



General Certificate of Education

Government and Politics
5151/6151

GOV1 Electoral Systems and Voting
Behaviour

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 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, 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.

AS GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (GOV1, GOV2, GOV3)**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for part (a) questions (Total: 8 marks)**

	Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy	Skills: Analysis & Evaluation	Communication
	AO1	AO2	AO3
	<p>Levels 3–4 (3 – 4 marks) The candidate successfully demonstrates accurate or generally accurate knowledge and understanding of political data, concept(s) or term(s).</p> <p>Where appropriate, the candidate is able to illustrate his/her answer with relevant evidence/example(s).</p>	<p>Levels 3–4 (2 marks) The candidate provides an appropriate analysis of political data, concept(s) or term(s) showing an awareness of differing viewpoints where appropriate.</p>	<p>Levels 3–4 (2 marks) The candidate communicates clearly and effectively using appropriate political vocabulary.</p>
	<p>Levels 1–2 (1 – 2 marks) The candidate demonstrates slight or basic knowledge and understanding of political data, concept(s) or term(s).</p> <p>The candidate may illustrate his/her answer with evidence/example(s) of limited relevance.</p>	<p>Levels 1–2 (1 mark) The candidate provides a superficial or partial analysis of political data, concept(s) or term(s).</p>	<p>Levels 1–2 (1 mark) The candidate communicates with limited clarity and effectiveness using a limited political vocabulary.</p>

AS GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (GOV1, GOV2, GOV3)**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for part (b) questions (Total: 22 marks)**

	Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy	Skills: Analysis & Evaluation	Communication
	AO1	AO2	AO3
	<p>Level 4 (10 – 11 marks) The candidate successfully demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/ institutions and processes and the relationship between them, producing an answer that deploys relevant knowledge and understanding to address the requirements of the question and that demonstrates significant contextual awareness.</p> <p>The candidate's answer includes relevant evidence and/or examples to substantiate and illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 4 (7 marks) The candidate evaluates political institutions, processes and behaviour, applying appropriate concepts and theories.</p> <p>The candidate provides analysis which displays sound awareness of differing viewpoints and a clear recognition of issues. Parallels and connections are identified, together with valid and precise comparisons. The answer includes relevant and convincing interpretations or explanations.</p>	<p>Level 4 (4 marks) The candidate communicates clear arguments and explanations using accurate political vocabulary. The candidate produces answers with a clear sense of direction leading towards a coherent conclusion.</p>
	<p>Level 3 (7 – 9 marks) The candidate demonstrates generally accurate knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/ institutions and processes and the relationship between them, producing an answer that addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates adequate contextual awareness.</p> <p>The answer provides evidence backed up by clear examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p>Level 3 (5 – 6 marks) The candidate evaluates political institutions, processes and behaviour, applying some concepts or theories.</p> <p>The candidate provides clear arguments and explanations and demonstrates awareness of differing viewpoints and a recognition of issues. Parallels and connections are identified, together with some sound comparison.</p>	<p>Level 3 (3 marks) The candidate communicates arguments and explanations using some political vocabulary. A conclusion is linked to the preceding discussion.</p>

GENERIC MARK SCHEME for part (b) questions (continued)

	Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy	Skills: Analysis & Evaluation	Communication
	AO1	AO2	AO3
	<p>Level 2 (4 – 6 marks) The candidate demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/ institutions and processes and some awareness of the relationship between them. He/she makes a limited attempt to address the requirements of the question.</p> <p>The candidate may demonstrate contextual awareness covering part of the question, and may produce limited evidence and/or few examples.</p>	<p>Level 2 (3 – 4 marks) The candidate offers a simplistic evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour and begins to construct arguments which contain basic explanation.</p> <p>The candidate shows some awareness of differing viewpoints. There is recognition of basic parallels or simplistic comparisons.</p>	<p>Level 2 (2 marks) The candidate attempts to develop an argument using basic political vocabulary. Where a conclusion is offered, its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p>
	<p>Level 1 (1 – 3 marks) The candidate demonstrates slight and/or incomplete knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/ institutions and processes and limited awareness of the relationship between them.</p> <p>The candidate makes a very limited attempt to address the requirements of the question. Only superficial awareness of the context of the question is evident and the few examples cited are often inaccurately reported or inappropriately used.</p>	<p>Level 1 (1 – 2 marks) The candidate makes a partial attempt to evaluate political institutions, processes and behaviour. Arguments offered are superficial. There is very limited awareness of parallels or comparisons.</p>	<p>Level 1 (1 mark) The answer relies upon narrative which is not fully coherent and which is expressed without using political vocabulary. A conclusion is either not offered or it is not related to the preceding material.</p>

1**Total for this question: 30 marks****(a)** Explain the term *marginal seat* used in the extract.**(8 marks)**

Marginal seats will be explained in terms of a tight or close contest between two or more parties in a constituency. The 'incumbent' cannot be confident of victory, nor can rivals assume defeat. The stimulus extract provides the example of Cheadle as a marginal seat. Candidates might provide contextual AO1 material such as generally marginal seat contests attract greater electoral effort/resources on the part of parties and AO2 analysis when compared with safe seats. There may be comment regarding by-elections: such as even normally 'safe' seats take on characteristics of marginal ones.

