

GCE Government and Politics

OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Government and Politics H095

OCR Advanced GCE in Government and Politics H495

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specification

Contents

1	About these Qualifications	4
1.1	The Two-Unit AS	4
1.2	The Four-Unit Advanced GCE	5
1.3	Qualification Titles and Levels	6
1.4	Aims	6
1.5	Prior Learning/Attainment	6
2	Summary of Content	7
2.1	AS Units	7
2.2	A2 Units	8
3	Unit Content	10
3.1	AS Unit F851: <i>Contemporary Politics of the UK</i>	10
3.2	AS Unit F852: <i>Contemporary Government of the UK</i>	12
3.3	A2 Unit F853: <i>Contemporary US Government and Politics</i>	14
3.4	A2 Unit F854: <i>Political Ideas and Concepts</i>	16
3.5	A2 Unit F855: <i>US Government and Politics</i>	18
3.6	A2 Unit F856: <i>Political Ideas and Concepts in Practice</i>	20
4	Schemes of Assessment	22
4.1	AS GCE Scheme of Assessment	22
4.2	Advanced GCE Scheme of Assessment	23
4.3	Unit Order	24
4.4	Unit Options (at AS/A2)	24
4.5	Synoptic Assessment (GCE)	24
4.6	Assessment Availability	24
4.7	Assessment Objectives	25
4.8	Quality of Written Communication	26
4.9	Levels of Assessment in Question Papers	26
5	Technical Information	27
5.1	Making Unit Entries	27
5.2	Making Qualification Entries	27
5.3	Grading	27
5.4	Result Enquiries and Appeals	28
5.5	Shelf-Life of Units	29
5.6	Unit and Qualification Re-sits	29
5.7	Guided Learning Hours	29
5.8	Code of Practice/Subject Criteria/Common Criteria Requirements	29
5.9	Arrangements for Candidates with Particular Requirements	29
5.10	Prohibited Qualifications and Classification Code	30

6	Other Specification Issues	31
6.1	Overlap with other Qualifications	31
6.2	Progression from these Qualifications	31
6.3	Key Skills Mapping	31
6.4	Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social, Legislative, Economic and Cultural Issues	32
6.5	Sustainable Development, Health and Safety Considerations and European Developments	32
6.6	Avoidance of Bias	32
6.7	Language	32
6.8	Disability Discrimination Act Information Relating to these Specifications	33
Appendix A: Performance Descriptions		34
Appendix B: Levels of Assessment in Question Papers – The Assessment Matrix		37

Vertical black lines indicate a significant change to the previous printed version.

1 About these Qualifications

This booklet contains OCR's Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE specifications in Government and Politics for teaching from September 2013.

A course based on these specifications will encourage candidates to develop a critical awareness of the nature of politics and promote a sense of the rights and responsibilities of the individual within society.

These GCE Government and Politics specifications require candidates to:

- comprehend, synthesise and interpret political information in a variety of forms;
- analyse and evaluate:
 - political institutions, processes and behaviour;
 - political arguments and explanations;
 - the relationship between institutions, processes, ideologies, concepts, behaviour and values;
- identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied;
- select and organise relevant material to construct arguments and explanations leading to reasoned conclusions;
- communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence, using appropriate political vocabulary.

1.1 The Two-Unit AS

The Advanced Subsidiary GCE is both a 'stand-alone' qualification and also the first half of the corresponding Advanced GCE. The AS GCE is assessed at a standard appropriate for candidates who have completed the first year of study (both in terms of teaching time and content) of the corresponding two-year Advanced GCE course, ie between GCSE and Advanced GCE.

From September 2013 the AS GCE is made up of **two** mandatory units, which are externally assessed and form 50% of the corresponding four-unit Advanced GCE.

AS Unit F851 *Contemporary Politics of the UK* and AS Unit F852 *Contemporary Government of the UK* concentrate on various aspects of UK government, politics and the European Union.

This AS GCE Government and Politics specification:

- develops a broad knowledge and understanding of the political system of the UK, including the local and European Union (EU) dimensions;
- encourages candidates to develop their capacity for critical thinking, to see relationships between different aspects of government and politics and to perceive their field of study in a broader perspective, including some comparisons with other political systems;
- develops knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts and processes.

1.2 The Four-Unit Advanced GCE

From September 2013 the Advanced GCE is made up of **two** mandatory units at AS and **two** further units at A2. These A2 units are also externally assessed.

Candidates choose from **two** options at A2: either F853 *Contemporary US Government and Politics* with F855 *US Government and Politics* or F854 *Political Ideas and Concepts* with F856 *Political Ideas and Concepts in Practice*. These units extend candidates' knowledge and understanding in the area of study beyond the context of the political system of the UK. They draw together the knowledge, understanding and skills learned in different parts of the course and involve the understanding of connections between different areas of the course.

These GCE Government and Politics specifications address:

- the essential characteristics and inter-relationships of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary;
- the adequacy of existing political arrangements for ensuring representative democracy and participation;
- the rights and responsibilities of the individual;
- ideologies, theories and traditions;
- current political debates.

1.3 Qualification Titles and Levels

These qualifications are shown on a certificate as:

- OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Government and Politics.
- OCR Advanced GCE in Government and Politics.

