



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Government and Politics**

**GOV3A**

**The Politics of the USA**

**Unit 3A**

***Mark Scheme***

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the 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 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 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 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, assistant examiners are required to familiarise themselves with the general principles of the mark scheme as contained in the Assessment Matrix.

At A2, generally speaking, there is no unambiguously 'right' or 'wrong' answer to the 30-mark questions. Answers will be judged on factors such as quality of the argument, depth of knowledge and understanding, a synoptic grasp of the subject, appropriateness of the examples and internal logic of the discussion. Where candidates are presented with a proposition to be discussed they may support it, reject it or adopt a balanced position.

There are no limits to the areas of knowledge that candidates may feel able bring to the discussion. Therefore the specification of requirements outlined in the mark schemes can only be indicative. Candidates 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 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****GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 10 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>
<b>Level 4 (4 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.	<b>Level 4 (4 marks)</b> The candidate applies an excellent range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.	<b>Levels 3–4 (2 marks)</b> The candidate 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.
<b>Level 3 (3 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates good 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.	<b>Level 3 (3 marks)</b> The candidate applies a good range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.	The answer has a clear sense of direction, is focused on the question and, where appropriate, has a conclusion which flows from the discussion.
<b>Level 2 (2 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate 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.	<b>Level 2 (2 marks)</b> The candidate applies a limited range of concepts and makes limited use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.	<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.
<b>Level 1 (1 mark)</b> The candidate demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The candidate 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.	<b>Level 1 (1 mark)</b> The candidate applies few concepts and makes little use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.	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.
<b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.	<b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.	<b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.

**A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS****GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 30 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 (10–12 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. A synoptic approach is fully developed, drawing appropriately on knowledge, perspectives and examples from a wide range of studies in government and politics. The answer fully addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates excellent contextual awareness. The answer includes excellent examples to illustrate points made. The answer includes detailed and comprehensive interpretations or explanations, as well as accurate evidence and relevant examples, to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 4 (10–12 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. 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 (6 marks)</b> The candidate communicates structured and sustained arguments, explanations and conclusions with clarity. Excellent use is made of political vocabulary to construct cogent and coherent arguments and explanations. The response should be legible with few, if any, errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The answer has a clear sense of direction, culminating in a conclusion that flows from the preceding discussion.</p>
<p><b>Level 3 (7–9 marks)</b> The candidate demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them. A synoptic approach is well developed, using a range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained elsewhere in the study of government and politics. The answer clearly addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates sound contextual awareness. The answer includes developed and effective interpretations or explanations and also clear evidence and good examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (7–9 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 (4–5 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions well. Good use is made of political vocabulary to construct clear arguments and explanations. The response should be legible but there may be occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The candidate produces an answer with a conclusion linked to the preceding discussion.</p>

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 30 marks (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>
<b>Level 2 (4–6 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. An attempt to develop a synoptic approach is made, using a limited range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained more broadly in the study of government and politics. The answer includes a partial and reasonably effective attempt at interpretation or explanation, with some examples to illustrate points made.	<b>Level 2 (4–6 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.  There is some recognition of basic parallels and comparisons. Arguments and explanations are undeveloped, with a limited use of concepts.	<b>Level 2 (2–3 marks)</b> The candidate communicates arguments and conclusions adequately, with a limited use of political vocabulary. There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and legibility may be a problem. A conclusion is offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.
<b>Level 1 (1–3 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. A very limited attempt at synopticity is made, sometimes using superficial or inaccurate knowledge, perspectives and examples cited from elsewhere in their study of government and politics. There is little attempt to address the requirements of the question. There is only superficial awareness, if any, of the context of the question, with little interpretation and few, if any, examples, often inaccurately reported or inappropriately used.	<b>Level 1 (1–3 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.  Analysis shows little awareness of differing viewpoints and issues. There is little, if any, recognition of parallels and comparisons. Arguments, explanations and use of concepts are superficial and naïve.	<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. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be intrusive and the response may not be legible. A conclusion, if present, is not adequately related to the preceding discussion.
<b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.	<b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.	<b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.

