

A-level
POLITICS
7152/2

Paper 2 Government and politics of the USA and comparative politics:

Mark scheme

June 2021

Version: 1.0 Final



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

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.

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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Levels of response mark scheme for 9-mark questions

0 1 Explain and analyse three principles of the US constitution. **[9 marks]**

0 2 Explain and analyse three policy differences between the Republican and Democrat parties. **[9 marks]**

0 3 Explain and analyse three ways that cultural theory could be used to study pressure groups in the US and UK. **[9 marks]**

Target AO1: 6 marks, AO2: 3 marks

Level	Marks	Descriptors
3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed knowledge of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes is demonstrated and appropriate political vocabulary is used (AO1) thorough explanations and appropriate selection of accurate supporting examples demonstrates detailed understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes (AO1) analysis of three clear points will be structured, clearly focused on the question and confidently developed in to a coherent answer (AO2).
2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally sound knowledge of political concepts, institutions and processes is demonstrated and generally appropriate political vocabulary is used (AO1) some development of explanations and generally appropriate selection of supporting examples demonstrates generally accurate understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, though further detail may be required in places and some inaccuracies may be present (AO1) analysis will be developed in most places, though some points may be descriptive or in need of further development. Answers will, for the most part, be clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material (AO2). <p>Students who only make two relevant points will be limited to this level.</p>
1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited knowledge of political concepts, institutions and processes is demonstrated and little or no appropriate political vocabulary is used (AO1) limited development of explanations and selection of supporting examples demonstrates limited understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with further detail required and inaccuracies present throughout (AO1) analysis will take the form of description for the most part. Coherence and structure will be limited (AO2). <p>Students who only make one relevant point will be limited to this level.</p>
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nothing worthy of credit.

0	1
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 Explain and analyse three principles of the US constitution.**[9 marks]****Indicative content**

In their explanations and analysis, students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of the fact that the US has a codified Constitution that was written in 1787 and that the framers were influenced by enlightenment philosophers such as Locke and Montesquieu. It provides a framework of government within a single written document and outlines the relationship between the different branches of government and establishes the relationship between the federal government, the states and citizens
- explanation and analysis of the separation of powers (by roles and personnel); that the legislative, executive and judicial powers of the three branches of government are found in Articles I, II and III. Students are likely to argue that was done in order to prevent the concentration of power and subsequent tyranny
- explanation and analysis of the concept of limited government and the system of checks and balances (as argued for by Madison in Philadelphia stating 'ambition will be used to counteract ambition') eg the executive can propose nominations for federal and judicial appointments but the Senate has the power of 'advice and consent'. Examples could include Trump's nominations for cabinet posts or judicial positions such as Judges Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh
- explanation and analysis of the concept of federalism and the fact that the constitution sets out how power is shared between the national government and the states. This relationship can be found in Article IV and the 10th amendment
- explanation and analysis of entrenched positive rights for citizens via the Bill of Rights, added in 1791, and subsequent amendments such as the 14th that guarantees equal protection.

Students are required to consider only three principles of the US Constitution. If a student exceeds this number reward only the best three. However, some may include relevant points not listed above and these should be credited. If a student gives only one or two examples they will receive a maximum of three and six marks respectively.

0	2
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Explain and analyse three policy differences between the Republican and Democrat parties.

[9 marks]

Indicative content

In their explanations and analysis, students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of the ideological and policy gulf between the two parties because the Republican party is on the conservative right and the Democrat party is on the liberal left of the US political spectrum. Students may argue it is no longer possible to argue that they are like 'two empty bottles' or 'only separated by abortion' and each party has experienced growing internal ideological cohesion
- explanation and analysis of the Republican Party's increasingly conservative stance on a range of economic, social and foreign policy issues. For example the party's support for low taxes (to encourage incentives); low public spending (to encourage private initiative); balanced budgets (to avoid deficits) and small government. Students are likely to argue that the Republican Party is also socially conservative and focus on the party's belief in and support for traditional family values, its stance against abortion and same-sex marriage. They may also reference its support for the second amendment and the rights of gun owners. Students could argue that these views became more dominant within the party after Reagan (and the influence of the Christian Right in the 1980s) and have been reinforced by the election of Trump
- explanation and analysis of the Democrat Party's increasingly liberal stance on a range of fiscal, social and foreign policy issues. For example the party's focus on the positive and activist role of government ('Big government') to bring about social and economic changes such as the support for welfare and the more equal distribution of wealth. Hence the support for a publicly funded healthcare system, higher taxes and increased Federal government spending. There may also be focus on the party's belief in and support for a pro-choice stance on abortion, single-sex marriage, gun control and wider equal rights programmes. Students are likely to argue these views have been an important part of Democrat ideology since the New Deal, the era of LBJ and the Obama presidency.

