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A-LEVEL

# Government and Politics

GOV3A The Politics of the USA

Mark scheme

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

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

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

## **CRITERIA FOR MARKING AS/A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

### **Introduction**

AQA's revised Government and Politics specification has been designed to be objectives-led in that questions are set which address the assessment objectives published in the specification. The assessment objectives for A Level and AS are the same, but the weightings are different at AS and A2. Details of the weightings are given in Section 4.2 of the specification.

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

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

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

There are no limits to the areas of knowledge that students may feel able bring to the discussion. Therefore the specification of requirements outlined in the mark schemes can only be indicative. Students are not expected to include all the material presented in order to access the full range of available marks. At the same time they may successfully include material from their particular studies which is not indicated in the scheme.

### **Using a levels-of-response mark scheme**

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

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

In making decisions away from the middle of the level, examiners should ask themselves questions relating to student attainment, including the quality of language. The more positive the answers, the higher should be the mark awarded. We want to avoid ‘bunching’ of marks.

Levels mark schemes can produce regression to the mean, which should be avoided. A student’s script should be considered by asking ‘Is it:

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

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

**A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 10 marks**

<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 (4 marks)</b>  The student demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student fully addresses the requirements of the question and provides developed and effective to comprehensive interpretation. The answer also provides clear to accurate evidence and, where appropriate, good to excellent examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 4 (4 marks)</b>  The student applies an excellent range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.</p>	<p><b>Levels 3–4 (2 marks)</b>  The student communicates clearly and effectively in a sustained and structured manner, using appropriate political vocabulary. There are few, if any, errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and the response should be legible. The answer has a clear sense of direction, is focused on the question and, where appropriate, has a conclusion which flows from the discussion.</p>
<p><b>Level 3 (3 marks)</b>  The student demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student clearly addresses the requirements of the question and provides sound interpretation and contextual awareness. The answer includes good examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (3 marks)</b>  The student applies a good range of developed concepts and uses appropriate political theory to construct a clear and cogent explanation or argument.</p>	
<p><b>Level 2 (2 marks)</b>  The student demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student makes a limited attempt to address the requirements of the question and provides little to partial, but reasonably effective, interpretation. Answers offer limited evidence and few, or inaccurate, examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 2 (2 marks)</b>  The student applies a limited range of concepts and makes limited use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.</p>	<p><b>Levels 1–2 (1 mark)</b>  The student communicates explanations or arguments with limited clarity and effectiveness, using limited political vocabulary. The answer may lack either a clear focus on the question or a sense of direction. There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and legibility may be a problem. A conclusion, where appropriate, may be offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion is modest or implicit.</p>
<p><b>Level 1 (1 mark)</b>  The student demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes. The student makes little attempt to address the requirements of the question and provides little interpretation. Answers offer little evidence and few, or inaccurate,</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1 mark)</b>  The student applies few concepts and makes little use of political theory or ideas in developing an explanation or argument.</p>	