(b) 'By-election results are not a good guide to the electorate's voting intentions in general elections.' Discuss.

(22 marks)

The stimulus extract provides material on the Cheadle by-election, a case in which the Lib-Dems won firstly the general election and then the closely followed by-election. It is generally mid or even late-term by-elections which are compared with following general elections. Nevertheless, some useful points can be extracted from the stimulus, even if the sequence is not one conventionally referred to. Candidates may agree with the thrust of the set question, and argue that by-elections are treated by voters as a judgement on the performance of the government to date. If voters are disillusioned then even normally loyal voters may be inclined to abstain. Lower than normal turnouts may be identified as a cause of by-election volatility with candidates arguing that such voters return to their 'normal' voting behaviour at the following general election. Loyal voters may wish to give their government a 'bloody nose' and use by-elections as a vehicle for protest voting. Candidates are likely to argue that whereas the outcome of a general election could be a change of governing party, the outcome of a by-election is just plus or minus one MP for a party. Finally, it might be argued that the political climate surrounding a by-election differs from that surrounding a general election. In the Cheadle case there was a sizeable sympathy vote; in other cases the personal vote may be of a differing nature. There may be more or less local campaigning, less national coverage will occur, third parties may be able to focus their resources more effectively, etc. Strong responses may argue that local government election results are a better guide to the forthcoming general election than any by-election. Candidates may disagree with the thrust of the set question quote and argue, for example, that general elections have become more like by-elections as a result of increasing voter volatility. Electoral swings unthinkable a few decades ago are now commonplace. The 'uniform' swing from Penzance to Aberdeen has disappeared and now neighbouring constituencies can exhibit very different swings from one party to another in the same general election. Examples of by-elections may be cited as evidence, although the politically significant Crewe and Nantwich by-election which was held on the day prior to the examination may not be mentioned in responses. There should be a conclusion that makes the required evaluation, albeit qualified, and is supported by evidence and argument.

2

Total for this question: 30 marks

(a) Explain the term *share of the vote* used in the extract.

(8 marks)

Candidates will explain this in terms of share of the popular vote or opinion poll support and might comment that it is a poor guide to the number of seats won or distribution of support across constituencies. It might also be contrasted with opinion poll findings which offer a similar statistic based on respondents' replies. However, respondents may change their minds between the date of the poll and election day and so the amount of support a party enjoys according to the polls and their final share of the vote frequently differ.

(b) 'Opinion polls are major influences on both campaigns and outcomes in general elections.' Discuss.

(22 marks)

Candidates have been given information on the performance of the polls in 1992 in the stimulus extract which may be applied and used within answers. They are also generally well informed about the possible impact of opinion polls in terms of the 'bandwagon' and 'boomerang' effects on levels of partisan support during campaigns. Strong responses may contain impressive AO1 information on different polling interviewing methods and sampling techniques and their possible impact on voters but this is **not** essential information for a high level response. It would be useful in any response, however, if candidates realised that 1992 was dreadful for the reputation of the pollsters and that, following an inquest into what went wrong, a number of improvements have been made. However, sophisticated voters probably still treat the polls with greater caution than in the past. Although poll findings may still differ from one organisation to another, pollsters' results in 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections were seen as a vindication of their profession. Indeed, some candidates will argue that in 2001 and again in 2005 many of the electorate understood the polls in a way that made the actual election result a foregone conclusion, and that this had the effect of depressing electoral turnout. Candidates might argue that the polls continue to exaggerate Labour's lead and generally under-estimate Conservative and Liberal-Democrat support (and this does/does not affect voters) or that national opinion polls results bear little relation to the situation in any given constituency, or that polls should be banned in the final days of an election campaign – all points related to answering the set question. There may be discussion of the polls' influence with party managers, directing their campaigns, and this should receive credit. Other factors which influence campaigns may also be introduced legitimately by candidates although it must be related to, or contrasted with, the influence of polls. Candidates may introduce examples of polling organisations – such as Gallup, NOP, ICM, MORI, and YouGov – and this should receive credit although it would not be necessary to expect all the examples listed here for the purpose of being an aide-memoire to examiners. There should be a conclusion on whether or not polls still wield electoral influence which is supported by evidence and argument.