Students are required to consider only three policy differences between the Republican and Democrat parties. If a student exceeds this number reward only the best three. However, some may include relevant points not listed above and these should be credited. If a student gives only one or two examples they will receive a maximum of three and six marks respectively.

0	3
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Explain and analyse three ways that cultural theory could be used to study pressure groups in the US and UK.

[9 marks]

Indicative content

In their explanations and analysis, students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of cultural theory and how it can be applied to understanding pressure groups in the US and UK. Cultural theory refers to the differing histories of both countries and how this has affected the 'tone' of political debate and activity. This approach focuses on groups within a political system such as pressure groups. A cultural approach suggests that the shared ideas, beliefs and values of these groups often determine the actions of individuals. Students may argue a cultural approach can be linked to the historical background of the political cultures of the UK and US. Students may contrast the UK's continuing commitment to the monarchy with the American republican revolutionary spirit and rejection of over-powering government, self-help and acquired wealth against continuing aristocracy and inheritance of wealth and power.
- explanation and analysis of the fact that while in both countries pressure groups have the same fundamental aims (to influence public policy making at all levels of government in the interests of their cause, and to protect/promote the interests of their members) they operate in very different constitutional systems. These constitutional arrangements have produced different political cultures. These constitutional arrangements and the political cultures of both countries can be understood by using cultural theory.
- explanation and analysis of pressure groups as a means of participation of citizens in politics between elections and during elections. A cultural approach suggests that the shared ideas, beliefs and values of these groups often determine the actions of individuals. In the US because of guaranteed constitutional rights, particularly First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, the right to assembly and the right to 'petition the government for redress of grievances' political participation via pressure groups is very common. American citizens like to think of their society as open (pluralist) and that pressure groups are more accepted and not the 'serpents that strangle' or impede government as they are often seen in the UK. In the UK there is a weaker culture of participation through pressure groups but students may refer to the relationship that exists between trade unions and the Labour Party.
- explanation and analysis of the status of groups and the methods selected and evidence of impact on politics, elections and public policy making. In both countries, groups that struggle to gain attention for their policies (usually because there is little ideological compatibility with any politicians) resort to demonstrations or direct action, rather than lobbying such as BLM and Extinction Rebellion. Wealthy groups, such as corporations, will use political donations, whereas resource-poor groups will rely on other methods.

Students are required to consider only three aspects of how cultural theory could be used to study pressure groups in the US and UK. If a student exceeds this number reward only the best three. However, some may include relevant points not listed above and these should be credited. If a student gives only one or two examples they will receive a maximum of three and six marks respectively.

Levels of response mark scheme for 25-mark extract-based essay

0	4
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Analyse, evaluate and compare the different arguments in the above extracts regarding the extent to which the US presidency has become an imperial executive.

[25 marks]**Target AO1: 5 marks, AO2: 10 marks, AO3: 10 marks**

Level	Marks	Descriptors
5	21–25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion (AO1) • analysis of the extract is balanced and confidently developed. • evaluation of the above leads to well substantiated conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3) • relevant perspectives and/or the status of the extract are successfully evaluated in the process of constructing arguments (AO3) • the answer is well organised, coherent and has a sustained analytical focus on the question (AO2).
4	16–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion, though further detail may be required in places (AO1) • analysis of the extract is balanced and developed, though some elements of the analysis could be expanded and/or developed further • evaluation of the above leads to conclusions that show some substantiation and are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3) • relevant perspectives and/or the status of the extract are evaluated in constructing arguments, although in some places there could be further development of the evaluation (AO3) • the answer is well organised, analytical in style and is focused on the question as set.
3	11–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generally sound knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though inaccuracies will be present (AO1) • analytical points relating to the extract are made and developed in places, showing some balance, though some points are descriptive rather than analytical (AO2) • evaluation of the above leads to conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion, but that lack substantiation (AO3) • relevant perspectives and/or the status of the extract are commented on in constructing arguments, though evaluation is lacking depth (AO3) • the answer is organised, occasionally analytical and focused on the question as set.
2	6–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though these contain inaccuracies and irrelevant material (AO1) • analysis of the extract takes the form of description in most places, with some attempt at balance, though many points are unsupported assertions (AO2) • some attempt to draw conclusions is made, but these lack depth and clear development from the preceding discussion (AO3).