Both qualifications are Level 3 in the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

1.4 Aims

The aims of these specifications are to encourage candidates to:

- develop a critical awareness of the nature of politics and the relationship between political ideas, institutions and processes;
- acquire knowledge and understanding of the structures of authority and power within the political system of the UK, and how these may differ from those of other political systems;
- acquire knowledge and informed understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the individual;
- encourage an interest in, and engagement with, contemporary politics.

1.5 Prior Learning/Attainment

No prior knowledge or understanding of any political systems, institutions or ideologies is required although prior study of politics or a similar subject such as history and citizenship at GCSE would provide a helpful introduction.

2 Summary of Content

2.1 AS Units

Unit F851: *Contemporary Politics of the UK*

- Political parties (mandatory)
- Pressure groups (mandatory)
- Electoral systems and referenda
- UK parliamentary elections
- Voting behaviour in the UK

Unit F852: *Contemporary Government of the UK*

- The constitution
 - The executive (mandatory)
 - The legislature (mandatory)
 - The judiciary
 - The European Union
-

2.2 A2 Units

Unit F853: *Contemporary US Government and Politics*

- Elections, presidential and congressional
- Political parties
- Pressure groups
- The constitution
- Congress
- The presidency
- The Supreme Court
- Civil rights and liberties

Unit F854: *Political Ideas and Concepts*

- Democratic theory
 - The state, nation, sovereignty and globalisation
 - Power, authority and legitimacy
 - Rights, liberty and equality
 - Law, order, justice and obligation
 - Conservatism and nationalism
 - Liberalism and socialism
 - Alternative ideologies
-

Unit F855: *US Government and Politics*

- Elections
- Political parties and pressure groups
- Civil rights and liberties
- Constitutions
- Legislatures
- Executives
- Judiciaries

Unit F856 *Political Ideas and Concepts in Practice*

- Democracy in practice
 - The state, nation, sovereignty and globalisation in practice
 - Power, authority and legitimacy in practice
 - Rights, liberty and equality in practice
 - Law, order, obligation and justice in practice
 - Contemporary conservatism and nationalism
 - Contemporary liberalism and socialism
 - The impact of alternative ideologies
-

3 Unit Content

3.1 AS Unit F851: *Contemporary Politics of the UK*

In this unit candidates are expected to show knowledge and understanding of parties, party systems and pressure groups in the United Kingdom as well as electoral systems, parliamentary elections and voting behaviour.

Candidates will need a basic working knowledge of concepts such as democracy, participation and representation. They must also be aware of current political developments and be able to interpret and evaluate data.

Political parties (mandatory)

Concepts: representative government; responsible government; democracy; power, authority; influence.

Political parties	Definition; roles and functions.
Party systems	One-, two-, multi-party and dominant party systems; advantages and disadvantages of various systems; the UK party system.
UK parties	Structure and organisation of the main parties; basic values of the main parties; party democracy within the main parties.
Funding political parties	Main sources of party income; issues surrounding the funding of political parties; proposals for reform.
Parties and the democratic process	Contribution to the democratic process; criticisms.
Key developments within and relating to political parties	
Pressure groups (mandatory)	
<i>Concepts: representation; democracy; power; influence; pluralism; elitism; corporatism.</i>	
Pressure groups	Definition; types; role and functions.
Methods	Direct action; pressure groups and the executive; pressure groups and the legislature; pressure groups and the courts; pressure groups and the EU; pressure groups and public opinion.
Impact and success	Definitions of success; problems of assessing success; factors influencing success and failure.
Pressure groups and the democratic process	Contribution to the democratic process; criticisms.
Key developments within and relating to pressure groups	

Electoral systems and referenda

Concepts: democracy; legitimacy; mandate; representation; representative government; responsible government

Functions	Purpose of elections and referenda
Electoral systems	Plurality systems; majority systems; proportional systems; hybrid systems.
Electoral systems in the UK	European; parliamentary; regional; local.
Electoral reform in the UK	Recent reform; criticisms of the various electoral systems used in the UK; party attitudes to further reform.
Referenda	Types; referenda in the UK; arguments for and against.
Elections, referenda and the democratic process	Contribution to the democratic process; criticisms.

Key developments relating to electoral systems and referenda

UK parliamentary elections

Concepts: legitimacy; mandate; democracy; representation; representative government; responsible government.

The mechanics of general elections	Including: why and how elections are called; who can stand and who can vote; how candidates are selected; voting and winning.
General election campaigns	Including: party strategies; manifestos; national and local campaigns; mass media; opinion polls; funding.
Recent general elections (knowledge of the last three elections is required)	Reasons for holding; campaigns; results; reasons for victory/loss.
By-elections	Nature of and differences from general elections; significance.
British parliamentary elections and democracy	Contribution to the democratic process; criticisms.

Key developments relating to UK parliamentary elections

Voting behaviour in the UK

Concepts: class and party de-alignment.

Factors associated with voting behaviour	For example, long-term: class, age, sex, ethnicity, region, party identification; short-term: issues, recent and future performance, party principles, party leadership, party image, mass media, campaign.
Models of voting behaviour	For example, social structures model; party identification model; rational choice model; dominant ideology model; voting context model.
Trends in voting behaviour	For example, party support; turnout and abstention; tactical voting; protest voting.
Key developments relating to voting behaviour	

3.2 AS Unit F852: *Contemporary Government of the UK*

In this unit, candidates are expected to show knowledge and understanding of the composition, role and power of the legislative and executive branches of government in the United Kingdom as well as of the judiciary, the constitution, rights of the individual and the European Union.

