



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
GOVERNMENT & POLITICS – UNIT 4
1160U40-1**

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

GCE A LEVEL GOVERNMENT & POLITICS
UNIT 4 – GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF THE USA
SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

Marking guidance for examiners

Summary of assessment objectives for Unit 4

The questions in Section A assess both AO1 and AO2. The questions in Section B assess both AO1 and AO3. The question in Section C assesses all three assessment objectives. The assessment objectives focus on the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant institutions, processes, political concepts, theories and issues (AO1); the ability to interpret and apply political information to identify and explain relevant similarities, differences, and connections (AO2), and the ability to analyse and evaluate the areas of government and politics studied to construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions (AO3).

The structure of the mark scheme

The mark scheme for each question has two parts:

- an assessment grid advising bands and associated marks that should be allocated to responses which demonstrate the characteristics needed in AO1, AO2 and AO3.
- advice outlining indicative content which can be used to assess the quality of the specific response. The content is not prescriptive, and candidates are not expected to mention all the material referred to. Examiners should seek to credit any further admissible evidence offered by the candidates.

Deciding on the mark awarded within a band

- The first stage for an examiner is to use both the indicative content and the assessment grid to decide the overall band.
- The second stage is to decide how firmly the characteristics expected for that band are displayed.
- Thirdly, a final mark for the question can then be awarded.

Organisation and communication

This issue should have bearing if the standard of organisation and communication is inconsistent with the descriptor for the band in which the answer falls. In this situation, examiners may decide not to award the highest mark in the band.

Level Descriptors

Using 'best fit', decide first which set of level descriptors best describes the overall quality of the answer. The following grid should inform your decision as to which band the answer belongs:

Stamps and annotations used for GCE Government and Politics

Stamp	Annotation	Meaning/use
	Application	<u>Application</u> of political knowledge. Used for AO2
	Correct	Where the comment is correct and/or demonstrates understanding of the factual and/or political material expressed
	Development	Where the argument being presented has gone beyond assertion and utilises supporting material. Used for AO3
	Incorrect	Where the comment is incorrect and/or misunderstands the factual and/or political material expressed.
	Narrative	Valid information is deployed ineffectively – it does not answer the set question
	Not relevant	Invalid information is deployed – it is irrelevant to the set question
	Question mark	The information presented is unclear or vague and/or it is difficult to follow the logic used
	Supported judgement	Notes a clear and supported judgement. Also used for effective summative judgement. Used for AO3
	Underline – Green	Green underline AO1 (knowledge and understanding). Use vertical line for larger areas.
	Underline – Blue	Blue underline AO2 (similarities, differences and connections). Use vertical line for larger areas.
	Underline – Yellow	Yellow underline AO3 (analysis and evaluation). Use vertical line for larger areas.
	Comment box	Using mark scheme terminology provide a brief summative comment for the final mark awarded for each question

	AO1	AO2	AO3
Thorough	• Aware of a wide range of detailed and accurate knowledge. • Demonstrates fully developed understanding that shows relevance to the demands of the question. • Evidence/examples are well chosen. • Precision in the use of terminology.	• Knowledge and understanding are consistently applied to the context of the question. • Is able to form a clear, developed and convincing interpretation of evidence that is fully accurate. • Is able to fully identify and explain similarities, differences, and connections where relevant.	• Analysis and evaluation skills are used in a consistently appropriate and effective way. • An effective and balanced argument is constructed. • Detailed and substantiated evaluation that offers secure judgements leading to rational conclusions.
Reasonable	• Has a range of detailed and accurate knowledge. • Demonstrates well developed understanding that is relevant to the demands of the question. • Evidence/examples are appropriate. • Generally precise in the use of terminology.	• Knowledge and understanding are mainly applied to the context of the question. • Is able to form a clear and developed interpretation of evidence that is mostly accurate. • Is partially able to identify and explain similarities, differences, and connections where relevant.	• Analysis and evaluation skills are mostly used in a suitable way and with a good level of competence and precision. • An accurate and balanced argument is constructed. • Detailed evaluation that offers generally secure judgements, with some link between rational conclusions and evidence.
Adequate	• Shows some accurate knowledge. • Demonstrates partial understanding that is relevant to the demands of the question. • Evidence/examples are not always relevant. • Some use of appropriate terminology.	• Knowledge and understanding are partially applied to the context of the question. • Is able to form a sound interpretation of evidence that shows some accuracy. • Makes some attempt to identify and explain similarities, differences, and connections where relevant.	• Analysis and evaluation skills are used in a suitable way with a sound level of competence but may lack precision. • An imbalanced argument is constructed. • Sound evaluation that offers generalised judgements and conclusions, with limited use of evidence.
Limited	• Limited knowledge with some relevance to the topic or question. • Little or no development seen. • Evidence/examples are not made relevant. • Very little or no use of terminology.	• Knowledge and understanding are applied in a weak manner to the context of the question. • Can only form a simple interpretation of evidence, if at all, with very limited accuracy. • Makes weak attempt to identify and explain similarities, differences, and connections where relevant.	• Analysis and evaluation skills are used with limited competence. • Unsupported evaluation that offers simple or no conclusions.