**Topic 1 The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy****Total for this topic: 40 marks****(01) Examine the use of recall elections in US politics.****(10 marks)**

For high AO1 marks, candidates must show that they understand what recall elections are and the circumstances in which they are held in the USA. For example, they are:

- Direct democratic devices.
- Called as a result of recall petitions (which vary) from registered voters to remove an elected official from office between elections.
- Used (very rarely) in approximately 18 states only, with no provision made at the federal level. Do not reward candidates who refer to recall of Members of Congress.

For high AO2 marks, candidates must offer some evaluation of their use and a critique of their democratic value, such as:

- Arguments concerning democratic 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.
- Alternatively, 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.

At the higher levels of response, candidates will use the example of the successful recall of Democratic Governor Gray Davis in 2003 and the subsequent election won by Republican Schwarzenegger out of a field of over 130 candidates. The arguments surrounding this successful recall should be highly rewarded. Also reward candidates who are aware that recall elections have recently been proposed for the UK, although not yet acted upon.

**(02) 'Slick media events which lack any significance in the modern US nomination process.'**  
Assess this view of the national nominating conventions.

**(30 marks)**

The question demands AO1 knowledge and understanding of the role and functions (both formal and informal) of the national nominating conventions in the candidate selection process, and AO2 analysis of whether they are now 'slick media events', losing their traditional functions and significance as a result of changes that have taken place in the party nomination process, particularly since the 1960s. Any historical understanding of the role of the NNCs to demonstrate change from 'deliberative bodies' with significant functions to 'ratifying bodies' with fewer significant functions (see reference to 'modern' in the question) should be rewarded.

- It is likely that higher-level responses will include analysis of the significance of the role of primaries (and caucuses), especially when 'frontloaded', which now determine the choice of candidates through delegate selection. Good candidates will argue that this has undermined the original role of the NNCs in determining the choice of party nominee, as the nominee is now often chosen months before the convention takes place (eg McCain by March 2008). As a result, the NNC is often described as the 'coronation' or confirmation of the candidate whose name has long been known, and it can be argued that the loss of this main function



has been important in describing the NNCs as ‘insignificant’ and as simply rituals and ‘slick media events’.

- Candidates may also argue that the choice of the vice-president is now often made before the NNC, rather than as it was in the past. (Obama’s choice of Biden was announced by text message directly to supporters!)
- Analysis of the term ‘slick media events’ will show understanding that the primary goal of the NNCs in modern times is the media focus on the marketing of the candidate, the keynote speech and the images that the party wishes to present as it moves to the actual presidential campaign to win votes from the wider electorate, rather than the party activists and voters.

For higher marks, candidates should focus on the above when arguing that modern NNCs do seem to ‘lack any significance’ when compared to their historical role and functions.

However, it is likely that candidates at the higher levels of response will recognise that, although the statement can be accepted as accurate to some degree, it can also be argued that the NNCs do retain some significance in the nomination process. The following analysis should be rewarded, especially when backed up by convincing evidence and examples:

