



General Certificate of Education

**Government and Politics
5151/6151**

**GOV1 Electoral Systems and Voting
Behaviour**

Mark Scheme

2009 examination – January series

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the candidates' responses to questions and that every examiner understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for the standardisation meeting each examiner analyses a number of candidates' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed at the meeting and legislated for. If, after this meeting, examiners encounter unusual answers which have not been discussed at the meeting they are required to refer these to the Principal Examiner.

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

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Dr Michael Cresswell, Director General.

CRITERIA FOR MARKING AS/A2 GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Introduction

AQA's revised Government and Politics specification has been designed to be objectives-led in that questions are set which address the assessment objectives published in the specification. The assessment objectives for A Level and AS are the same, but the weightings are different at AS and A2. Details of the weightings are given in paragraphs 7.2 and 8.4 of the specification.

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

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

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

Using a levels of response mark scheme

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

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

In making decisions away from the middle of the Level, examiners should ask themselves questions relating to candidate attainment, including the quality of language. The more positive the answers, the higher should be the mark awarded. We want to avoid "bunching" of marks. Levels mark schemes can produce regression to the mean, which should be avoided. A candidate's script should be considered by asking 'Is it:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

| | Knowledge and Understanding: Recall, Select & Deploy | Skills: Analysis & Evaluation | Communication |
|--|---|---|---|
| | A01 | A02 | A03 |
| | <p>Level 2 (4–6 marks) The candidate demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and some awareness of the relationship between them. He/she makes a limited attempt to address the requirements of the question.</p> <p>The candidate may demonstrate contextual awareness covering part of the question, and may produce limited evidence and/or few examples.</p> | <p>Level 2 (3–4 marks) The candidate offers a simplistic evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour and begins to construct arguments which contain basic explanation.</p> <p>The candidate shows some awareness of differing viewpoints. There is recognition of basic parallels or limited comparisons.</p> | <p>Level 2 (2 marks) The candidate attempts to develop an argument using basic political vocabulary. Where a conclusion is offered, its relationship to the preceding discussion may be modest or implicit.</p> |
| | <p>Level 1 (1–3 marks) The candidate demonstrates slight and/or incomplete knowledge and understanding of political concepts/theories/institutions and processes and limited awareness of the relationship between them.</p> <p>The candidate makes a very limited attempt to address the requirements of the question. Only superficial awareness of the context of the question is evident and the few examples cited are often inaccurately reported or inappropriately used.</p> | <p>Level 1 (1–2 marks) The candidate makes a partial attempt to evaluate political institutions, processes and behaviour. Arguments offered are superficial or simplistic. There is very limited awareness of parallels or comparisons.</p> | <p>Level 1 (1 mark) The answer relies upon narrative which is not fully coherent and which is expressed without using political vocabulary. A conclusion is either not offered or it is not related to the preceding material.</p> |

1

Total for this question: 30 marks

(a) Explain the term *issue voting* used in the extract.

(8 marks)

The stimulus refers to primacy and recency explanations of voting behaviour, with issue voting being associated with the latter approach. Strong responses will refer to the differing and changing salience of issues in elections or explain the term through setting out the 'supermarket' notion of partisan choice. This may be contrasted with other explanations or illuminated with examples. Other responses will simply describe the idea that issues play a critical role in determining the voting decision.

(b) 'The level of turnout is always a major issue in British elections.' Discuss.

(22 marks)

Candidates are provided with some stimulus to tackle this question if they so wish in the text, which sets out the fundamental differences in explanations of voting behaviour since the 1960s but within the political context of communication and apathy/turnout. Candidates might focus on wider changes exploring why increasing apathy and declining turnout appears to characterise the contemporary electorate. They may, for example, mention the decline in trade unionism, class solidarity, and partisan loyalty compared with the increase in levels of popular education, rise of the mass media, decline of deference (even 'bowling alone' and declining social capital which is appearing in more and more textbooks). For these candidates, such themes would provide the context and/or explanation of the main focus on the question of increasing apathy/declining turnout. Others might focus on the problems of falling or low turnout on issues such as legitimacy, or explore the differential turnouts of elections held at various levels of government. They might, for example, argue that the electorate is geared to turning out more in elections where their vote counts. The key discriminator in this question is the attempt to bring the discussion together in making an evaluation of the changing nature of the study of politics/political behaviour. There may be some narrative concerning the impact of the war in Iraq, the differing generational outlook on politics, the changing patterns of participation, etc which qualifies conclusions drawn. The set question is deliberately bold and stronger responses may ask 'for whom', and construct their evaluations accordingly (for politicians? for democracy?). Weaker responses are likely to be stronger on AO1 with some, for example, knowledge and understanding of the determinants of voting behaviour and reasons for engagement/apathy than on the analysis and evaluation of AO2.

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

(a) Explain the term *political attitudes* used in the extract.