**GENERIC MARK SCHEME for questions with a total of 10 marks (continued)**

<b>Level 1 (1 mark) (continued)</b> examples to illustrate points made.		
<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></p> <p>The student demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them.</p> <p>A synoptic approach is fully developed, drawing appropriately on knowledge, perspectives and examples from a wide range of studies in government and politics.</p> <p>The answer fully addresses the requirements of the question and demonstrates excellent contextual awareness.</p> <p>The answer includes excellent examples to illustrate points made. 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></p> <p>The student displays excellent awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is an excellent and sustained focus on the specific question asked. There is clear and full evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour, which displays a sophisticated awareness of differing viewpoints and recognition of issues.</p> <p>Appropriate parallels and connections are clearly identified, together with well-developed comparisons. A wide range of concepts is used and developed.</p>	<p><b>Level 4 (6 marks)</b></p> <p>The student communicates structured and sustained arguments, explanations and conclusions with clarity. Excellent use is made of political vocabulary to construct cogent and coherent arguments and explanations.</p> <p>The response should be legible, with few, if any, errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The answer has a clear sense of direction, culminating in a conclusion that flows from the preceding discussion.</p>
<p><b>Level 3 (7–9 marks)</b></p> <p>The student demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and the relationships between them.</p> <p>A synoptic approach is well developed using a range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained elsewhere in the</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (7–9 marks)</b></p> <p>The student displays sound awareness of the implications and demands of the question. There is a clear focus on the question. There is a sound evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour, which displays good</p>	<p><b>Level 3 (4–5 marks)</b></p> <p>The student communicates arguments, explanations and conclusions well. Good use is made of political vocabulary to construct clear arguments and explanations.</p> <p>The response should be legible but there may be occasional errors of spelling, punctuation</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>
<p><b>Level 3 (7–9 marks) (continued)</b> 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) (continued)</b> 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) (continued)</b> and grammar. The student produces an answer with a conclusion linked to the preceding discussion.</p>
<p><b>Level 2 (4–6 marks)</b> The student demonstrates outline knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and some awareness of the relationships between them. The answer makes a limited attempt to address the question and demonstrates contextual awareness covering part of the question. An attempt to develop a synoptic approach is made, using a limited range of knowledge, perspectives and examples gained more broadly in the study of government and politics. The answer includes a partial and reasonably effective attempt at interpretation or explanation with some examples to illustrate points made.</p>	<p><b>Level 2 (4–6 marks)</b> The student displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question, resulting in a restricted focus. There is a limited evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour which displays a partial awareness of differing viewpoints and issues. 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 (2–3 marks)</b> The student communicates arguments and conclusions adequately, with a limited use of political vocabulary. There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and legibility may be a problem. A conclusion is offered but its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p>
<p><b>Level 1 (1–3 marks)</b> The student demonstrates a slight and incomplete knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes and a limited awareness of the relationships between them.</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1–3 marks)</b> The student displays little awareness of the implications and demands of the question, and focus is lacking. Evaluation of</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. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar</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>
<p><b>Level 1 (1–3 marks) (continued)</b> A very limited attempt at synopticity is made, sometimes using superficial or inaccurate knowledge, perspectives and examples cited from elsewhere in their study of government and politics. There is little attempt to address the requirements of the question. There is only superficial awareness, if any, of the context of the question, with little interpretation and few, if any, examples often inaccurately reported or inappropriately used.</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1–3 marks) (continued)</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>Level 1 (1 mark) (continued)</b> may be intrusive and the response may not be legible. A conclusion, if present, is not adequately related to the preceding discussion.</p>
<p><b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.</p>	<p><b>0 marks</b> No relevant response.</p>	<p><b>0 marks</b> No relevant response</p>

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**Topic 1: The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy**

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 Explain the importance of recall elections in US politics.**[10 marks]**

Students need to demonstrate an understanding of what recall elections are. For high AO1 marks, students should give a clear definition and the circumstances in which recall elections are held in the USA.

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

- Recall elections are direct democratic devices.
- Recall elections are held as a result of recall petitions (which vary) from registered voters to remove an elected official from office between elections.
- Recall elections are used (very rarely) in **19 states only**, with no provision made at the federal level. Students should not be rewarded if they refer to recall of Members of Congress.

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

- Arguments concerning accountability and making politicians answer for possible corruption or incompetence between elections, thus giving more power and control to the electorate over elected representatives or officials.
- Some students may also discuss arguments concerning the possible undermining of elected representatives and responsible politicians through frivolous recall petitions, financed by their partisan opponents who failed to defeat them in a free and fair election. Recall petitions could also discourage the taking of bold but unpopular decisions.

To illustrate arguments, it can be expected that students will use the example of the successful recall of Democratic Governor Gray Davis in 2003 and the subsequent election won by Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. While not necessary for the highest marks some students may use evidence of recalls from 2013. Scott Walker the Republican governor of Wisconsin won a fiercely contested recall (the first governor to win a recall in US political history) – also in 2013 Colorado saw the successful recall of two State Senators; John Morse and Angela Giron, both lost recalls following their support of strict new gun control legislation. It is not necessary for the highest marks but some students note that recall elections have been proposed for the UK, although not yet acted upon – this argument should be rewarded.