- Although the conventions are ‘media events’ and tightly controlled by the party hierarchy, the reason is that a ‘successful’ convention can give ‘momentum’ and a ‘bounce’ in the polls for the party candidates as they move into the national campaign.
- The NNCs are ‘significant’ because they are the only time that the 50 state parties come together to form ‘national parties’ that attempt to speak with one voice, and have one aim – the selection of their party candidate as president. They are organised by the National Party Committees.
- These ‘media events’ can also be significant in ‘healing wounds’ in the party, caused by divisive primary contests as in 1980, 1992 and 2008. This helps to unite the party around its chosen candidate and to present a ‘united front’ to the electorate in the search for votes.
- Although the name of the vice-presidential candidate may already be known, the NNC is usually the first time that the ‘balanced ticket’ is presented to the electorate and the candidate analysed for strengths and weaknesses, eg Sarah Palin in 2008.
- It is at the convention that the ‘platform’ of the party is introduced and the policy proposals on which the party will fight the election are announced, discussed and confirmed. Although not quite a UK manifesto, the platform can be accepted so that the party goes out to fight on an agreed set of proposals OR (as at the Republican Convention in 1992) the platform may present disunity in a party, leading to the subsequent loss of the election. This again shows that NNCs can be seen as ‘significant’ rather than ‘insignificant’.
- Well-informed candidates will be aware of the possible role of the ‘super-delegates’ in the Democratic Party, who could be important at the convention in the case of a deadlocked selection process with no clear primary winner. Excellent candidates may argue that this has never happened so is not significant, or that it almost happened in 2008 when Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama looked as though they could be tied in delegates so the super-delegates could have been ‘significant’.
- NNCs ‘energise’ the party and its activists behind the presidential candidate for the coming campaign.
- They can be used to mobilise the party voters behind the chosen candidate.

In this question, candidates may either argue that the NNCs are ‘significant’ or ‘lack significance’ or, at the higher levels of response, cover both sides of the argument. Answers will be distinguished by the strength of the analysis on the ‘significance’ of the NNCs and the strength of the evidence and examples used to back it up.

**Topic 2 Political Parties****Total for this topic: 40 marks****(03) Consider the importance of the 'religious right' in US politics.****(10 marks)**

For high AO1 marks, candidates should demonstrate that they clearly understand the concept of the 'religious right' (Christian right) in US politics, especially in the Bible Belt, 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 AO2 marks, candidates should recognise its importance in US politics. Weaker candidates may refer only to religion and politics in a general sense or fail to understand the term itself.

For high AO1 marks, candidates may refer to:

- Its growth under the Reagan Republican Party in the 1980s.
- Its socially conservative views, such as pro-life on the abortion issue, against gay marriage and stem cell research.
- Its importance in providing the voting 'base' or core vote of the Republican Party in several elections.
- The influence of some of its supporters and spokespersons, such as Newt Gingrich, Sarah Palin, Pat Robertson and the Christian right broadcasting channels and links to evangelical Christianity.

For AO2 marks, candidates must address the 'importance' part of the question. It may be argued that the religious right has been very important in the success of the Republican Party since the 1980s, particularly with the election of Reagan in 1980 and 1984 and G W Bush in 2004, when it was 'the moral values, stupid', 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).

On the other hand, it can be argued that the influence of the religious right is now waning (as it did under the Clinton administration) with the election of Obama in 2008, with its socially conservative messages having much less impact. There is also evidence that the views of the religious right can alienate moderate Republican and independent voters, so the Republican Party has to tread a fine line on issues such as abortion and gay marriage.

Excellent candidates will demonstrate that the influence of the religious right has been variable, depending on personalities, issues and events: for example, they may point to the importance of the Christian Coalition in the 1980s and into the 1990s, but its waning influence in recent years. There was evidence that McCain distanced himself from the religious right in 2008. Some very well informed candidates may refer to the irony of religion and politics mixing in the USA, where state and church are separated by the Constitution.

Reference to the Tea Party movement may be made by some candidates, although this movement tends to have fiscally rather than socially conservative views. Some candidates may refer to the influence on some democratic politicians such as the 'Blue Dogs'.

(04) Why are US parties often described as weak organisations, and how accurate is the description today? (30 marks)

For the first part of this question, candidates must be able to explain the reasons why US parties are often described as 'weak', eg when compared to parties in the UK. Answers at the higher levels of both AO1 and AO2 should include knowledge and arguments relating to:

- **Federalism** – creates 50 decentralised state parties with few links between them, apart from during presidential elections.
- The **separation of powers** means little linkage between the parties and their candidates in congressional and presidential elections. Candidates tend to raise their own finance for their campaigns and are selected via primaries.

