



ASSESSMENT and  
QUALIFICATIONS  
ALLIANCE

**General Certificate of Education**

**Government and Politics  
5151/6151**

**GOV5      The Politics of the USA**

**Mark Scheme**

*2008 examination – June series*

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

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

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## CRITERIA FOR MARKING AS/A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

### Introduction

AQA's revised Government and Politics specification has been designed to be objectives – led in that questions are set which address the assessment objectives published in the specification. The assessment objectives for A Level and AS are the same, but the weightings are different at AS and A2. Details of the weightings are given in paragraphs 7.2 and 8.4 of the specification.

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

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

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

### Using a levels of response mark scheme

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

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

In making decisions away from the middle of the Level, examiners should ask themselves questions relating to candidate attainment, including the quality of language. The more positive the answers, the higher should be the mark awarded. We want to avoid 'bunching' of marks. Levels mark schemes can produce regression to the mean, which should be avoided. A candidate's script should be considered by asking 'Is it:

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

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

**A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, EXCLUDING SYNOPTIC UNIT  
(GOV4, GOV5, GOV6, GOV7)**

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for Question 1 part (a) (Total: 8 marks)**

	<b>Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select &amp; Deploy</b>	<b>Skills: Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>AO1</b>	<b>AO2</b>	<b>AO3</b>
	<p><b>Levels 3–4 (2 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a good to excellent knowledge and understanding of political data, concept(s) or term(s). Where appropriate, the candidate produces accurate and/or relevant examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Levels 3–4 (3 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate applies a good to excellent range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.</p>	<p><b>Levels 3–4 (2 marks)</b> The candidate communicates clearly and effectively using appropriate political vocabulary. 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><b>Levels 1–2 (1 mark)</b> The candidate demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of political data, concept(s) or term(s). The candidate produces few or inaccurate examples and/or limited evidence to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Levels 1–2 (1 – 2 marks)</b> The candidate applies a limited range of concepts and makes little or limited use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.</p>	<p><b>Levels 1–2 (1 mark)</b> The candidate communicates explanations or arguments with limited clarity and effectiveness using limited political vocabulary. The answer may lack either a clear focus on the question or a sense of direction. A conclusion, where appropriate, may be offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion is modest or implicit.</p>

**A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, EXCLUDING SYNOPTIC UNIT  
(GOV4, GOV5, GOV6, GOV7)**

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for Question 1 part (b) (Total: 12 marks)**

	<b>Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select &amp; Deploy</b>	<b>Skills: Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>AO1</b>	<b>AO2</b>	<b>AO3</b>
	<p><b>Level 4 (5 – 6 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate fully addresses the requirements of the question and provides developed and effective to comprehensive interpretation. The answer also provides clear to accurate evidence and, where appropriate, good to excellent examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Levels 3–4 (3 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate applies a good to excellent range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.</p>	<p><b>Levels 3–4 (2 marks)</b> The candidate communicates clearly and effectively using appropriate political vocabulary. 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><b>Level 3 (3 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate clearly addresses the requirements of the question and provides sound interpretation and contextual awareness. The answer includes good examples to illustrate points made.</p>		
	<p><b>Levels 1–2 (1 – 2 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates slight to basic knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate makes a very limited attempt to address the requirements of the question and provides little to partial and reasonably effective interpretation. Answers offer limited or little evidence and few or inaccurate examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Levels 1–2 (1 – 2 marks)</b> The candidate applies a limited range of concepts and makes little or limited use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.</p>	<p><b>Levels 1–2 (1 mark)</b> The candidate communicates explanations or arguments with limited clarity and effectiveness using limited political vocabulary. The answer may lack either a clear focus on the question or a sense of direction. A conclusion, where appropriate, may be offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion is modest or implicit.</p>

**A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, EXCLUDING SYNOPTIC UNIT  
(GOV4, GOV5, GOV6, GOV7)**

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for Question 1 part (c) (Total: 20 marks)**