Candidates will need a basic working knowledge of concepts such as democracy, representative and responsible government, power, authority and legitimacy. They must also be aware of current political developments and be able to interpret and evaluate data.

The constitution

Concepts: devolution; sovereignty; the rule of law; separation of powers; federalism.

Constitutions	Definition; nature; role and functions.
Sources of the UK constitution	The royal prerogatives; conventions; common law; statute law; works of authority; membership of international organisations.
Characteristics of constitutions	Flexible and rigid constitutions; written and unwritten constitutions; codified and uncodified constitutions.
The underlying principles of the UK constitution	The sovereignty of parliament; the rule of law; parliamentary government; constitutional monarchy.
Constitutional reform	Major reforms since 1997.
Key developments in the UK constitution and constitutional reform	

The executive (mandatory)

Concepts: power; authority; legitimacy; accountability; parliamentary government.

Executives	Definition; role and functions; powers.
The Prime Minister	Role; powers; limits; relationship with the cabinet.
The cabinet	Role; membership; structure; collective responsibility.
Ministers and civil service	Roles; ministerial responsibility; relationship between ministers and senior civil servants.

Key developments in the core executive

The legislature (mandatory)

Concepts: democracy; parliamentary sovereignty; accountability; representation; parliamentary government.

Legislatures	Definition; role and functions; powers.
The Commons and the Lords	Role; membership; legislative, scrutiny and representative functions.
The opposition and backbenchers	Role and powers.
Parties in parliament	Role of parties in parliament; whips and the whipping system.
The organisation of parliament	Role of the Speaker; select and standing committees; debates; questions; role of the executive.

Key developments in parliament and parliamentary reform

The judiciary

Concepts: law; justice; the separation of powers; rule of law; equality; liberty; rights; duties; judicial independence; judicial neutrality.

Judiciaries	Definition; roles and functions; functions.
Role and powers of the judiciary	Role, impact and importance of the judiciary; powers of statutory interpretation; judicial review; constitutional review.
Rights, liberties and duties in the UK	Nature of rights and liberties in the UK; principal rights and duties of UK citizens; threats to these rights.
Redress of grievance	Methods of obtaining redress, eg MP, councillor, ombudsmen, administrative tribunals, pressure groups, judicial review; relative effectiveness of those methods.
Judicial neutrality and independence	Separation of powers; appointment and removal of senior judges; relationship between the judiciary, the executive and the legislature.
Key developments in the judiciary and rights	

The European Union

Concepts: federalism; devolution; subsidiarity; sovereignty.

The EU	Nature; origins; aims and objectives.
The structure of the EU	The Council; the Council of Ministers; the Commission; the European Parliament; the European Court of Justice; the decision-making process.
How decisions are made	Policy-making processes; role and power of major EU bodies and member states.
The impact of membership of the EU on the British government, politics and constitution	Impact on British government and politics; issues such as enlargement and the euro.
Key developments in the EU affecting the UK	

3.3 A2 Unit F853: *Contemporary US Government and Politics*

Candidates should build on their working knowledge of the concepts and ideologies introduced at AS and also be aware of key and current developments. The study of US government and politics in practice should be taught against a background of the ways in which government and politics works in theory.

In this unit, candidates are expected to develop knowledge and understanding of the contemporary government and politics of the United States of America. They should develop knowledge and understanding of the constitutional arrangements and principles, the legislature, the executive and judiciary of the federal government, as well as issues concerning representation and participation. Candidates should be aware of all major political developments in the United States over the previous decade.

Elections, presidential and congressional

Functions of elections: representation, participation, accountability, legitimacy, direct, indirect and representative democracy. The nominating process including primaries, caucuses and national party conventions; the general election campaign including the role of parties, and factors influencing the campaign and voting behaviour; the Electoral College. Congressional: Factors influencing the campaign and voting behaviours; issues concerning incumbency, redistricting and gerry mandering.

Political parties

Roles and functions: representation, participation. Philosophy, ideology and policies of the two major parties: Social democracy / Liberalism / New Deal Democrats, Reagan and Republican Revolutions (1990s), New Right & Neo-conservatism: the dominant ideology and end of history theses, Third way, New Democrats & Compassionate Conservatism. The role and impact of third parties; party renewal and decline.

Pressure groups

Roles and functions; types; methods used; examples of, and reasons for, success or failure; implications for the democratic process; issues concerning power and influence. Corporatism / elitism / pluralism / New Right views.

The constitution

The making of the constitution; the importance and evolution of its underlying principles; separation of powers and checks and balances, the rule of law and constitutional rights. Constitutional amendments; the process of amendment and the need for reform; federalism.

Congress

Functions of legislatures; representation, participation and accountability. Membership; leadership; committees; the legislative process; role of political parties; oversight of the executive; factors influencing voting in Congress.

The presidency

Functions of executives; powers of the President; presidential policy-making (both domestic and foreign); cabinet; Executive Office of the President; problems of the coordination of the Executive Branch; relations with Congress; theories and practice of presidential power.

The Supreme Court

Functions of judiciaries; the rule of law and judicial independence. Membership; appointment process; issues concerning judicial review, accountability and democratic control; theories and practice of judicial activism and judicial restraint; the role of the Court in the development of the rights of states and individuals, and of deciding other constitutional issues.

Civil rights and liberties

Concerning race, religion, gender, freedom of speech and expression; the role of institutions and of the Constitution in defending rights; current issues associated with rights and liberties.