Section A Mark bands for Question 1 and Question 2

Band	Marks	AO1	Marks	AO2
4	4	• Thorough knowledge and understanding of the concepts raised in the set question. • Evidence/examples used are well-chosen. • Depth and range to material used. • Effective use of terminology.	10–12	• Thorough application of relevant political knowledge. • Thorough interpretation of political information. • Thorough explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.
3	3	• Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the concepts raised in the set question. • Evidence/examples used are appropriate. • Depth and range to material used, but not in equal measure. • Good use of terminology.	7–9	• Reasonable application of relevant political knowledge. • Reasonable interpretation of political information • Reasonable explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.
2	2	• Adequate knowledge and understanding of the concepts raised in the set question. • Evidence/examples used are not always relevant. • Depth or range to material used. • Some appropriate use of terminology.	4–6	• Adequate application of relevant political knowledge. • Adequate interpretation of political information • Adequate explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.
1	1	• Limited knowledge and understanding of the concepts raised in the set question. • Evidence/examples used are not made relevant. • Very little use of terminology.	1–3	• Limited application of relevant political knowledge. • Limited interpretation of political information • Limited explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.
	0	Response not creditworthy or not attempted.		

01 Explain the impact of the committee system on the work of the US Congress. [16]

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to interpret and apply their knowledge of committee system and explain its connection to the work of the US Congress. In demonstrating this, candidates are required to give an answer that is focused on the impact of the committee system on the work of the US Congress.

Responses may include, but are not limited to the following points:

- The committees have a significant influence on the legislative process. Standing committees decide which bills to 'hear' and can choose or neglect a range of bills (pigeon-holing).
- Committees can conduct investigations into a range of issues that fall under their remit. Such investigations allow them to subpoena evidence and witnesses to testify before the committee.
- Senate committees are responsible for conducting hearings into executive appointments, for example the Senate Judiciary Committee conducts hearings into the presidential nomination for the Supreme Court.
- There are some committees that are profoundly influential in the House of Representatives such as the House Rules Committee and the Ways and Means Committee.
- Committee chairs have a central role within the committee system and the political nature of the system.

02 Explain the influence of social media on US elections. [16]

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to interpret and apply their knowledge of social media and explain its connection to US elections. In demonstrating this, candidates are required to give an answer that is focused on the influence of social media on US elections.

Responses may include, but are not limited to the following points:

- The polarising impact of social media on US elections and the manner in which it creates an echo chamber that reinforces the political ideas of voters.
- Social media platforms give candidates the opportunity to use a relatively low-cost way to increase their profile.
- The ability of social media to enable direct access to candidates allows voters to get to know candidates and communicate directly with them.
- Candidates are obliged to spend significant amounts of money on advertising on social media platforms.
- The threat of misinformation on social media is potentially destabilising in the functioning of a healthy democracy.

