



A-Level Politics

7152/2 Comparative Politics: Government and Politics of
the USA

Report on the examination

Version: 1.0
June 2025

Further copies of this report are available from aqa.org.uk

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General comments

In general, students were able to access the entirety of the question paper, however, a minority of students did not attempt at least one of the section A questions. High level 2 and level 3 response for the 9-mark questions were based on the 'three factors, three paragraphs' model. Less successful responses tended to be descriptive. Question 03 (the comparative theory question) proved not to be as accessible this year. Those who scored well across the paper managed their time effectively and were aware of the assessment objectives. Most students did not seem to experience any significant time management issues, and it was common for some students to answer either section B or C questions before the 9-mark questions.

Question 04 (the extract question) proved to be more accessible this year compared to previous years, however, there were some students found the question a challenge. It is important to stress that the extracts should be seen as a 'springboard' for students to evaluate and analyse. Level 2 responses were common because students did little more than identify an element in the extracts and describe or restate the point. Some students appeared not to be fully aware of the assessment criteria in terms of using the extracts and provenance. The best responses used a 'pair and compare' approach, taking quotes from each extract and using this as the basis of analysis.

Section C has an optional element and question 05 (constitutions) proved to be more popular than 06 (pressure groups). The best responses focused clearly on the questions set and were based on well-structured and coherent answers with up-to-date information, evidence, and examples. As section C essays are comparative students must engage with the US and UK when answering these questions, otherwise level 3 and above marks are unlikely to be awarded. When answering the essay question, as with previous years, the most successful students were able to offer a sophisticated answer in terms of synopticity.

Section A

Question 01

Some students did not attempt this question or left it until the end of the exam which resulted in incomplete responses. There were a surprising number of students who did not seem to know the difference between informal and formal powers. This suggests selective revision and centres are reminded of the need to teach **all of** the specification. Responses that focused on formal powers, such as the presidential pardon or the nomination of supreme court judges were not rewarded. A successful approach was to discuss three of the following powers, executive orders (including those issued by Trump since January 2025), the power to persuade, the president as de facto party leader and a president on the international stage as leader of the free world. Such responses were awarded level 3 marks. Level 2 responses were common, often being descriptive with little to no analysis, while some responses did not provide three clear informal powers.

Question 02

This question proved not to be accessible for some students, as it produced a significant range of responses in terms of quality. As with question 01, some students did not attempt this question or left it until the end of the exam which resulted in incomplete responses.

The most common reason students were not rewarded high level 2 and level 3 marks was because students wrote very generalised responses which focused on policy positions adapted by the Democrat party (such as being pro civil rights and for gun control) rather than focusing on internal party differences. There was a tendency to describe policy stances as factions or to focus on sections of the US electorate who vote Democrat. Some students also used historic and not current factions such as the now defunct Dixiecrats.

Level 2 responses often used generic terms such as moderate, conservative and liberal rather than naming actual factions such as the Progressive caucus or the Blue Dogs. More successful responses were able to identify three factions, their policy ideas and some of the leading figures associated with that faction. These answers also discussed the relative strength of each faction within the Democrat party. However, some responses used inaccurate Republican factions such as the Tuesday group and the Freedom Caucus. Students should be encouraged to engage in wider reading and research to be aware of developments in US politics including intra-party differences within the main political parties.

Question 03

As in previous years, some students left question 03 until the end of the exam or did not attempt to answer it at all. As with previous series, students who gave a secure definition of the comparative theories, were given credit for it. As stated in previous reports, students do not need to name, or list academics associated with the comparative theories in their responses. Students who did not refer to both the US and UK when answering the comparative theory question did not access the full range of marks available.

Some responses were able to give a clear definition of rational theory but then did not apply that to their analysis of the actions and behaviour of US presidents and UK prime ministers, which limited the credit they received. Many students inadvertently described structural differences in the legislatures rather than focusing on executive actions as outlined in the question. There were also many students described the relationship/actions of members of the legislatures to their respective executives.