3.4 A2 Unit F854: *Political Ideas and Concepts*

In this unit, candidates are expected to develop knowledge and understanding of political ideas and concepts. They should be aware of theories relating to the nature of democratic systems, the role of the state, the process by which governments are able to rule and the relationship between the individual and the state in society. They should also be aware of the central beliefs behind a range of political ideologies and be able to make effective points of comparison between them.

Candidates are expected to be able to illustrate their ideas with the use of a range of relevant political thinkers across the ideological spectrum. Whilst candidates need to build upon their knowledge and understanding of key concepts covered at AS, they are not expected to deploy a range of detailed illustrative examples from their study of British and EU politics.

Democratic theory

Definition and central characteristics; distinction between direct and representative democracy; the characteristics of the four main models – classical, protective, developmental and people’s democracy; the central features of liberal democracy; comparison with dictatorship; advantages and disadvantages of democracy.

The state, nation, sovereignty and globalisation

Views on the nature of the state – including organic and social contract theories; its different characteristics; the different roles of the state; the meaning of the nation-state (cultural and political) and the debate over its potential demise; the meaning of sovereignty; legal and political sovereignty; internal and external sovereignty; its location and potential divisibility; the meaning and different interpretations of globalisation; the changing world order; moves towards globalisation; prospects of a world government.

Power, authority and legitimacy

Explanations of power and authority – including typologies of power and authority; justifications for the exercise of power and authority; the meaning of legitimacy; distinctions between power, authority and legitimacy; explanation of how power, authority and legitimacy is bestowed upon government; the meaning of and methods by which consent is obtained.

Rights, liberty and equality

Views of rights and duties of the individual and the state including the relationship between them; the differing forms of rights including moral and legal, natural, human and animal; the different interpretations of liberty including negative and positive liberty; the dangers of excessive liberty; the extent of toleration required in society; the meaning of equality and the different interpretations including formal, equality of opportunity and outcome; social justice theories; different perspectives on the balance between equality and liberty within society.

Law, order, justice and obligation

The rule of law; different interpretations on the meaning of law; natural and positive law; the relationship between law and liberty; the meaning and different interpretations of order within society including links to discipline and control and natural harmony; the justifications for punishment; the meaning and models of justice including substantive and procedural justice; meaning and different models of obligation including natural duty and contractual; justifications for law breaking particularly relating to civil disobedience and the role of consent.

Conservatism and nationalism

Origins and core values of each; extent to which they can be regarded as ideological; different types; conservatism – reactionary and authoritarian, paternalism and one-nation, libertarian and the New Right; nationalism – liberal, conservative, racial, expansionist, post-imperial and socialist; knowledge of key conservative theorists, eg Hobbes, Burke, Disraeli, Oakeshott and Hayek; knowledge of key nationalist thinkers, eg Von Herder, Mazzini, Nyerere; similarities and differences between the two and with other ideologies.

Liberalism and socialism

Origins and core values of each; different types; liberalism – utilitarianism, classical liberalism, social Darwinism and libertarianism, new liberalism and welfare liberalism; socialism – primitive and utopian, Marxism and other revolutionary forms, democratic socialism and social democracy; knowledge of key liberal and socialist thinkers; liberal, eg Locke, Bentham, Mill, Spencer, TH Green, Beveridge, Rawls and Gray; socialist, eg Fourier, Owen, Marx, Bernstein, Crosland and Giddens; similarities and differences between the two and with other ideologies.

Alternative ideologies

Understanding of the central beliefs of the alternative ideologies of feminism, post-modernism, religious fundamentalism, environmentalism and ecologism; similarities and differences in their critique of society; comparison with the central principles of mainstream ideologies (conservatism, liberalism and socialism).

3.5 A2 Unit F855: *US Government and Politics*

In this unit candidates are expected to draw together the knowledge, understanding and skills learned in different parts of the Advanced GCE course, and make appropriate connections between the areas studied. For this unit, candidates should be able to compare and contrast features of British and American politics and, where relevant, make connections to and comparisons with the political system of the European Union. It is essential that candidates can view political institutions and practices in perspective.

It is expected that candidates will supplement their formal study of politics and government by being alert to the course of events in the world of politics and following them in the available media.

In the assessment of this unit, candidates are encouraged to make appropriate references to political systems, processes and events beyond the UK, US and European Union, and insofar as these are relevant and illuminating, they will be rewarded.

Elections

Electoral systems, candidate selection procedures; conduct of general election campaigns; issues concerning the media and campaign finance; theories of voting behaviour; issues concerning representation, participation and democracy; contemporary issues associated with elections and voting behaviour.

Political parties and pressure groups

Power within political parties; two-party, multi-party and dominant-party systems; issues concerning the role of ideology in political parties; the debate concerning the decline of political parties and the rise of candidate and issue-centred politics; current political issues in the UK and US; the function and power of pressure groups in a modern representative democracy; contemporary issues associated with parties and pressure groups.

Civil rights and liberties

Issues concerning the adequacy of governmental arrangements for the effective protection of majority and minority rights, with particular reference to constitutions, bills of rights, legislatures and judiciaries; issues concerning rights, liberty and citizenship; contemporary issues concerning rights and liberties.

Constitutions

The sources, nature and role of constitutions; parliamentary and separated; relationships between the centre and periphery; federal, devolved and unitary constitutions; constitutional reform; contemporary issues associated with constitutions and their reform.