Section B
Mark bands for Question 3, Question 4 and Question 5

Band	Marks	AO1	Marks	AO3
4	7–8	- Thorough knowledge and understanding of the issue raised in the set question. - Evidence/examples used are well-chosen. - Depth and range to material used. - Effective use of terminology.	13–16	- Thorough analysis and evaluation of the relevant issues. - Thorough discussion with well-developed and balanced arguments. - Structure is logical. - An appropriate conclusion is reached based on evidence presented.
3	5–6	- Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the issue raised in the set question. - Evidence/examples used are appropriate. - Depth and range to material used, but not in equal measure. - Good use of terminology.	9–12	- Reasonable analysis and evaluation of the relevant issues. Reasonable discussion with well-developed and balanced arguments. - Structure is mostly logical. - A reasonable conclusion is reached based on evidence presented.
2	3–4	- Adequate knowledge and understanding of the issue raised in the set question. - Evidence/examples used are not always relevant. - Depth or range to material used. - Some appropriate use of terminology.	5–8	- Adequate analysis and evaluation of the relevant issues. - Adequate discussion with well-developed and balanced arguments. - Or Reasonable discussion with only one side of the argument. - Structure is adequate. - A basic conclusion is reached.
1	1–2	- Limited knowledge and understanding of the issue raised in the set question. - Evidence/examples used are not made relevant. - Very little use of terminology.	1–4	- Limited analysis and evaluation of the relevant issues. - Limited discussion. - Answer lacks structure. - No conclusion.
	0	Response not creditworthy or not attempted.		

03 “Race and ethnicity are key determinants of voting behaviour in US elections.”
Discuss. [24]

In discussing voting behaviour in US elections, candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to analyse the significance of race and ethnicity, gauging if they are key determinants in that voting behaviour. Candidates will construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions. In demonstrating this, candidates are required to give an answer that is focused on whether race and ethnicity are key determinants in US voting behaviour.

Responses may include, but are not limited to the following points:

For:

- Consistent support of African Americans for the Democratic Party: 87% supported Biden in 2020 and an estimated 83% supported Harris in 2024.
- The Hispanic / Latino vote traditionally breaks for the Democrats, with 65% for Biden in 2020 and, in 2024, an estimated 56% support for Harris. However, it may be noted that this is not a wholly unified voting bloc.
- The increasing importance of the Hispanic/Latino vote as the fastest growing racial group in the US, and Hispanic/Latino voters were projected to be 14.7% of all eligible voters in November 2024, a significant increase from 7.4% in 2000.
- The Hispanic vote is young and influential in key battleground states such as Arizona, Florida and Nevada. The changing nature of the American population is potentially transforming traditional regional voting blocs in US elections.
- Asian voters have tended to support the Democratic Party with 61% supporting Biden in 2020; however, there are indications that Asian support is drifting to the right, with only an estimated 54% voting for Kamala Harris in 2024.

Against:

- Issues influence the way in which racial groups vote, for example with the Hispanic/Latino vote, those from Cuba tend to support Republicans due to anti-communist ideas, while those from Mexico and Puerto Rico are influenced heavily by immigration and tend to support the Democrats.
- Socio-economic status is fundamental and explains voting behaviour in US elections. Economic issues (Clinton, 1992: “It’s the economy, stupid”) are key to understanding the voting behaviour of all racial and ethnic groups.
- Candidates and the election campaign have an influence on voting behaviour in US elections, for example, the “October surprise”.
- There is also the crucial role of incumbency in US elections, re-election rates in the House are consistently over 90%.

04 “‘Imperial Presidency’ is not relevant when considering US presidential power today.” Discuss. [24]

In discussing US presidential power today candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to analyse the significance of the term “Imperial Presidency”. Candidates will construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions. In demonstrating this, candidates are required to give an answer that is focused on whether “Imperial Presidency” is not relevant when considering US presidential power today.

Responses may include, but are not limited to the following points:

For:

- The President is restrained by constitutional checks and balances; Congress has a range of effective measures to limit the Presidency, for example overriding vetoes and confirming appointments.
- In an era of divided government, the presidency is more imperilled as, during his first presidency, the House looked to exercise its constitutional powers of impeachment on Trump twice.
- The Supreme Court have provided a range of decisions that limit the powers of the US president, for example Obama’s ability to make recess appointments, Trump’s assertion of executive privilege over the release of documents relating to 6 January.

Arguments:

- The US President has a range of powers that are outside constitutional control. These include the increasing use of executive orders, executive agreements and signing statements.
- In foreign policy, the US president can evade effective Congressional oversight: for example, President Obama’s justification for bombing Libya, stating that the War Powers Act did not restrict limited acts.
- The significance of the Executive Office of the President as a Presidential resource independent of Cabinet.
- In the context of unified government, when one party controls both Congress and the Presidency, scrutiny is limited. Consequently, the President enjoys greater freedom from constitutional restrictions.