3**Total for this question: 30 marks**

- (a) Explain the term *Additional Member System* used in the passage. (8 marks)

Candidates are likely to present AMS as a mixed or hybrid system which attempts to gain the advantages of, for example, local constituency links together with greater proportionality than FPTP. Strongest responses will briefly present the mechanics of each voter having two votes (constituency with FPTP or AV plus party list), or provide examples of AMS in use, or comment on disadvantages such as the creation of two classes of MPs.

- (b) 'Electoral reform is bound to change electoral outcomes.' Discuss. (22 marks)

Candidates seem likely to tackle this question following two lines of analysis; firstly, they may explore changes in voting behaviour resulting from new electoral systems, such as the greater propensity to vote for minority parties, such as Greens or UKIP, which now have a greater chance of success; or they may consider various electoral systems are likely to produce majority governments or coalition governments; or they may do both. The stimulus provides some guidance in mentioning the elections to the devolved institutions and the European Parliament. They may refer to 1999 or 2003 results in very general terms, assessing the electorate's relative willingness to support, for example, nationalist parties under different systems (in Scotland the SNP emerged to become the official opposition and arguably similar for Plaid Cymru in 1999), or the electorate's willingness to support minority parties such as Greens or UKIP in the Euro-elections mentioned above. They might argue, for example, that FPTP encourages two-party politics and that other systems will encourage multi-party systems. Some candidates may evaluate these changes in either a positive or negative manner, with the possible growth of extremist parties as an example of the latter. Candidates are likely to contrast FPTP with other systems in terms of changing, for example, the need for tactical voting under systems of greater proportionality, or the likelihood of turning out in systems where fewer votes are 'wasted' ones. They may offer counter-arguments, such as the simplicity of FPTP and the strong constituency link encouraging higher turn outs and mention, for example, that Jenkins dismissed STV because of its complexity and likely after-effects, or they may refer to the electoral confusion in recent Scottish elections. Some candidates might consider the effects of different systems in terms of voter motivation (when the voting decision is made, partisanship, safe/marginal considerations). They may discuss the record of FPTP in producing 'strong majority governments' and the record of other systems used in the devolved assemblies including Northern Ireland. They may speculate on recent outcomes in Westminster had other electoral systems been in use (some textbooks include such material which is not expected to be reported here with total accuracy). There should be a conclusion which addresses the set question.

4

Total for this question: 30 marks

- (a) Explain the term *single member constituencies* used in the extract. (8 marks)

Candidates are likely to associate single-member constituencies with FPTP and comment on the advantages. Stronger responses will show awareness of alternatives, such as multi-member constituencies or ‘absence’ of constituencies, and provide appropriate contextual comment.

- (b) ‘Despite being unfair, “first-past-the-post” is the best electoral system for Britain.’ Discuss. (22 marks)

Clearly this is a broad question which candidates may approach from a number of directions, but full marks are available to responses which provide appropriate depth but which are not comprehensive in terms of scope. Some candidates might pursue the line that Britain was/is a class-based society with two parties that reflected the interests of two competing classes, and that first-past-the-post best suits this situation. Where there are more classes, or where society is divided into more than two main blocs based on factors other than class (such as religion) then a more proportional system might be more appropriate to reassure minorities. Some candidates might challenge the thrust of the set question by arguing that Britain’s political culture is now much more heterogeneous and less stable than in the past, and that this fails to be reflected under the crudities of first-past-the-post (as in the USA?). Others might argue the value of tradition, that first-past-the-post has long dominated British politics and is understood as having worked efficiently in translating the voters’ mood into electoral results. Examples might include wanting Labour defeated in 1979 or 1983, or wanting the Conservatives removed in 1997. It might be argued that the more proportional systems introduced at differing tiers of government since 1997 have not performed any more effectively than the unreformed system used for Westminster. Indeed, greater proportionality may carry risks in legitimising politics of the extreme, which generally gets ‘squeezed out’ by first-past-the-post. It might be argued that ‘moderate’ third/minor parties such as the Liberal Democrats, mentioned in the stimulus as unfairly penalised, have made very significant advances in national and local election results under first-past-the-post. Some candidates may introduce the theory of the mandate of British politics and argue about the suitability of various electoral systems in producing a clear ‘winner’ and/or the issue of forming coalition governments. There may be responses that answer the set question through a ‘case-study’ type of approach comparing the fit between political culture and election type of, for example, FPTP at Westminster general elections and STV in Northern Ireland, or may simply argue regarding the simplicity of one system against the complexity of the other. Some candidates may argue about the experiences of countries such as Italy and New Zealand which have changed electoral systems. Some might dissect first-past-the-post and argue that it fails to provide any/few of the advantages that its proponents argue makes it so suitable to Britain. There should be a conclusion that makes the required evaluation, albeit qualified, and is supported by evidence and argument.