**0 2** 'The national party conventions no longer have any significant roles or functions in the modern presidential nomination process.' Discuss.

**[10 marks]**

This question is asking students to assess the debate surrounding the role and functions of the national nominating conventions. It is necessary for high-level marks that students make reference to the argument that modern conventions (since the 1970s and 1980s) have seen a reduction in their formal roles whilst at the same time the so-called informal roles of the conventions have grown, therefore, it can be argued conventions do retain some significance. For AO1 marks, it is likely students will begin their responses by making reference to the role of the conventions in finishing the nomination process and that they act as the starting point for the national presidential campaign. For high AO1 marks students should refer to the historic formal role and functions of the conventions as significant, as they in theory decide the candidate, the vice-president, the party platform and elect the party's national committee. They may then contrast this with the counter-argument that today conventions are simply seen as 'rubber stamping' bodies and highly stage-managed 'political theatre'. To develop these themes students should reference the following themes:

- The role of the primary and caucus system since the McGovern-Fraser reforms have reduced the role of 'party bosses' in 'smoke-filled rooms' in terms of candidate selection. The party nominees are now known before the conventions, as a result the main function of the conventions today is to "crown" rather than select the candidates. It can be expected that students may well use evidence from 2008, 2012 and 2016 to illustrate this argument.

For high-level marks at both AO1 and AO2, students must analyse and explain why party conventions may now be described as having 'no longer any significant' roles and functions. It is likely higher level responses will refer to some or much of the following arguments:

- Conventions are the only time (once every four years) when the national party meets (rather than as 50 state parties) and is organised/controlled by the National Committees.
- At conventions the 'coronation' of the candidate takes place with the acceptance speech and keynote speech given to the party delegates and to the nation. The candidate and vice-president are showcased at the convention as part of a 'balanced ticket' to influence voters.
- The Platform (party principles and goals known as 'planks') is announced.
- Conventions can be the source of an electoral 'bounce' in the polls for candidates. To illustrate the 'bounce' that can be generated from a successful convention, students may reference the Democrats in 2008 or the loss of it as in the 1992 Republican convention, where the party was perceived as divided, or the failure to gain it as in the 2012 Republican convention. In 2016 both candidates enjoyed post-convention poll boosts, with Clinton appearing to benefit slightly more than Trump, however, students may note that the boost for Clinton did not result in a victory in the November election.
- Conventions can help to heal party divisions, especially after divisive primaries such as those between Obama and Hillary Clinton in 2008 or Santorum and Romney in 2012, and the projection of a united party image with the party uniting around its chosen candidate for the national campaign. Some well-prepared students may reference the 2016 conventions of both parties, contrasting the Democrats and Bernie Sanders public support for Clinton and Ted Cruz's lack of support for Trump.
- Conventions are important for "energising of the base" or core vote of the party and the enthusing of the party activists to organise the 'ground war' in the upcoming national campaign.

- A successful convention can help candidates reach out and appeal to undecided 'swing' voters. Some students may refer to the argument that is why parties often locate their conventions in key swing states to try and impact the votes here, e.g. the Democrats selecting North Carolina and the Republicans in Florida in 2012 or the Democrats choosing Pennsylvania and the Republicans Ohio in 2016.

Higher levels of response will, therefore, recognise that the conventions do retain some roles (informal) and significance, and that they remain an important 'ritual' and 'media event' ending the nomination process. Students should be rewarded when they use convincing evidence and examples of specific conventions to illustrate their response. At lower levels of response there will be little balanced debate, or any convincing evidence or examples on either side of the debate.

**Topic 2: Political Parties**

**0 3** Examine the extent to which the Democratic Party may be described as **both** fiscally **and** socially liberal.

**[10 marks]**

This question needs a clear understanding of, and explanation for, the ideological views within the Democratic Party. The question allows students to address the ideological *intra-party* divisions and factions within the Democratic Party. It is likely that students will use concepts such as ‘internal coalitions’ or ‘big tents’ in their responses.