This leads to much less emphasis on party discipline and cohesion, especially at the federal level of government. There are no 'party leaders' or national party manifestos.

The question also demands analysis about 'how accurate' this description of the parties as weak is today, so it is necessary for candidates to be able to assess the arguments surrounding the ongoing debate as to whether the US parties are still 'weak' or whether changes to the parties themselves and to their functions means that they are not weak, but 'resurgent'.

For higher-level marks, candidates may present arguments to show that parties remain 'weak' in the USA (especially when compared to UK or European parties) because:

- They do not select or de-select their own candidates – this is done through primaries and caucuses.
- They do not completely fund their candidates' campaigns, as candidates tend to raise their own campaign war chests through their own money, federal funding or PACs.
- Electoral campaigns are candidate centred rather than party centred, with the emphasis on image rather than policies. Often the party is not mentioned.
- There are no party leaders as such in US politics.
- There is no mass membership of parties, only registered voters and activists.
- There are (relatively) low levels of party discipline in Congress.

On the other hand, candidates may argue that there is evidence that the US parties have been changing, with evidence that they may be growing stronger organisationally (as well as ideologically, although the focus of this question should be on organisation). Good candidates should be aware of the debate over Broder's thesis as to whether, and to what extent, the 'party is over'.

There should be evidence presented on the 'accuracy' of the description of US parties as weak. At the higher levels of response, candidates must address the question and may argue that, although the parties may still be characterised as 'weak' by some of the arguments shown above, evidence may also show some 'strengthening' of the parties in recent times, so the 'accuracy' of the description could and should be challenged by well prepared candidates for Level 3 and Level 4 marks:

- Although the parties are de-centralised, the parties' National Committees have been strengthened and now have many roles (eg the Brock reforms in the Republican Party).
- The introduction of 'super-delegates' representing the party in the selection process.

- The greater role played by the parties in raising, spending and allocating campaign finance to favoured candidates and states eg 6 for 6 in 06.
- The greater emphasis on party discipline and unity in Congress and more coherent party voting, with evidence from recent party unity scores and partisanship in Congress.
- Candidates may refer to the contract with America in 1994.

The marks for this question will relate to the focus on the question, the analysis of the 'weakness' of US parties and the evidence and examples presented relating to US party organisation. At the lower levels of response, expect little focus on the actual question and/or a drift to ideology and uncritical acceptance of the 'weakness' of US parties.

**Topic 3 Voting Behaviour****Total for this topic: 40 marks****(05) Explain the 'gender gap' which exists in US voting behaviour.****(10 marks)**

For AO1 marks, candidates must explain that the gender gap in US voting behaviour refers to the different voting patterns of men and women in US elections. For high marks they must be able to give some **evidence** of these different voting patterns in recent elections. For very high marks, candidates may have contextual awareness of the targeting of women voters by the parties, such as 'soccer moms' in 1992, 'security moms' in 2004 and 'hockey moms' and 'walmart moms' in 2008 (one of the reasons for the selection of Palin as vice-president in 2008, but this backfired because she alienated more women voters than she attracted to the ticket).

It is known that women are more likely to vote Democrat than Republican and this has been true in all recent elections (reward use of accurate statistical evidence such as: in 2008, 56% of female voters voted for Obama against 43% for McCain or, in 2004, 55% of male voters voted for Bush and 44% for Kerry). Candidates should also be rewarded for knowing that there are more registered women voters and that women are more likely to turn out to vote than men.

For AO2 marks, reward analysis that attempts to explain *why* women are more likely to vote Democrat than men (or vice versa), such as:

- The pro-choice, pro-gun-control, anti-capital-punishment views of the Democrats.
- Women are more likely to be 'dovish' on foreign policy issues, favouring diplomacy over conflict.
- Women are more likely to support the health, education and welfare policies of the Democrats (synoptic links here) and also to benefit from their policies such as women's rights.