1	1–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with inaccuracies and irrelevant material present throughout (AO1) • analysis of the extract takes the form of description and assertion, with little or no attempt made at balance (AO2) • conclusions, when offered, are asserted and have an implicit relationship to the preceding discussion (AO3) • little or no evaluation of relevant perspectives and the status of the extract is present (AO3) • the answer shows little organisation and does not address the question (AO2).
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nothing worthy of credit.

0 4

Analyse, evaluate and compare the different arguments in the above extracts regarding the extent to which the US presidency has become an imperial executive.

[25 marks]

Indicative content

In the analysis and evaluation of the Supreme Court and the extent to which it is a politicised institution, as made in the extracts, students should be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- analysis and evaluation of the debate about the extent to which presidents have expanded their powers beyond those defined by the Constitution and that the US executive in “imperial” in character. Students should be able to identify the origin of the term from the 1973 book ‘The Imperial Presidency’ by Arthur Schlesinger.
- analysis and evaluation of the “extra-constitutional powers” the presidency has acquired beyond those “enumerated” in the Constitution as referred to in the *New Republic* extract. Students are likely to examine Articles 1 and 2 of the Constitution.
- analysis and evaluation of executive-congressional relations and why in theory the president is “coequal to Congress” but that in reality it struggles to check the presidency as referred to in the *New Republic* extract. Students may refer to how the use of executive orders and executive agreements by presidents are a means to circumvent Congress.
- analysis and evaluation that the framers of the Constitution made a mistake by “investing so much power in the hands of one person” as referred to in the *New Republic* extract. Some students may refer to the unitary executive theory which was supported by Bush’s Vice President Dick Cheney.
- analysis and evaluation of presidential power post 9/11 and the why “war almost always leads Congress to defer to the president” as referred to in the *New Republic* extract. For example, after 9/11, Congress passed the Authorisation for Use of Military Force (AUMF) resolution to give the president broader powers to combat terrorism.
- analysis and evaluation of how presidential power in relation to foreign policy has been checked by Congress, examples could include the War Powers Act of 1973 and the Foreign Assistance Act 1974. Students may also refer to constitutional checks and balances e.g. the negotiation of treaties requires the advice and consent of the Senate.
- analysis and evaluation of how “both the judicial and legislative branches are placing a check on the president” as referred to in the *Financial Times* extract. For example, U.S. appeals court rulings in 2018, 2019 and 2020 against Trump’s attempt to withhold funds from ‘sanctuary’ cities. Students may argue that presidents must also rely on their ability to persuade to achieve their political goals and are therefore not “imperial”. For example, Trump was unable to persuade House Republicans to support the American Health Care Act in March 2017; Congress can override a presidential veto eg Obama vetoed the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act in

September 2016, and the Supreme Court prevents presidents from going beyond their enumerated and implied powers e.g. US v Nixon 1974.