High level 2 and 3 responses typically gave a clear definition of rational theory and argued that heads of executives will act out of self-interest to maximise political goals. Such responses used contextual examples such as the Cameron led coalition government or Theresa May's minority government and when US presidents have faced a divided Congress. As in previous years, less successful responses struggled to provide balance and tended to focus on one country and ignore the other.

Section B

Question 04

This question elicited a wide range of responses, and students found the extracts accessible and were able to find arguments within them. This then meant most students found something of relevance to write about when answering the question. However, some responses tended to be more descriptive than analytical. Most students were able to identify some of the themes in the extracts such descriptive representation, the legislative process and how unproductive Congress has become, the use of the filibuster, the role of committees and the negative impact of growing partisanship.

As stated earlier it is important to stress that the extracts should be a 'springboard' for students to evaluate and analyse. It is important to remind teachers and students that question 04 is not a traditional essay style question. Level 1 and level 2 responses tended to be more descriptive than analytical. Common issues were that the extracts were largely re-written with little or no reference to wider own knowledge regarding the debate over whether Congress is the broken branch of US government. It is also important to advise students and teachers there is no requirement for a comparative focus when answering question 04.

Students who were awarded level 4 and 5 marks were able to apply their own knowledge to evaluate the assertions of the extracts regarding the extent to which Congress is the broken. Level 3 and above responses did understand the need to discuss the provenance of the extracts, and the vast majority understood that they needed to use the extracts as prompts for further discussion, which hasn't always been the case in previous years.

Section C

Question 05

This was the most popular essay question. Generally, there was a sound understanding of the US and UK constitutions with well deployed political vocabulary. Most students were able to give a balanced response in terms of US and UK content, but less successful responses dealt with the UK and US in separate paragraphs, whilst the more successful responses focused on

an aspect of the constitutions such how rights are protected and compared them within paragraphs.

There were a number of very good answers that had depth and detail as well as being well structured and analytical. A general line of argument followed was that the US Constitution is outdated and in need of reform, while the UK has elements that need reform. Some responses focused on the role of the monarchy in the UK and House of Lords as evidence that the UK constitution is outdated. The most successful answers paired and compared aspects of both constitutions such as comparing the constitutional amendment process in the US with the process in the UK.

There were some good synoptic links to the New Labour constitutional reforms to illustrate how flexible the UK constitution can be. Some responses also examined the Electoral College in the US and the use of FPTP in the UK. Most responses knew and discussed the key points of contrasts between UK and US constitutions and some of the benefits and drawbacks of entrenchment vs flexibility. The higher-level responses displayed high levels of synopticity such as focusing on the role played by pressure groups in protecting constitutional rights and landmark judicial judgements in both countries.

Question 06

This question was the less popular of the two optional questions, and it produced the clearest distinctions between high- and low-level responses. The main problem was the omission to answer the question as set; some students did not get into level 3 and above because of very generalised responses about pressure group methods.

A majority of students who answered this question agreed with the statement in the question, that US pressure groups are more effective in promoting and protecting civil rights than their UK counterparts. Most responses were able to discuss the constitutional context in which US and UK pressure groups operate in, such as focusing on access points. As in previous years, many students tended to be stronger on the US, using groups such as NRA, NAACP and the ACLU to illustrate arguments particularly when discussing the US Supreme Court.

Some students struggled to give examples of pressure groups influencing civil rights in the UK. Instead, their examples tended to focus on the BMA, Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, without referencing civil rights. Some responses focused on campaigns and groups relating to gun rights, rights of ethnic minorities, reproductive rights and religious rights. The most successful responses discussed the differing context of why pressure groups have had different levels of success in the US and UK such using the issue of gun control and citing the overwhelming parliamentary support for the Snowdrop campaign in the UK vs the ability of the NRA to lobby Republican members of Congress.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.