It would be acceptable to explain the gender gap by focusing on why men are more likely to support the Republican Party at elections by reversing some of the arguments outlined above. For example, men are more likely to support the more 'hawkish' views on foreign policy and are more likely to be anti-gun-control and less influenced by health/welfare/education issues.

Excellent candidates may indicate that the gender gap can widen or narrow at different elections according to candidates, issues and events.

**(06) 'Although most forms of political participation are high in the USA, voter turnout at elections remains low.' Discuss.****(30 marks)**

This question is encouraging candidates to explain why measures of participation in political activity (such as civic activity, pressure group membership, political demonstration) show that the USA ranks highly. Candidates may point out there is less evidence of political passivity in the USA than there is in the UK, and part of the explanation for this lies in the higher sense of civic duty and awareness within the US political culture and traditions. Some evidence should be given of the high levels of political participation in the USA at the higher levels of response.

The statement, however, is pointing to the paradox that, although measures of political participation are shown to be high, voter turnout in the USA is low. This paradox needs explanation and, the fuller the explanation, the higher the likely mark.

It is known that turnout figures in the USA are amongst the lowest in the democratic world. Excellent candidates, however, may recognise that how turnout is measured may be a factor and refer to the concept of the Voting Age Population (VAP), whereby if turnout is measured as a percentage of the population aged 18 and over that is resident in the USA, it looks significantly lower than if measured by the percentage of the registered voting population.

When explaining the reasons why many voters do not vote in the USA, it is likely that candidates at the higher levels of response will refer to many different factors in their analysis, including:

- electoral system explanations such as the winner takes all, simple plurality system and the electoral college, which leads to wasted votes
- explanations relating to the characteristics of the parties (eg perceived as similar) and their candidates (perceived as uninspiring)
- partisan de-alignment explanations
- democratic overload and voter fatigue arguments (permanent campaigns)
- negative campaigns or 'image politics', unrelated to real policy and issues
- difficulties of voter registration
- 'haphathy arguments'
- unhappiness with Washington insider politics and gridlock.

Weaker candidates may rely on learned lists relating to reason for abstention, or suggest that it is mainly due to 'apathy' or 'dissatisfaction', whilst not explaining why voters may be apathetic or dissatisfied.

At higher levels of response, candidates are likely to refer to the fact that, in 2008, turnout at the presidential election increased (being the highest at 63% since 1976, with 7 million more voters than in 2004) and attempt some explanation of this rise in turnout, such as:

- Barack Obama's candidacy and campaign (enthusing in particular the young and minority voters who have been most likely not to vote in the past) and the greater differences between the candidates.
- The serious issues that dominated the campaign (war and recession).
- Measures that have been taken to make it easier to vote, such as same day registration or early voting.

Excellent candidates may refer to the concept of 'differential abstention', explaining that turnout varies between different social groups (or that felons cannot vote in many states), and why this may be so. Also, reward analysis relating to the fact that turnout varies between kinds of elections and is lower in the mid-term and primary elections than in presidential ones, giving some explanation as to why. Accurate statistical evidence, rather than sweeping generalisations with little accuracy or plausibility, is important in a higher-level response.

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

- (07) Explain, using examples, the differences between sectional groups and cause groups in US politics. (10 marks)

In responding to this question, candidates must show their knowledge and understanding of the classification of pressure groups in US politics and the specific differences between these two types of organised groups, both of which are active in pressure group politics and lobbying. Reward candidates who define a pressure group before going on to explain the difference in aims and objectives of sectional and cause groups. It is essential that examples of both are given in order to achieve the higher marks in both AO1 and AO2.