	<b>Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select &amp; Deploy</b>	<b>Skills: Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>AO1</b>	<b>AO2</b>	<b>AO3</b>
	<p><b>Level 4 (7 – 8 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. 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><b>Level 4 (7 – 8 marks)</b> The candidate displays excellent awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is an excellent focus on the specific question asked. There is a clear evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays a sophisticated awareness of viewpoints and issues.</p> <p>Appropriate parallels and connections are clearly identified together with comparisons. A wide range of concepts is used.</p>	<p><b>Level 4 (4 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions with clarity. Excellent use is made of political vocabulary to construct cogent and coherent arguments. The answer has a clear sense of direction, culminating in a conclusion that flows from the preceding discussion.</p>
	<p><b>Level 3 (5 – 6 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. The answer clearly addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates sound contextual awareness.</p> <p>The answer includes good examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (5 – 6 marks)</b> The candidate displays sound awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is a clear focus on the question. There is a sound evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays good awareness of viewpoints and issues. There is good recognition of parallels and comparisons. Appropriate concepts are used.</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (3 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions well. Good use is made of political vocabulary to construct clear arguments and explanations.</p> <p>The candidate produces an answer with a conclusion linked to the preceding discussion.</p>

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for Question 1 part (c) (continued)**

	<b>Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select &amp; Deploy</b>	<b>Skills: Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>A01</b>	<b>A02</b>	<b>A03</b>
	<p><b>Level 2 (3 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates outline knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and some awareness of the relationships between them. The answer makes a limited attempt to address the question and demonstrates contextual awareness covering part of the question.</p> <p>The answer includes simple examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 2 (3 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate displays limited 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 partial awareness of viewpoints and issues.</p> <p>There is some recognition of basic parallels and comparisons with a limited use of concepts.</p>	<p><b>Level 2 (2 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments and conclusions adequately with a limited use of political vocabulary.</p> <p>A conclusion is offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p>
	<p><b>Level 1 (1 – 2 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a slight and incomplete knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes and a limited awareness of the relationships between them. There is little attempt to address the requirements of the question.</p> <p>The answer includes few, if any, examples which may be inaccurately reported or inappropriately used.</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1 – 2 marks)</b> The candidate displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question and focus is lacking. Evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour is superficial, with little awareness of viewpoints and issues.</p> <p>There is little, if any, recognition of parallels and comparisons. The use of concepts is superficial and naïve.</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1 mark)</b> The answer relies upon narrative, which is not fully coherent. There is little or no use of political vocabulary.</p> <p>A conclusion, if present, is not adequately related to the preceding discussion.</p>

**A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, EXCLUDING SYNOPTIC UNIT  
(GOV4, GOV5, GOV6, GOV7)**

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for Questions 2, 3 and 4 (Maximum 40 marks)**

	<b>Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select &amp; Deploy</b>	<b>Skills: Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>AO1</b>	<b>AO2</b>	<b>AO3</b>
	<p><b>Level 4 (13 – 16 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. 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. The answer includes detailed and comprehensive interpretations or explanations as well as accurate evidence and relevant examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 4 (13 – 16 marks)</b> The candidate displays excellent awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is an excellent and sustained focus on the specific question asked. There is clear and full evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays a sophisticated awareness of differing viewpoints and recognition of issues.</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><b>Level 4 (7 – 8 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions with clarity. Excellent use is made of political vocabulary to construct cogent and coherent arguments and explanations. The answer has a clear sense of direction, culminating in a conclusion that flows from the preceding discussion.</p>
	<p><b>Level 3 (9 – 12 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. 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><b>Level 3 (9 – 12 marks)</b> The candidate displays sound awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is a clear focus on the question. There is a sound evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays good awareness of differing viewpoints and recognition of issues. There is good recognition of parallels and comparisons. Appropriate concepts are used and developed.</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (5 – 6 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions well. Good use is made of political vocabulary to construct clear arguments and explanations.</p> <p>The candidate produces an answer with a conclusion linked to the preceding discussion.</p>

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for Questions 2, 3 and 4 (continued)**

	<b>Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select &amp; Deploy</b>	<b>Skills: Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Communication</b>
	<b>AO1</b>	<b>AO2</b>	<b>AO3</b>
	<p><b>Level 2 (5 – 8 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates outline knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and some awareness of the relationships between them. The answer makes a limited attempt to address the question and demonstrates contextual awareness covering part of the question.</p> <p>The answer includes a partial and reasonably effective attempt at interpretation or explanation with some examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 2 (5 – 8 marks)</b> The candidate displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question resulting in a restricted focus. There is a limited evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays a partial awareness of differing viewpoints and issues.</p> <p>There is some recognition of basic parallels and comparisons. Arguments and explanations are undeveloped with a limited use of concepts.</p>	<p><b>Level 2 (3 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments and conclusions adequately with a limited use of political vocabulary.</p> <p>A conclusion is offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p>
	<p><b>Level 1 (1 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a slight and incomplete knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes and a limited awareness of the relationships between them. 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><b>Level 1 (1 – 4 marks)</b> The candidate displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question and focus is lacking. Evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour is superficial.</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 naive.</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1 – 2 marks)</b> The answer relies upon narrative, which is not fully coherent. There is little or no use of political vocabulary.</p> <p>A conclusion, if present, is not adequately related to the preceding discussion.</p>