For AO1 expect knowledge of the two terms with examples given of both fiscal and social liberalism. Fiscal liberals believe in and support:

- A more interventionist government role in regulating and managing the economy (see Obama’s bail-out of the car-industry).
- Higher taxes and increased Federal government spending.
- Support for social welfare programmes and health-care.

These views have been an important part of Democrat ideology since the New Deal, the era of LBJ and the Obama presidency.

Social liberals believe in and support:

- A pro-choice stance on abortion, single-sex marriage and wider equal rights programmes.

For the higher AO2 marks, students should recognise that the Democrat Party can be and is internally divided on these ideological views and that not all Democrats hold liberal views on these fundamental policy areas. Students are likely to discuss:

- Liberal Democrats on the left of the party such as Nancy Pelosi and Elizabeth Warren who hold liberal views on most social and fiscal policy positions. These Democrats represent more liberal states such as California or states and districts in New England.
- Conservative Democrats (often referred to as ‘Blue Dog Democrats’ or DINOS Democrats in name only – the use of such terms should be rewarded) – they tend to have both fiscally and socially conservative views such as low taxes and spending and anti-abortion or pro-gun views. These Democrats tend to represent more conservative states or districts.
- Centrist New Democrats, such as Hilary and Bill Clinton, who take a more moderate and pragmatic position on most policy issues and were found in the Democratic Leadership Council.

Higher level responses may refer also to Obama’s difficulties in holding the Democratic Party to an agreed line on important issues such as health care or the stimulus to illustrate the factions within the party.

**0 4** 'In the past the two main parties were organisationally weak and in ideological decline'. To what extent is this an accurate description of the Democratic and Republican parties today?

**[30 marks]**

This question presents students with a view of the two main US parties alleging two defining characteristics; that they were 'organisationally weak' and that they were 'in ideological decline'. The statement in the question is referring to what is known as the party decline and renewal thesis. It likely students will recognise the link to the ideas of David Broder and his arguments relating to party decline. It is up to students to argue the extent to which they think that the statement is an accurate description.

The question has two parts which must be addressed in the context of 'today'. The description of the two main US parties can be challenged by students. For the highest AO1 and AO2 level marks students could use several themes to demonstrate evidence of both ideological and organisational renewal. Students should be arguing that there are now growing policy differences, not similarities, between the parties. At the higher levels of response, expect reference to some analysis of greater ideological differences between the parties recently as the Republican Party has become much more ideologically conservative, since the 1980s and the Reagan presidency and continuing to the present day - this has meant the party has lost many of its more moderate members and voters. Similarly, the Democratic Party has become much more ideologically liberal as it has shed its southern wing of voters and representatives in the 1970s and with the election of Obama in 2008. Thus both parties have become ideologically more coherent and cohesive, evidence and examples of this would be expected at the higher levels of response.

'Organisationally weak' needs to be specifically addressed in the answer for high AO1 and AO2 marks, with explanations for this. Higher level responses will be related to the constitutional system of federalism and the separation of powers, which makes this characteristic inevitable in a large country of 50 states with 50 decentralised and separate party organisations, largely operating independently from the national party and its committee (RNC and DNC). Synoptic comparisons may be made (and should be rewarded) with the strong national party system in the UK and national party leaders/manifestos/discipline, etc.

Given the focus of the statement it is likely that students will first seek to discuss why parties were considered to be in serious decline and then evaluate if this is the current condition of parties. Students are likely to address some but not all of the following themes:

- 'Organisationally weak' - this has traditionally been the description of US parties (compared to their stronger, centralised UK counterparts, for example).
- Selection of candidates by primaries not parties/Campaign finance raised through PACs or individuals rather than parties.
- The weakness of national party organisation (with party organisation found more at the state level), the lack of an organised mass membership.
- Absence of national party manifestos and a single national leader.
- Weak Congressional party discipline.
- The parties' National Committees only become significant every four years at the time of the Nominating Conventions.