Legislatures

Functions; internal organisation; the role and power of second chambers; role of political parties within; role of legislators as delegates or representatives; the relationships with the executive and judicial branches of government; contemporary issues concerning representation, accountability, sovereignty and effectiveness.

Executives

Election, power and functions of chief executives; issues concerning the organisation of executives – as presidential, or prime ministerial, and cabinet government; issues concerning the efficiency of executives in carrying out the functions of executives; formulation and implementation of domestic and foreign policy; relationships with the legislative and judicial branches of government; contemporary issues concerning the role and power of executives; authority and accountability.

Judiciaries

Political influence and significance; selection and accountability of judges, role of courts in democracies; issues of neutrality and independence; relationships with the legislative and executive branches of government; contemporary issues concerning the role of courts.

3.6 A2 Unit F856: *Political Ideas and Concepts in Practice*

In this unit, candidates are expected to draw together knowledge, understanding and skills learned in the different areas of their Advanced GCE course, and make appropriate connections between the areas studied. For this unit, candidates should apply their understanding of political ideas and concepts to the practice of politics in the UK and the European Union.

It is expected that candidates will supplement their formal study of politics by being alert to the course of events in the world of politics, and following them in newspapers, on television and on the Internet.

In the assessment of this unit, candidates are encouraged to make appropriate reference to a range of political ideologies, including the ideas of specific political thinkers, and also illustrate their arguments with reference to factual examples drawn from the various political systems they may have studied.

Democracy in practice

The operation of modern forms of democracy – particularly liberal democracy; elements of direct democracy (especially referenda, initiatives and e-democracy); problems relating to the operation of democracy in the UK and EU including majoritarianism, the applicability of the mandate theory, operation of electoral systems, extent of political pluralism (especially the role played by parties and pressure groups) and the degree and nature of representation (including the application of the models of representation in the UK and EU).

The state, nation, sovereignty and globalisation in practice

The role of the modern nation state and the growth of multinational organisations and corporations; the impact of devolution and regionalism in the UK and EU, including the impact of multi-layered governance; the prospects for the development of federalism in the UK and EU; the debate surrounding the location and continued existence of internal and external sovereignty in the UK and EU.

Power, authority and legitimacy in practice

The operation of power in practice and its application to the various typologies; the location of power in modern society including issues relating to executive dominance and the lack of formal separation of powers in the UK; the exercise and manufacturing of authority by modern governments, including debate over the extent of civic culture and ideological hegemony in the UK and EU; the extent of a legitimisation crisis in modern society.

Rights, liberty and equality in practice

The exercise of rights in modern society; methods of rights protection, including recent developments such as the Human Rights Act; balance between rights and responsibilities; potential encroachment of individual rights relating to contemporary threats; the extent of liberty in society and perceptions of the existence of growing threats to the exercising of individual liberty (especially with regards to recent legislation in the UK and EU); attitudes to the promotion of equality and application to government policy through issues such as positive discrimination and wealth redistribution; the exercise of social justice and debate over the impact of a welfare state.

Law, order, obligation and justice in practice

How the rule of law is applied in practice and its role in constitutions throughout the UK and EU; the role of the judiciary in interpreting law; attitudes and policies towards law enforcement and the maintenance of order; civil disobedience through direct action and justifications for terrorism; debate over judicial independence and activism.

Contemporary conservatism and nationalism

Impact of the New Right upon traditional conservative values, including the legacy of Thatcherism; social and liberal conservatism; the rise of neo-conservatism; debate over the future direction of the Conservative Party in the UK; the role of nationalist parties in the UK and their significance post-devolution; the impact of the EU and immigration on the growth of support for British nationalism; comparison between the Conservative Party and other nationalist parties' ideologies and policies and those of other UK mainstream political parties.

Contemporary liberalism and socialism

Impact of contemporary liberalism and socialism within liberal democracies, especially inside liberal- and socialist-based parties; new strands of liberalism, including contemporary liberal democracy, economic and social liberalism, and tough liberalism; Fukuyama and the triumph of liberal democracy; debate between social democracy and democratic socialism; impact of New Labour ideas on the Labour Party and beyond; Is Labour still a socialist party?; the potential for alternative radical socialist parties in the UK and the EU; comparison between Liberal Democratic and New Labour ideologies and policies, and those of other mainstream political parties.

The impact of alternative ideologies

Post-modernism and the end of ideology debate; the debate over globalisation and the critique offered by ecologism and environmentalism; the challenges of religious fundamentalism to western society; debate over gender imbalance in politics and policy initiatives dealing with gender inequality.

4 Schemes of Assessment

4.1 AS GCE Scheme of Assessment

AS GCE Government and Politics (H095)

AS Unit F851: *Contemporary politics of the UK*

25% of the total GCE marks
1.5 hrs written paper
100 marks

This paper has **two** sections:

Section A: Candidates are required to answer **all** source-based questions to demonstrate knowledge of political parties and pressure groups.

Section B: Candidates are required to answer **one** essay question from a choice of **three** to demonstrate knowledge of: electoral systems; UK parliamentary elections; voting behaviour in the UK.

AS Unit F852: *Contemporary government of the UK*

25% of the total GCE marks
1.5 hrs written paper
100 marks

This paper has **two** sections:

Section A: Candidates are required to answer **all** source-based questions to demonstrate knowledge of the executive and legislature.