- analysis and evaluation of how the ‘House of Representatives will muster new kind of resistance in 2019’ as referred to in the *Financial Times* extract with reference the impeachment of Trump in 2020. Students may refer to impeachment as the ultimate constitutional check on presidential power and noting that Trump was not removed from office because the Republicans hold a majority in the Senate. They may argue this is evidence of partisanship preventing constitutional checks and balances from working. Alternatively some students may comment on the dates of the extracts in relation to the reality of the Trump administration in its first two years and how mid-term election results can act as a check on presidential power, as has been the case since January 2019 when the Democrats took control of the House of Representatives.
- The analysis and evaluation of any political information is affected by;
 - who the author is - their position or role;
 - the type of publication - newspaper, academic journal, electronic media;
 - the overt or implicit purpose of the author - to inform, persuade or influence;
 - the relevance of the extract to a political issue or concern, and how representative the extract is of a particular viewpoint. Students will be expected to address some of these factors in their analysis and evaluation of the extracts.
- Students may note *The New Republic* offers a liberal progressive perspective and that the tone of the extract is critical of Donald Trump and the concept of an imperial presidency. The second extract is taken from the *Financial Times* which is UK based but an international daily newspaper which focuses on politics, business and economic current affairs. While both extracts are opinion pieces they can be contrasted; *The New Republic* article was written in August 2017 almost eight months after Trump had become president but before his eventual impeachment in 2019/20 and the *Financial Times* article appeared after the 2018 November mid-term elections. Both offer differing views as to the never-ending debate about presidential power and how effective are constitutional checks and balances.
- comparisons can be made between the pessimistic perspectives in the first extract with the emphasis on the 1973 imperial presidency arguments still being relevant today and the second extract which suggests the constitutional and political checks on presidential power still broadly work despite evidence of stress on the system. The concerns made in *The New Republic* suggests that anxieties about expanding presidential power are not just a matter of historical debate (although, Hamilton noted in Federalist paper 8, “it is of the nature of war to increase the executive at the expense of the legislative authority”) and that since the 1980s most presidents have sought to stretch the authority of the executive thus echoing the 1973 concerns of Schlesinger. On the other hand, the *Financial Times* extract offers a cautious defence of constitutional checks and balances. Students may make synoptic points here and conclude that the power of the president ebbs and flows due to many circumstances, particularly regarding domestic policy and that arguments about an imperial presidency can be overstated as the *Financial Times* suggests.

Students are required to analyse and evaluate the arguments presented in the extracts. Students who identify which arguments support which of the different views regarding extent to which the US presidency has become an imperial executive may be awarded marks for analysis (AO2). To gain marks for evaluation (AO3) students must assess the relative strengths of the differing arguments and whether arguments regarding an imperial executive are more or less convincing. The analysis and evaluation must clearly focus on the arguments presented in the extracts.

Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks; equally, some may introduce further relevant points and these should be credited. The conclusion should clearly focus on the issue in question. In their evaluation, it does not matter what view students reach. However, their position must be supported by their arguments and examples.

Students who fail to focus their discussion on the arguments in the extracts, however complete their answer may otherwise be, cannot achieve above Level 2.

Levels of response mark scheme for 25-mark extract-based essay

0 5 'The scrutiny powers of the British Parliament are less effective than those of the US Congress.' Analyse and evaluate this statement. **[25 marks]**

0 6 'A key characteristic of the US and UK is that both have strong and durable two-party systems.' Analyse and evaluate this statement. **[25 marks]**

Target AO1: 5 marks, AO2: 10 marks, AO3: 10 marks

Level	Marks	Descriptors
5	21–25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion (AO1) • analysis is balanced and confidently developed (AO2) • synoptic links are well explained, are focussed on the question and fully supported with relevant and developed examples (AO2) • evaluation of the above leads to well substantiated conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3) • relevant perspectives are successfully evaluated in the process of constructing arguments (AO3) • the answer is well organised, coherent and has a sustained analytical focus on the question (AO2).
4	16–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion, though further detail may be required in places (AO1) • analysis is balanced/developed, though some elements of the analysis could be expanded and/or developed further • synoptic links are relevant to the questions as set, and supported with examples (AO2) • evaluation of the above leads to conclusions that show some substantiation and consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3) • relevant perspectives are evaluated in the process of constructing arguments, although in some places there could be further development of the evaluation (AO3) • the answer is well organised, analytical in style and is focused on the question as set.
3	11–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generally sound knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though inaccuracies will be present (AO1) • analytical points are made and developed in places, showing some balance, though some points are descriptive rather than analytical • synoptic links will be made, may be supported by examples, though explanation will lack depth (AO2) • evaluation of the above leads to conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion, but that lack substantiation (AO3) • relevant perspectives are commented on in the process of constructing arguments, though evaluation is lacking depth (AO3)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the answer is organised, occasionally analytical and focused on the question as set.
2	6–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though these contain inaccuracies and irrelevant material (AO1) analysis takes the form of description in most places, with some attempt at balance, though many points are unsupported assertions (AO2) synoptic links tend to be limited and undeveloped (AO2) some attempt to draw conclusions is made, but these lack depth and clear development from the preceding discussion (AO3) relevant perspectives are identified, though evaluation will be superficial (AO3) the answer shows some organisation and makes some attempt to address the question (AO2).
1	1–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with inaccuracies and irrelevant material present throughout (AO1) analysis takes the form of description and assertion, with little or no attempt made at balance (AO2) few if any synoptic links are offered (AO2) conclusions, when offered, are asserted and have an implicit relationship to the preceding discussion (AO3) little or no evaluation of relevant perspectives is present (AO3) the answer shows little organisation and does not address the question (AO2).
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nothing worthy of credit.