The word 'today' is a discriminator so students should introduce analysis and evidence relating to the 'renewal/resurgence' of US parties in recent times. Again some of the following

themes may be covered by responses but it is not expected that all will be:

- Growing influence of party over candidate selection/campaigns, timing and organisation of primaries.
- Growing party input into electoral finance and funding of candidates, eg 6 for 6 in 2006 and the role of the party campaign committees in tight Congressional races. This is also evidence of 'nationalised' campaigns such as in 2014 and the Republican success in the mid-terms.
- Strengthening party organisation through the role of the national committees (Dean and Brock reforms in the Democratic and Republican parties).
- Strengthening of party organisation and discipline in Congress, particularly since the Contract with America in 1994.
- Greater polarisation of parties and ideological coherence dating back to the 1980s and into the Obama presidency.
- The party decline theories have been exaggerated; all the presidents elected since the 1970s have been either Democrats or Republicans; virtually all members of Congress are either Democrats or Republicans; so too are the vast majority of state governors.

Students should seek to conclude their essays with a reasoned judgement as to how much party renewal has taken place. Higher level responses may argue that the parties have become more internally united on principles but remain organisationally weak at national level compared European parties. Weaker responses may fail to focus on the question and write generically on the parties, with little up to date or accurate evidence on the changes that have taken place in party organisation and ideology in recent years. Such responses should not move beyond Level 2.

**Topic 3: Voting Behaviour**

**0 5** Consider the reasons why some voters 'split their ticket' when voting in US elections.

**[10 marks]**

It is essential that students should begin their response by explaining clearly what split-ticket voting actually is. They must also be able to give some precise statistical evidence and supporting examples for higher AO1 marks, as well as the way that split-ticket voting has fluctuated at recent elections depending on the candidates and issues at the time. For example, the highest was in the 1980 and 1984 elections with 28% of voters splitting their ticket with 20% for the Republican President Reagan but for a Democrat to represent them in Congress. In 2008, 17% of voters split their ticket, including 9% 'Obama Republicans'. For higher AO2 marks students should explain the paradoxical nature of split-ticket voting as voters vote for two (or more) different parties on the same ballot paper on the same day. It can be expected that the best responses will be able to provide clear examples of states where split-ticket voting is common such as Montana.

When explaining 'reasons for' split-ticket voting students should cover, to a greater (Levels 3 and 4) or lesser (Levels 1 and 2) degree, the following analysis:

- The context of US elections which are conducted under a constitutional system of separated powers and federalism. It is these factors that allow voters to make complex choices on their single ballot paper for different offices at different levels of government.
- The concept of partisan de-alignment where a weakening of party attachments and habit voting is more likely to lead to split-ticket voting and voter volatility.
- The importance of single-issue voting and candidate-centred campaigning. Some voters may switch to voting for a different presidential candidate because of a likeability factor, or for competence reasons, yet continue to vote for their preferred party for ideological reasons. For example, Bush Democrats in 2004 or Obama Republicans in 2008. A very poor candidate such as Dole in 1996 may have led to high levels of split-ticket voting as a result.
- High congressional re-election rates because of numerous incumbency advantages may see voters returning their preferred member of Congress, yet voting differently for president or governor.
- 'Cognitive Madisonianism' may mean voters consciously voting for divided government because it would mean more effective checks and balances.
- Rational choice theory explains that voters may consciously vote for different things that will benefit them when voting. Those supporting third party presidential candidates at elections will have to choose an alternative party further down the ticket.

The best responses should argue that ticket splitting peaked in the early 1970s with more than 44 % of all congressional districts voting for one party for president and the other for Congress. Since the 1972 presidential election, however, the percentage of ticket-splitting districts has declined (the anomaly being the 2000 presidential election when ticket splitting rose to almost 20%). In 2012, just 26 members of Congress represented districts that the presidential nominee not of their party won. Therefore, as split ticket voting declines 'straight ticket voting' is on the increase as the two main parties continue to polarise, as 2016 further illustrates.

**0 6** 'Long term primacy factors rather than short term recency factors are the most important determinants of voting behaviour in the US'. Discuss.