Section B: Candidates are required to answer **one** essay question from a choice of **three** to demonstrate knowledge of: the constitution; the European Union; the judiciary.

4.2 Advanced GCE Scheme of Assessment

Advanced GCE Government and Politics (H495)

AS units as above, each unit being 25% of the total Advanced GCE marks.

either	A2 Unit F853: <i>Contemporary US government and politics</i>	
25% of the total Advanced GCE marks 2 hrs written paper 100 marks	Candidates are required to answer question 1 which will be structured and contain a stimulus, and may be drawn from any of the 8 topic areas covered in this unit . Candidates must then choose three questions from a choice of seven to demonstrate knowledge of: presidential elections; political parties; pressure groups; the constitution; Congress; the presidency; the Supreme Court; civil rights and liberties.	
	Candidates answer four questions.	
	This unit is synoptic.	
With	A2 Unit F855: <i>US government and politics</i>	
25% of the total Advanced GCE marks 2 hrs written paper 100 marks	Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of eight . Candidates need to draw upon their knowledge of UK politics, US government and politics, other political systems and the European Union.	
	Candidates answer two questions.	
	This unit is synoptic.	
Or	A2 Unit F854: <i>Political ideas and concepts</i>	
25% of the total Advanced GCE marks 2 hrs written paper 100 marks	Candidates are required to answer question 1 which will be structured and contain a stimulus, and may be drawn from any of the 8 topic areas covered in this unit . Candidates must then choose three questions from a choice of seven to demonstrate knowledge of: democratic theory; the state, nation, sovereignty and globalisation; power, authority and legitimacy; rights, liberty and equality; law, order, justice and obligation; conservatism and nationalism; liberalism and socialism; alternative ideologies.	
	Candidates answer four questions.	
	This unit is synoptic.	
With	A2 Unit F856: <i>Political ideas and concepts in practice</i>	
25% of the total Advanced GCE marks 2 hrs written paper 100 marks	Candidates are required to answer two questions from a choice of eight . Candidates need to draw upon their knowledge of UK politics, political ideas and concepts, other political systems and the European Union.	
	Candidates answer two questions.	
	This unit is synoptic.	

4.3 Unit Order

Teachers may deliver the AS units consecutively or concurrently. The normal order in which the unit assessments could be taken is AS Units F851 and F852 in the first year of study, leading to an AS GCE award, then A2 Units F853 and F855 *or* A2 Units F854 and F856 leading to the Advanced GCE award. However, the unit assessments may be taken in any order.

Alternatively, candidates may take a valid combination of unit assessments at the end of their AS GCE or Advanced GCE course in a 'linear' fashion.

4.4 Unit Options (at AS/A2)

There are no optional units in the AS GCE specification; for AS GCE Government and Politics candidates must take AS Units F851 and F852.

There are optional units in the Advanced GCE specification; for Advanced GCE Government and Politics candidates take AS Units F851 and F852 *and* A2 Units F853 and F855 *or* A2 Units F854 and F856.

4.5 Synoptic Assessment (GCE)

Synoptic assessment is part of all A2 units

Synoptic assessment tests the candidates' understanding of the connections between different elements of the subject.

The A2 units require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of UK politics, the option they have followed at A2, its contemporary relevance, other political systems and also the European Union.

4.6 Assessment Availability

There is **one** examination series each year in June.

From 2014, both AS units and A2 units will be assessed in June only.

4.7 Assessment Objectives

Candidates are expected to demonstrate the following in the context of the content described:

AO1 Demonstrate Knowledge and Understanding

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant institutions, processes, political concepts, theories and debates.

AO2 Analyse and Evaluate

- Analyse and evaluate political information, arguments and explanations, and where appropriate identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied including the EU.

AO3 Communicate

- Construct and communicate coherent arguments making use of a range of appropriate political vocabulary.

AO weightings in AS GCE

Unit	% of AS GCE			Total
	AO1	AO2	AO3	
AS Unit F851: <i>Contemporary politics of the UK</i>	25	17.5	7.5	50%
AS Unit F852: <i>Contemporary government of the UK</i>	25	17.5	7.5	50%
	50%	35	15%	100%

AO weightings in Advanced GCE

Unit	% of Advanced GCE			Total
	AO1	AO2	AO3	
AS Unit F851: <i>Contemporary politics of the UK</i>	12.5	8.75	3.75	25%
AS Unit F852: <i>Contemporary government of the UK</i>	12.5	8.75	3.75	25%
A2 Unit F853: <i>Contemporary US government and politics</i> or	10	10	5	25%
A2 Unit F854: <i>Political ideas and concepts</i>				
A2 Unit F855: <i>US government and politics</i> or	10	12	3	25%
A2 Unit F856: <i>Political ideas and concepts in practice</i>				
	45%	39.5%	15.5%	100%

4.8 Quality of Written Communication

Quality of written communication is assessed in all units and credit may be restricted if communication is unclear. Candidates are required to answer questions on examination papers in continuous prose where appropriate.

Candidates will:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear;
- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter;
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

Quality of written communication is included in Assessment Objective AO3 (*Communication*).

4.9 Levels of Assessment in Question Papers

Appendix B contains the levels of assessment that are used in assessing candidates' answers in the question papers. It must be noted that these are intended for use *with* question-specific mark schemes.

5 Technical Information

5.1 Making Unit Entries

Please note that centres must be registered with OCR in order to make any entries, including estimated entries. It is recommended that centres apply to OCR to become a registered centre well in advance of making their first entries.