Sectional groups are those groups whose aim is to protect and defend the specific interests of their members. Many examples can be given of such groups (which largely have an economic aim), such as:

- The AMA (American Medical Association) protects and defends the interests of American doctors.
- The ABA (American Bar Association) protects and defends the interests of American lawyers.
- The AFL/CIO (American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organisations) protects and defends the interests of American Trade unionists. Other sectional groups represent individual occupations, such as the teacher unions or the United Auto Workers union.
- The National Association of Manufacturers and the US Chamber of Commerce protect and defend the interests of US employers.

These groups are primarily involved in lobbying government on their economic and professional interests and are highly representative organisations. For example, most doctors belong to the AMA and their voice is highly organised on health issues that specifically affect their interests (but not on other issues such as farming or foreign policy).

Candidates must contrast the above groups with 'cause groups', which form in order to promote a particular cause, rather than defend a particular (usually economic) interest. As such, the membership of such groups is very different and more open-ended; anyone can join if they support the cause. Examples could include:

- the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth, which promote the cause of environmentalism
- Common Cause, a public interest group which promotes good government and lobbies on issues such as campaign finance reform
- the NRA, which promotes the cause of gun ownership (but also protects the interests of gun owners).

Excellent candidates at the highest level of response may argue that there is not a watertight distinction between the two types of groups and therefore indicate the difficulties of classifying some groups as they can be *both* sectional *and* promotional. For instance, the NAACP protects the interests of African Americans but also promotes the cause of diversity and civil rights for all. Reward this argument highly, especially when good examples are given.

- (08) Critically evaluate the methods used by US pressure groups to achieve their political aims. (30 marks)

The question clearly relates to pressure group methods by which thousands of different pressure groups try and carry out their political aims and objectives within the US political system, with its different branches and levels of government. There are many examples of these methods that candidates may select, and part of AO2 would be explaining why different pressure groups use different methods at different times. It is likely that the following would be the methods selected for analysis:

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

Because the question demands a 'critical evaluation' to gain high marks, candidates must present some critique of lobbying of the above institutions, such as the 'revolving door' of influence, the significance of groups in the K Street corridor gaining access to decision-making through financial donations (excellent candidates may refer to the Abramoff lobbying scandal in 2006) or the criticisms made of 'Iron Triangles' in the policy process. The latter is likely at the very highest level of response.

- Electoral activities. Candidates may analyse the methods of electoral funding of candidates through Political Action Committees and offer a critique of the 'buying' of political influence through this method, which advantages the well-financed pressure groups and can be used to gain access denied to other less-well-financed groups. Candidates may also offer a critical evaluation of negative campaigning through TV advertising against candidates, or the 'targeting' of elected representatives for defeat. Excellent responses may refer to the FEC v Citizens United Supreme Court decision in 2010 that lifted restrictions on corporate and union spending in support of, or opposition to, candidates.
- The Initiative process. The methods used by pressure groups to influence the outcome of direct democracy, such as initiatives and propositions, can be described and criticised: for example, the 'buying' of petition signatures, the dominance of pressure group financing of the campaigns (eg pressure group campaigns to defeat same-sex marriage initiatives).
- The use of grass roots lobbying, direct action and other 'outsider' forms of pressure group methods is likely to be analysed and criticised, such as demonstrations or some of the methods used by the more extreme and fanatical single-issue groups.

At the lower levels of response, candidates may simply write generically about US pressure groups and their activities or simply describe pressure group methods or why some groups are more successful than others. For higher-level marks, there must be a clear focus on the methods used by different pressure groups, with examples of different groups and why they use these methods. At the higher levels of response, candidates should **critically analyse** groups' lobbying and other activities used to gain access to and influence over policy decisions which



affect their numerous causes and interests. Examples and evidence of such methods are essential for the higher mark bands.

### ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE GRID

<b>A2 Assessment Objective</b>	<b>Marks allocated by Assessment Objective 10-mark question</b>	<b>Marks allocated by Assessment Objective 30-mark question</b>	<b>Total Marks by Assessment Objective</b>
<b>AO1</b>	4	12	16
<b>AO2</b>	4	12	16
<b>AO3</b>	2	6	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>

### Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)