05 “The death penalty does not violate the civil rights and liberties of US citizens.”
Discuss. [24]

In discussing the civil rights and liberties of US citizens candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to analyse the significance of the death penalty. Candidates will construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions. In demonstrating this, candidates are required to give an answer that is focused on whether the death penalty violates the civil rights and liberties of US citizens.

Responses may include, but are not limited to the following points:

For:

- The landmark decision of Gregg v Georgia (1976) stated that the death penalty was constitutional.
- The Supreme Court has made appropriate restrictions to the use of the death penalty in decisions such as Atkins v Virginia (2002) and Roper v Simmons (2005) which effectively limit the use of the death penalty on certain groups.
- There are necessary and effective measures in place to prevent racial bias in the use of the death penalty.
- States have the individual agency to decide on their use of the death penalty.
- The federal government, under the instruction of Attorney General William Barr, began to use the death penalty again in 2020 after a 17-year hiatus.

Against:

- The argument put forward by Justice Marshall that the use of the death penalty was in all circumstances a cruel and unusual punishment, a violation of human dignity as expressed in Furman v Georgia 1972.
- The racial bias inherent in the use of the death penalty in the US in modern times as relating to civil rights and liberties.
- Arguments relating to the length of time some individuals are on death row, for example the case of Richard Glossip.
- Democrats introduced the Federal Death Penalty Abolition Act in 2021 with the intention of abolishing the use of the death penalty by the federal government.

Section C Mark bands for Question 6

Band	Marks	AO1	Marks	AO2	Marks	AO3
4	10–12	- Thorough knowledge and understanding of the relevant concepts. - Evidence/examples used are well-chosen. - Depth and range to material used. - Effective use of terminology.	11–14	- Thorough application of political knowledge to the relevant concepts. - Thorough interpretation of political information. - Thorough explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.	11–14	- Thorough analysis and evaluation of the relevant concepts. - Thorough discussion with well-developed and balanced arguments. - Structure is logical. - An appropriate conclusion is reached based on evidence presented.
3	7–9	- Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the relevant concepts. - Evidence/examples used are appropriate. - Depth and range to material used, but not in equal measure. - Good use of terminology.	7–10	- Reasonable application of political knowledge to the relevant concepts. - Reasonable interpretation of political information. - Reasonable explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.	7–10	- Reasonable analysis and evaluation of the relevant concepts. - Reasonable discussion with well-developed and balanced arguments. - Structure is mostly logical. - A reasonable conclusion is reached based on evidence presented.
2	4–6	- Adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant concepts. - Evidence/examples used are not always relevant. - Depth or range to material used. - Some appropriate use of terminology.	4–6	- Adequate application of political knowledge to the relevant concepts. - Adequate interpretation of political information. - Adequate explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.	4–6	- Adequate analysis and evaluation of the relevant concepts. - Adequate discussion with well-developed and balanced arguments. Or Reasonable discussion with only one side of the argument. - Structure is adequate. - A basic conclusion is reached.
1	1–3	- Limited knowledge and understanding of the relevant concepts. - Evidence/examples used are not made relevant. - Very little use of terminology.	1–3	- Limited analysis and evaluation of the relevant concepts. - Limited interpretation of political information. - Limited explanation of relevant similarities, differences and connections.	1–3	- Limited analysis and evaluation of the impact of Freedom. - Limited discussion. - Answer lacks structure. - No conclusion.
	0	Response not creditworthy or not attempted.				

In discussing the US political system today, candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to analyse its efficacy. Candidates will construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions. In demonstrating this, candidates are required to give an answer that is focused on how effective the US political system is today.

Responses may include, but are not limited to the following points:

- An evaluation of how much the system of separation of powers and checks and balances leads to an effective political system.
- An evaluation of the balance of power between federal and state power and how effectively this distribution of powers functions within the US today.
- An assessment of the civil rights and liberties of people in the US today to gauge how well the political system is functioning.
- An assessment of the individual branches of government in terms of how effectively they are functioning both individually and collectively.
- An evaluation of whether the media is supporting or undermining the effective functioning of the US political system; for example, the increased polarisation and spread of misinformation.
- The role of money and how it influences the functioning of the US political system; for example, the growing emergence of super PACs.
- Political parties and their contribution to the effective functioning of the US political system; discussions around how effectively the two-party system serves the US population.
- An evaluation of how effectively the electoral process functions in today's US; caucuses, primaries, the electoral college.