It is essential that unit entry codes (the four-figure alpha-numeric codes given in brackets at the end of the unit title) are quoted in all correspondence with OCR. See Sections 4.1 and 4.2 for these unit entry codes.

See Sections 4.1 and 4.2 for unit entry codes.

5.2 Making Qualification Entries

Candidates must enter for qualification certification separately from unit assessment(s). If a certification entry is **not** made, no overall grade can be awarded.

Candidates may enter for:

- AS GCE certification (entry code H095).
- Advanced GCE certification (entry code H495).

A candidate who has completed all the units required for the qualification, and who did not request certification at the time of entry, may enter for certification either in the same examination series (within a specified period after publication of results) or at a later series.

AS GCE certification is available from June 2014.
Advanced GCE certification is available from June 2014.

5.3 Grading

All GCE units are awarded a-e. The Advanced Subsidiary GCE is awarded on the scale A-E. The Advanced GCE is awarded on the scale A-E with access to an A*. To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on their full A level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of their A2 units. Grades are reported on certificates. Results for candidates who fail to achieve the minimum grade (E or e) will be recorded as *unclassified* (U or u) and this is **not** certificated.

A Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) enables comparison of candidates' performance across units and across series and enables candidates' scores to be put on a common scale for aggregation purposes. The two-unit AS GCE has a total of 200 *uniform* marks and the four-unit Advanced GCE has a total of 400 *uniform* marks.

OCR converts each raw mark for each unit to a uniform mark. The maximum *uniform* mark for any unit depends on that unit's weighting in the specification. In these government and politics specifications, the four units of the Advanced GCE specification have an equal 25% UMS weighting (and the two units of the AS GCE specification have an equal 50% UMS weighting) and the UMS total for each is 100. Each unit's *raw* mark grade boundary equates to the *uniform* mark boundary at the same grade. Intermediate marks are converted on a pro-rata basis.

Uniform marks correspond to *unit* grades as follows:

(Advanced GCE) Unit Weighting	Maximum Unit Uniform Mark	Unit Grade					u
		a	b	c	d	e	
25%	100	100–80	79–70	69–60	59–50	49–40	39–0

OCR adds together the unit *uniform* marks and compares these to pre-set boundaries (see the table below) to arrive at *qualification* grades.

Total uniform marks correspond to qualification grades.

Qualification	Qualification Grade					U
	A	B	C	D	E	
AS GCE	200–160	159–140	139–120	119–100	99–80	79–0
Advanced GCE	400–320	319–280	279–240	239–200	199–160	159–0

Candidates achieving at least 320 UMS marks in their Advanced GCE, ie grade A, and who also gain at least 180 UMS in their two A2 units will receive an A* grade.

5.4 Result Enquiries and Appeals

Under certain circumstances, a centre may wish to query the grade available to one or more candidates or to submit an appeal against an outcome of such an enquiry. Enquiries about unit results must be made immediately following the series in which the relevant unit was taken.

For procedures relating to enquiries on results and appeals, centres should consult the *OCR Administration Guide for General Qualifications* and the document *Enquiries about Results and Appeals – Information and Guidance for Centres* produced by the Joint Council. Copies of the most recent editions of these papers can be obtained from OCR.

5.5 Shelf-Life of Units

Individual unit results, prior to certification of the qualification, have a shelf-life limited only by that of the qualification.

5.6 Unit and Qualification Re-sits

There is no restriction on the number of times a candidate may re-sit each unit before entering for certification for an AS GCE or Advanced GCE.

Candidates may enter for the full qualifications an unlimited number of times.

5.7 Guided Learning Hours

AS GCE Government and Politics requires **180** guided learning hours in total.
Advanced GCE Government and Politics requires **360** guided learning hours in total.

5.8 Code of Practice/Subject Criteria/Common Criteria Requirements

These specifications comply in all respects with the revised *GCSE, GCE, GNVQ and AEA Code of Practice* as available on the QCA website and the subject criteria for GCE Government and Politics.

5.9 Arrangements for Candidates with Particular Requirements

For candidates who are unable to complete the full assessment or whose performance may be adversely affected through no fault of their own, teachers should consult the *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations* produced by the Joint Council. In such cases advice should be sought from OCR as early as possible during the course.

5.10 Prohibited Qualifications and Classification Code

Candidates who enter for the OCR GCE specifications may **not** also enter for any other GCE specification with the certification title *Government and Politics* in the same examination series.

Every specification is assigned to a national classification code indicating the subject area to which it belongs.

Centres should be aware that candidates who enter for more than one GCE qualification with the same classification code will have only one grade (the highest) counted for the purpose of the Schools and College Achievement and Attainment Tables.

The classification code for these specifications is 4830.

6 Other Specification Issues

6.1 Overlap with other Qualifications

There is no significant overlap between the content of these specifications and any other OCR specifications.

6.2 Progression from these Qualifications

The study of government and politics provides a solid basis for those proceeding into higher education. Government and politics in its different guises is well viewed by universities, which recognise the discipline as providing a sound intellectual base for further study at university level in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

For those proceeding directly into employment, the academic study of government and politics provides a capacity for analysis, an ability to communicate, and an understanding of the decision-making process.

For all candidates at this level, an awareness of their rights and responsibilities, of the capabilities and limitations of government, and of recent developments in their country's governance (for example, growing European interdependence and internal devolution) will enable them to become more active citizens.