0 | 5

'The scrutiny powers of the British Parliament are less effective than those of the US Congress.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]

Indicative content

In the analysis and evaluation of the statement students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- analysis and evaluation of the statement in the question and the various methods of scrutiny available to both legislatures. Students should recognise that scrutiny is an important function of all legislatures to oversee and check the work of the executive. Scrutiny can take many forms, some that are similar such as committees and others such as PMQs that are confined to the UK. It is likely that students will argue effective scrutiny is important in ensuring 'responsible and representative government' in both the US and UK
- analysis and evaluation that Parliament and Congress are bi-cameral legislatures and that all four chambers (the House of Commons, House of Lords, the House of Representatives and the Senate) have scrutiny responsibilities and processes. Students may argue that the House of Commons is more significant in terms of scrutiny in the UK while in the US both chambers are significant but they are likely to argue that the Senate is particularly important due to 'advice and consent' roles
- analysis and evaluation of the constitutional context which each legislature operates. In the US, the Congress is powerful because of powers contained in Article 1 of the Constitution arguably making Congress the most powerful legislature in the world with legislative power and oversight power over the executive branch and the power of purse (which extends its power into foreign policy). Party discipline is weak and the executive has no power which would allow it to control Congress because of the separation of powers and the checks and balances laid down by the Constitution. In contrast the UK system with its fusion of legislative and executive power, its strongly disciplined parties and often large parliamentary majorities, frequently (but not always) results in executive dominance (and parliamentary weakness), with very few checks and balances and almost total control by the government of the political and legislative agenda. Overall, students may argue that scrutiny of the executive is weak in the UK but strong in the US
- analysis and evaluation of the US Congress – students are likely to argue that oversight is a key function and it encompasses the legislation process and scrutiny of the executive branch (government departments, federal agencies as well as the actions of the president). Students may focus on some of the following to illustrate how effective Congress can be; examples include the blocking of executive appointments (the Senate's special power of advice) gridlocked legislation and the power of Congressional committees to block, pigeon-hole and veto Presidential legislation and budgets. Alternatively, students may wish to argue the most effective form of congressional scrutiny is performed via committees: standing, select, conference and/or the House Rule committee. The most significant committees are standing committees such as the Senate's Armed Services committee because they have dual functions; the first involves reviewing legislation and the second is oversight of the executive. These committees can be compared to UK equivalents such as select and public bill committees which are separate from one another and the fact that public bill committees are dominated by the executive
- analysis and evaluation of the UK Parliament – students may focus on some of the following: departmental/ministerial questions and PMQs, select committees (including the Liaison Committee, Backbench Business Committee and Petitions Committee), public bill committees, Opposition Days' ('supply days'), adjournment debates, urgent questions and Early Day Motions. Students may also refer to the House of Lords. Alternatively, students may focus on how effective parliamentary questions are; PMQs can be characterised as a just 'Punch and Judy politics' but students may note US presidents are not subject to such oversight nor are cabinet secretaries or heads of federal agencies. There has in recent years been an increase in the number of urgent questions granted to backbench MPs, such as the one asked by David Lammy

in April 2018 regarding the Windrush scandal. The question to Home Secretary Amber Rudd could be used as evidence of effective scrutiny in the Commons chamber as it helped to highlight how many of the Windrush generation have been deported, detained and denied NHS care

- analysis and evaluation of the argument that the US Congress is not always the most effective and that Parliament is weaker in terms of scrutiny powers. Students may refer to arguments relating to divided or united government in the US, if a president is in their last two years in office or how popular a president is; all can impact on the quality of Congressional oversight. Equally, in the UK if a government lacks a majority and is dependent on the support of a minor party as was the case between 2017–19, parliamentary scrutiny can be more effective as the experience of the May government and its attempts to get the EU withdrawal bill passed illustrate.