**[30 marks]**

This question allows students to engage with the debate over whether US voting behaviour is more influenced by the long-term 'primacy' factors connected to the voters' social characteristics (socio-economic status, region, age, gender, religious affiliation or race/ethnicity) or whether short-term 'recency' factors, such as the different candidates standing for election or the political issues and events that are different at each election, are more important in influencing voting intentions.

At the higher levels of response, students must offer explanations for partisanship and partisan alignment, with supporting evidence from psephological studies of US voting behaviour.

- This would include the greater degree of voting support for the Democratic Party from lower socio-economic groups/females/racial and ethnic minorities/Catholics, Jews and secular voters/younger voters/urban voters in NE and coastal states (Blue America).
- This could be compared with the higher degree of voting support for the Republican Party from higher socio-economic groups/males/white voters/protestant and evangelical Christians/older voters/rural suburban voters in middle America and the south (Red America).

Reliable and valid explanations should be given for several of these links to gain higher AO1 and AO2 marks. Where this is absent, the mark is likely to be at Level 2 or below.

The question also requires analysis of the impact of candidates, issues and events on voting intentions, as each election is different and there are different influences on voters, possibly changing their vote.

- Examples and evidence of such influences would be expected as the results of elections are a combination of long-term and short-term factors impacting on voters: for example, 'It's the economy, stupid' in 1992 and 2008, or the 'national security' post-9/11 election of 2004, also dominated by the social issues of abortion and gay marriage ('wedge issues'), or the 'hope and change' message of Obama in 2008 after the economic crisis and bank bail-outs and the dominance of economic issues again in 2012.
- Students may also refer to the impact of different candidates and their characteristics on voting behaviours in recent elections, or events such as 9/11 and the war on terror in 2004 or Hurricane Sandy in 2012.
- Some students may refer to independent 'swing voters' as the voters who are most likely to be influenced by short-term factors and this should be rewarded. Expect psephological vocabulary and explanations and supporting statistical evidence at the higher levels of response but don't reward over-generalised and more simplistic assertions at the bottom of Level 2 and below.

For high marks, a fully supported conclusion should be reached about 'the most important determinants'. Some students may argue that it is social factors, while others that it is candidates and issues that are most important, although most students are likely to argue that it is a combination of the two kinds of factors at work in each election, giving supporting evidence from voting patterns from recent elections.

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

#### Topic 4: Pressure Groups

**0 7** Explain the significance of 'iron triangles' in US politics.

**[10 marks]**

It is essential that students should begin their response by explaining clearly what the term 'iron triangle' means. They should identify an iron triangle as a three-sided mutually beneficial relationship between members of a congressional committee, a federal department or agency and a pressure group. Higher level responses should seek to explain the 'iron' part of the triangle and refer to the 'insider' access to governmental decision-making gained by some special-interest lobbies in Washington.

For both high AO1 and AO2 marks, students must identify specific examples of iron triangles, such as Eisenhower's so-called military-industrial complex or those found in agriculture or veterans affairs, using specific examples of the three groupings involved and examples of the kinds of decisions made and the influence of the pressure groups in those policy areas.

For high AO2 marks a critique of iron triangles is necessary as this relates to the 'significance' part of the question. Students can be expected to discuss the criticisms levelled at iron triangles, including:

- The relationship between key members of a pressure group, a federal department or agency and a congressional committee can subvert the democratic process. Through lobbying pressure groups can change policy and influence the law-making process. The result can be government policies, contracts and expenditure that favours the interest groups at the expense of the population at large (the armed services committees and the defence contractors/House and Senate committees on Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture officials, and lobbyists for the American Farm Bureau Federation). High-level responses may develop this point further with reference to how relationships can be reinforced through the process of the 'revolving-door', when officials and ex-members of Congress go to work for lobbying firms and interest groups.
- High level students are also likely to discuss ideas of 'agency capture' and 'clientelism'. Robert Singh describes the notion that pressure groups are clients paying for a service. Pressure groups expect something in return for their campaign contributions to a candidate. Some students may use the example of the US Chamber of Commerce lobbying Congress to resist tighter banking regulations following the Wall Street Crisis. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act 2010 sought to place greater regulations on the banking industry. However, two years later, financial groups like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs held 356 meetings with federal agencies. As a result by 2014, federal agencies had still not written nearly half of the 400 regulations the law required.