(8 marks)

Acceptable definitions include those that relate to the political nature of ideology, opinions, or values. Some responses may be further triggered by the stimulus and elaborate on family values as an example. There may be a contrast drawn between so-called male and female political attitudes towards war/peace, conflict/cooperation, economy/welfare, etc. Weaker responses are likely to present political attitudes in terms of partisan outlooks or choice.

(b) Assess the relative impact of gender, age and class on voting behaviour in recent elections.

(22 marks)

Candidates are provided with some relevant information concerning the gender gap in the stimulus and requested to assess relative impact with age and class. Some responses might include precise statistics on the variables, and should be rewarded for so doing, but this is not crucial for a Level 4 answer. Rather, the quality of argument will take precedence in most of the strongest responses with the relationship between age and Conservative support (65+ for Conservative lead over Labour) and the consequences of lower turnout amongst the young compared with the 'grey' electorate. The complexities of dealignment and class voting will also be addressed in terms of its impact relative to gender. Some candidates might address the issue of 'whole voters' and argue, for example, that young women are much more likely to support Labour than older women. The strongest responses will explore reasons for their conclusions other than voting statistics and identify social changes such as declining deference, declining influence of primacy factors, feminist consciousness, and other factors included in the changing political culture. They might use or refer to an over-arching concept such as political socialisation. Some might discuss the dynamic nature of these influences, referred to in the stimulus, and conclude that the pattern of influence that prevails currently might not be detectable in future voting behaviour. Weaker responses will treat the variables separately, provide few if any links between them, and possibly ignore one factor at the expense of another.

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

(a) Explain the phrase *seats held on a minority vote* used in the extract. (8 marks)

Candidates will define the phrase in terms of meaning that the winning candidate or party will be returned with less than 50% of the popular vote. The brief analysis may be applied to constituency or national level, and examples of systems such as first-past-the-post may be cited. Examples of voting systems which preclude the possibility of candidates winning on minority votes may also be referred to in the explanation. There may also be references to proportional or majoritarian systems. Examples might be provided, including hypothetical figures to illustrate the workings of plurality, possibly alongside other systems.

(b) 'British experience has shown that first-past-the-post results in a two-party system and proportional representation in multi-party systems.' Discuss. (22 marks)

Strong responses are likely to qualify the set question quote by observing that more than one electoral system operates in Britain, with references to elections to the devolved institutions, the European Parliament, Scottish local government, etc. Weak responses are likely to rehearse the pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses, of first-past-the-post and proportional representation in 'pre-prepared package' format. Such responses may be rewarded for relevant knowledge and understanding but are unlikely to win substantial merit for analysis, evaluation, and comparison. The set question provides the strongest responses with an opportunity to challenge the principal assumptions and arguments of the stimulus, reflecting the particularly controversial nature of this part of the specification. Is the outcome of British general elections necessarily a two-party system? What are the distinctions and parallels with the proportional representation of the elections to the devolved institutions and the European Parliament? There is considerable scope for AO2 differentiation with strong responses raising questions in which the points are as important, if not more so, than the answers. Some responses are likely to establish what suits Westminster government and politics (strong government, absence of coalitions, constituency representation, etc) and measure this against what suits devolved (possibly EU Parliament) institutions' needs (representation of minorities, 'new politics' involving partnership, etc).

4

Total for this question: 30 marks

(a) Explain the term *threshold* as used in the extract.

(8 marks)

This may be portrayed as a 'safety device' to ensure the representativeness of the result. In 1979 at least 40 per cent of the electorate, not just voters, had to vote 'yes' before the new assemblies would be set up. Some responses may incorrectly argue that the 40% figure relates to those who actually voted, as opposed to the electorate as a whole, but this should receive some credit. Some might compare 1979 and its thresholds with the 1997 result in Wales where, without a threshold, 25 per cent support from the electorate resulted in the establishment of the Welsh Assembly. Low turnouts might be discussed in the context of thresholds. The term may also be discussed in the wider electoral context of votes necessary to gain representation.

(b) 'Referendums strengthen the democratic process.' Discuss.

(22 marks)

This is not a simple pros and cons argument concerning referendums, although various pro and con arguments are likely to appear in the context of addressing the set question. In other words, this question may be vulnerable to the 'pre-packaged' answer which scores some marks on AO1 but typically considerably fewer on AO2. Responses might compare the differing type of opportunities offered by referendums and how they augment the democratic process. Does the referendum ballot enhance the election vote and increase the degree of representation, or does one undermine the other? Is the referendum ballot more specific concerning issues than the voted-for representative who makes his or her own mind up on issues? The nature of the referendum in terms of direct versus representational democracy. How far is turnout and/or the existence of thresholds a crucial factor in answering the set question? Some responses may develop themes in the stimulus and explore, for example, the oversimplification of the yes/no decision or the controlling of information as variables concerning the authentic representation of electoral opinion. The strongest responses will provide relevant examples to illustrate and support their arguments, and this may provide differentiation and sophistication to the conclusions drawn.