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**1****Total for this question: 40 marks**

(a) Explain the term <i>social diversity of the United States</i> used in the extract. <span style="float: right;">(8 marks)</span>
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Candidates should recognise that the US is a country of huge diversity and that this diversity can have numerous political effects. It does not have a homogenous political culture as a result and candidates should give examples of this diversity which could be socio-economic, religious, ethnic or regional and for contextual awareness how this diversity has come about (eg immigration, the huge size of the country ) how WASP dominance has declined and the US has become more of a country of differing group loyalties (eg description such as ‘melting pot’ or ‘tossed salad’) and how difficult it is to make appeals to these in order to gain votes. At lower levels expect simple descriptions of US diversity, at higher levels of response expect some explanation of cause and effects with evidence and examples given.

(b) Using the extract and your own knowledge, assess the extent to which US political parties may be described as organisationally weak. <span style="float: right;">(12 marks)</span>
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Candidates should recognise that compared to European democracies (extract) parties in the US have traditionally been described as ‘weak’ organisations. Candidates should offer explanations for this from the extract, eg ‘less pivotal role in legislative politics’ and in the ‘election of office-holders’ which should be developed by higher level candidates and explanations offered such as the relative weakness of party voting in Congress or the lack of national party manifestos at elections and different party campaigning in different states.

Similarly, the extract refers to candidates winning office without much reference to their party and also to the distrust of parties in the constitution. Candidates should offer explanations for this organisational ‘weakness’ apart from those implied in the extract such as their lack of recognised leaders and a mass membership base (as found in the UK). The argument that the US does not have strong NATIONAL parties may be offered by the well informed candidates and that in reality the US has fifty STATE parties because of federalism and that the National Committees of the parties only really become important at the time of presidential elections every four years. Very well informed candidates may present the view that US parties are actually strengthening organisationally and give evidence from recent elections to back up their analysis.

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- (c) 'Broad coalitions of different interests and values.' To what extent is this still a valid description of US political parties? (20 marks)

The description of US parties is a common one and should be 'unpacked' and analysed by the candidates. The 'broad coalitions' refers to the two parties traditionally being labelled highly pragmatic 'catch-all' umbrella parties within very 'big tents'. The focus therefore should be on the two main parties and their ideological nature. The Democratic party as the party representing the 'different' interests of more liberal, minority, poorer (for example) America and the Republicans representing the interests of more conservative, WASP and richer America (for example). Both parties also representing different 'values' of collectivism of individualism, intervention of non or less intervention or conservatism of liberalism. Evidence would be expected of this at the higher levels of response. The quote, however, also implies that both parties, are in fact, 'broad coalitions' and therefore although they ARE representing different interests and values and presenting these to the US electorate, they are also internally divided and they are NOT ideologically homogenous or coherent. At the higher level of response explanations should be given of these 'big tent' parties and examples would be expected of such divisions. At a basic level this could be simply the liberal or moderate/conservative divide in each party, with better candidates giving specific examples of such internal divisions or factions. The key discriminator in this question is the word '**still**' as this allows the better prepared candidates to argue that recent changes to the parties and the causes of these changes (such as the Democratic Party's loss of its southern wing and the decline of 'liberal' or 'moderate' Republicans) have led to the parties becoming more ideologically cohesive. Evidence and examples are expected at the highest level of response.

2

Total for this question: 40 marks

Consider whether the growth of primary elections in the presidential nomination process has reduced the role and functions of the national nominating conventions to a mere formality. (40 marks)