Weaker responses may offer only a simple and not entirely accurate description of iron triangles.

**0 8** Evaluate the view that pressure groups are necessary for the functioning of pluralist democracy in the USA.

**[30 marks]**

This question invites students to discuss theoretical approaches to understanding pressure group activity in the US political system and whether pressure group activity benefits democracy. It is necessary for Level 3 or 4 responses to offer a clear understanding of the term pluralist democracy. At this level students are likely to explain the term, using Dahl or Truman's works to refer to the positive advantages of pressure-group activity in dispersing power and representing causes and interests. Writers such as Dahl argue that pressure group activity in the US is best understood by the Pluralist theory and that pressure groups themselves perform vital functions which help to ensure that democracy works in the US. It is characterised by a positive view of pressure groups with governments responding to the legitimate activities of groups speaking on behalf of citizens. The elitist argument takes a critical view of pressure group activity claiming there is no level pressure group playing field and power is concentrated in the hands of (often economic/corporate) interest groups who can influence members of Congress and the Executive branch. The elite theory is advanced by writers such as C. Wright Mills (in his book *The Power Elite*).

Weaker levels of response may simply present a list of the advantages and disadvantages of pressure-group activity and focus on a description of the latter such as methods used. It is therefore, necessary for high marks for students to present a response that illustrates how pressure groups do help the operation of US democracy. Responses are likely to focus on some or all of the following:

- Their representative functions, representing the many diverse views and minority opinions in the USA. Examples could be given such as the AARP representing the elderly, the NAACP representing black America, the pro-life and pro-choice lobbies on abortion, etc.
- The more specific representation of allowing for wider participation/involvement in the political system making up for the deficiencies of the party system (2-party dominance) and electoral system which works against minor parties.
- Their representation of views to decision-makers between elections.
- Their expertise and specialist knowledge aiding policy-makers.
- They educate and inform the public on issues and raise important issues on the political agenda.
- Students may also argue that concerns about pressure group activity can be exaggerated as most pressure groups are not powerful and their influence may be limited due to the existence of countervailing groups which provide some degree of 'pluralist balance'.

For AO2 marks students may argue while the US appears to be a pluralist democracy because of the access points created by the constitution and the existence of thousands of pressure groups, the reality is different as the elite theorists argue. Higher level responses are likely to argue that power is **NOT** dispersed in the US and some pressure groups are much more powerful than others (eg corporate lobbies) and that power is concentrated rather than dispersed. To illustrate such arguments and to secure higher level AO2 marks it is likely that students will refer to some or all of the following:

- The power of some pressure groups or 'special interests' to influence public policy decisions far in excess of their numbers or representative nature and often against what is perceived to be the 'public interest'. Examples could include the power of the

gun lobby (NRA) in blocking gun law reform during the Obama presidency, the Israeli lobby (AIPAC) in Middle East foreign policy or the corporate and business lobbies in stopping the regulation of Wall Street.

- Iron triangles
- The revolving door syndrome
- K-street and professional lobbyists
- Electioneering, PACs and Super-PACs. The insider access gained by some groups rather than others (ie the lack of 'pluralist balance') through campaign contributions, now easier after the Supreme Court's 'Citizens United' case in 2010.
- The argument that the pressure group world is highly unequal and not all interests are represented within it or have their interests listened to or defended.
- The activities of some single-issue groups in sometimes illegal or violent forms of direct action.

At a lower level of response, it is likely that students will present an over-generalised response on pressure group activity in the USA without attempting to address the specific question or giving clear examples and evidence. For students to achieve Level 4, a considered conclusion is required as to which side of the debate is most convincing, backed up with supporting evidence and examples used throughout the answer from actual pressure-group activity in the USA.