Synoptic links may be found in areas such as the powers and resources of committees in the UK in comparison to their US counterparts, the executive, bicameralism in the UK compared to the USA, the fusion of powers in comparison to the separation of powers in the US. Any response that does not include synoptic points cannot achieve above Level 4.

Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks; equally, some may introduce further relevant points and these should be credited. The conclusion should clearly focus on the issue in question. In their evaluation, it does not matter what view students reach. However, their position must be supported by their arguments and examples.

0 6

'A key characteristic of the US and UK is that both have strong and durable two-party systems.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]

Indicative content

In the analysis and evaluation of the statement students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of the standard view that both countries and particularly the US, the political party systems are dominated by two parties, the Democrats and Republicans, Labour and Conservative and thus both are examples of a classic two-party systems. A two-party system is where 80% or more of votes and seats are won by two-parties. Therefore students may argue that because a duopoly between the Democrat and Republican parties has existed in the US since the nineteenth century and that there has broadly been a similar context in the UK between the Labour and Conservative parties since 1918 both do have strong and durable two-party systems.
- explanation and analysis of how the electoral systems used in both countries has led to a two-party system. It is likely students will focus on how the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system used for congressional elections and parliamentary elections favours the two main parties. It is also possible this will be reinforced for the US by reference to the operation of the Electoral College for the election of the president, which again favours the republicans and democrats. The use of FPTP means that in both the UK and US, there are two dominant parties, with only politicians from the two main parties heading the executive in recent years.
- analysis and evaluation of the US – students could refer to other reasons for the strength of the two party system including; the depth of partisan alignment with the two main parties both historically and today; the financial and campaigning advantages enjoyed by the two parties in terms of contributions from PACs and Super PACs; the impact of the two parties being 'internal coalitions' or big tent parties covering all parts of the political spectrum from liberal left to conservative right thus leaving little 'ideological space' for other parties to gain votes and the electoral disadvantages faced by third parties and independent candidates, eg difficult ballot access or the 'appropriation' of their policies by the two main parties.
- analysis and evaluation of the argument that while the US does have at Congressional level a strong two party system there is evidence that challenges the statement in the question. Students for example may refer to the argument that the US, in reality, does not have a two-party system but rather a 100-party system because the two main parties are highly de-centralised and organised under state law, so are different in each of the 50 states both ideologically and organisationally, eg the Democratic Party in California is very different from the Democratic Party in Alabama, and the Republican Party in Texas is very different from the Republican Party in Maine. It can also be argued that there is one-party dominance in several states, such as the Republican Party in much of the mid-west, and increasingly the Democratic Party dominates New England.
- analysis and evaluation of the UK – by contrast that the two-party system in the UK has been characterised by a pendulum effect, with power typically swinging between the two. At any one point, only one party usually holds significant power in Westminster and the fact that the 2010–15 Conservative Lib-Dem coalition was rare. However, students should recognise the fact that the UK has a stronger third-party presence than the US, and is arguably the UK's two party system is not as strong as the one found in the US. At general elections the two main UK parties fall well below the near-100 per cent of seats held by Democrats and Republicans in the US. Students may wish to make synoptic links here to voting behaviour and voter dealignment and or the rise of nationalist politics and ultimately argue the UK is moving towards a multi-party system. Students may make further synoptic points here to devolution and the use of proportional electoral systems. There are strong regional variations in the UK. Third parties are the dominant force in some regions, such as the SNP in Scotland (Scotland has experienced Lab–Lib Dem

coalitions as well as majority and minority SNP governments) and Plaid Cymru in Wales, which often has the second-highest number of seats in the Welsh Assembly.

Synoptic links may be made in areas such as party systems, electoral systems, federalism and devolution and alignment. Any response that does not include synoptic points cannot achieve above Level 4.

Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks; equally, some may introduce further relevant points and these should be credited. The conclusion should clearly focus on the issue in question. In their evaluation, it does not matter what view students reach. However, their position must be supported by their arguments and examples.