The question demands knowledge and analysis of both the role and functions of primary elections and NNCs in the process to select and nominate presidential candidates for the parties. Candidates should understand that the increasing importance of primaries (where the voters are asked to select the nominee in state open or closed primary contests and where delegates are chosen to attend the NNCs committed to vote for whom the primary voters have chosen) has taken away many of the functions that the NNCs used to perform in the old system where primaries were less important and less widespread and the choice of candidates was made at the Convention. Because of the increase in the use of primaries by States and the 'front-loading' of the system the choice of the candidate is known long before the Convention takes place (eg Kerry by March in 2004). So the role of the NNC, traditionally the end of the nomination process, is now more like a 'coronation' of the already chosen candidate, than the activists of the party making a 'choice'. Candidates must be able to demonstrate understanding of this loss of function because of the primary system. However, the word 'mere' in the question should act as a key discriminator as candidates should be able to recognise that although the NNCs are no longer 'choosing' the candidate, they may not be simply described as a 'formality' and that some functions do remain although it is up to the candidates to speculate as to the actual importance of these functions in the presidential nomination process with evidence and examples. Many candidates may argue that the NNC is now simply a 'media event' that is helpful to gain momentum and a 'bounce' in the polls for the chosen candidate and the party. At the higher level of response candidates are likely to argue that this media attention may serve to heal any divisions created by the divisive nature of the primaries (and give examples of this) and create a unified party ready for the national campaign. Candidates may also analyse the role of the convention in introducing the 'balanced ticket' of the party as the name of the vice-presidential nominee is officially announced (although good candidates may recognise that this name is known in advance of the NNC again reducing its status to a 'formality') with examples of such 'ticket-balancing' from recent elections. Similarly, well informed candidates know that the 'platform' of the party is decided at the NNC in backstage 'platform hearings'. These give grass roots party workers and national officials some input into the policies on which the candidates will stand. The important role of the 'keynote speech' in the media (with examples from recent NNCs) could also be legitimately introduced to deny the 'mere formality' quote. At the highest levels of response candidates give evidence that NNCs **can** be the most important part of the party's ticket before the long national campaign begins and it **can** be good for the party and its candidate (eg Kerry 2004 OR Bush 2000) or it can show divisions and weakness (eg G Bush 1992) leading to defeat. Well-informed candidates will introduce evidence from the 2008 campaign, such as the role of super-delegates in the Democratic Party.

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**3****Total for this question: 40 marks**

Assess the factors that make some US pressure groups more successful than others in achieving their goals. *(40 marks)*

Candidates should know that pressure groups are NOT equally powerful and the requirement is for an evaluation of the factors that MAY or MAY NOT lead to the achievement of their goals (whatever these may be). Candidates may refer to a number of different variables that may lead to 'success' such as access to decision-makers through electoral campaigning and funding (through PACs); knowledge and expertise used in lobbying activities (for policy-making); the strength of their membership/numbers supporting their aims in terms of voting power and turn-out (eg AARP) or through support of their aims by the public. Most candidates are familiar with the strength of the NRA and at a higher level of response can indicate the reasons for their influence on Presidents, Congress and State legislatures. This could also be done with the other examples such as US 'Insider' pressure groups. At the highest level of response reference to the 'iron triangles' of US government with reference to the power of the corporate lobbies in particular should be expected. Candidates are also invited by the nature of the question to give explanations for the 'weakness' of other groups in achieving their aims and the reasons why some groups may be less successful on the US lobbying scene. This could be related to their aims (which may be perceived as 'extreme'); the lack of public support or the lack of financial 'clout' which may lead to the need to use more 'outsider' direct action methods to influence the decision-makers. Answers will be distinguished by the strength of the analysis, evidence and examples given by the candidates in response to the specific question asked.

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**4****Total for this question: 40 marks**

To what extent is voting behaviour in the US still determined by socio-economic factors rather than by candidates and issues? *(40 marks)*

Here candidates are presented with 2 sets of factors that are known to influence the way that voters vote in the US and they are asked to determine which are the most important factors in their analysis. At the lowest levels of response expect lists of factors that influence VB with little attempt to evaluate their relative importance. At the highest levels of response expect an analysis of the relative variables that can be both long term (social and economic) and short term (issues and candidates) and a conclusion as to which IS the most important. There should be reference to VB studies that emphasis voter de-alignment and the decline of party identification (with reasons) and the rising importance of more volatile 'independent' voters responding more to the issues of the campaigns (where examples should be given from recent elections) and the different candidates that have stood in these elections (with examples). When discussing the importance of social and economic factors candidates may refer to income, wealth, race, ethnicity, region and religion as important factors with evidence from recent elections about the way in which these factors CAN BE important explaining factors. Many candidates may however, suggest that a de-aligned electorate is now more responsive to the issues of the particular campaign ('it's the economy, stupid' in 92 and 'it's the moral values, stupid' in 2004 or abortion or gun control or national security) and the way that the campaign is conducted (eg Karl Roves strategies in 2000 and 2004). Given a more de-aligned electorate also the images and personalities of the candidates themselves become more important influences and candidates have a wealth of examples of this from recent presidential (or mid-term) elections to use along with knowledge of the growth of 'personalised' politics with a greater focus on image and 'likeability' rather than voters sense of identification with parties based on long-term social and economic factors.