6.3 Key Skills Mapping

These specifications provide opportunities for the development of the Key Skills of *Communication*, *Application of Number*, *Information Technology*, *Working with Others*, *Improving Own Learning and Performance* and *Problem Solving* at Levels 2 and/or 3. However, the extent to which this evidence fulfils the Key Skills criteria at these levels will be totally dependent on the style of teaching and learning adopted for each unit.

The following table indicates where opportunities *may* exist for at least some coverage of the various Key Skills criteria at Levels 2 and/or 3 for each unit.

Unit	C				AoN			IT			WwO			IOLP			PS		
	.1a	.1b	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3	.1	.2	.3
F851	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F852	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
F853	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
F854	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
F855	✓	✓		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
F856	✓	✓		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

6.4 Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social, Legislative, Economic and Cultural Issues

These specifications are designed to promote, wherever appropriate, an awareness of the spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legislative, economic and cultural aspects of different political institutions, concepts and ideologies. There are many opportunities within these specifications for these issues to be raised; for instance, through discussion of pressure groups; in connection with the rights and responsibilities of the individual; within civil rights and liberties; within liberty and equality, and political obligation and protest.

6.5 Sustainable Development, Health and Safety Considerations and European Developments

These specifications support the European dimension in education and the Resolutions of the Council for Ministers (EC 1998) by requiring candidates to study the main institutions of the EU as well as the relationship between Britain and the EU and the impact on UK politics of such European issues as federalism, EMU and EU enlargement.

6.6 Avoidance of Bias

OCR has taken great care in preparation of these specifications and assessment materials to avoid bias of any kind.

6.7 Language

These specifications and associated assessment materials are in English only.

6.8 Disability Discrimination Act Information Relating to these Specifications

AS/A Levels often require assessment of a broad range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare candidates for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised AS/A Level qualification and subject criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any disabled candidates. If this was the case, the situation was reviewed again to ensure that such competences were included only where essential to the subject. The findings of this process were discussed with disability groups and with disabled people.

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment. Information on reasonable adjustments is found in *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration: Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations* produced by the Joint Council (refer to Section 5.9 of this specification).

Candidates who are still unable to access a significant part of the assessment, even after exploring all possibilities through reasonable adjustments, may still be able to receive an award. They would be given a grade on the parts of the assessment they have taken and there would be an indication on their certificate that not all of the competences have been addressed. This will be kept under review and may be amended in the future.

Appendix A: Performance Descriptions

Performance descriptions have been created for all GCE subjects. They describe the learning outcomes and levels of attainment likely to be demonstrated by a representative candidate performing at the A/B and E/U boundaries for AS and A2.

In practice most candidates will show uneven profiles across the attainments listed, with strengths in some areas compensating in the award process for weaknesses or omissions elsewhere. Performance descriptions illustrate expectations at the A/B and E/U boundaries of the AS and A2 as a whole; they have not been written at unit level.

Grade A/B and E/U boundaries should be set using professional judgement. The judgement should reflect the quality of candidates' work, informed by the available technical and statistical evidence. Performance descriptions are designed to assist examiners in exercising their professional judgement. They should be interpreted and applied in the context of individual specifications and their associated units. However, performance descriptions are not designed to define the content of specifications and units.

The requirement for all AS and A level specifications to assess candidates' quality of written communication will be met through one or more of the assessment objectives.

The performance descriptions have been produced by the regulatory authorities in collaboration with the awarding bodies.

AS performance descriptions for government and politics

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant institutions, processes, political concepts, theories and debates.	Analyse and evaluate political information, arguments and explanations, and identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied.	Construct and communicate coherent arguments, making use of a range of appropriate political vocabulary.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate full and accurate knowledge of political institutions and processes and a sound understanding of political concepts, theories and debates; b) produce answers that deploy relevant knowledge to answer the question; c) demonstrate clear contextual awareness; d) use relevant evidence and, where appropriate, contemporary examples to illustrate points made. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide analyses that display a sound awareness of differing viewpoints and a clear recognition of issues; b) evaluate political institutions, process and behaviour, applying appropriate concepts and theories; c) make valid comparisons. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) construct and communicate clear, structured and sustained arguments and explanations; b) use accurate political vocabulary.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate a basic knowledge of political institutions and processes and begin to show some understanding of political concepts, theories and debates; b) make a limited attempt at answering the question; c) produce at least one piece of relevant evidence, which may be drawn from source material provided. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) show some basic awareness of differing viewpoints; b) attempt simple evaluation of political institutions, processes and behaviour; c) make simple comparisons. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) attempt to communicate and develop an argument or explanation; b) use basic political vocabulary.

A2 performance descriptions for government and politics

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant institutions, processes, political concepts, theories and debates.	Analyse and evaluate political information, arguments and explanations, and identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied.	Construct and communicate coherent arguments, making use of a range of appropriate political vocabulary.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate accurate, detailed and comprehensive knowledge of political institutions and processes, and a competent understanding of political concepts, theories and debates, incorporating the relevant specification content; b) produce answers which fully address the requirements of the question; c) demonstrate good contextual awareness; d) provide accurate evidence and, where appropriate, contemporary examples deployed to illustrate points made. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide analysis that synthesises political concepts, theories or issues; b) evaluate political information clearly and fully, using appropriate supporting evidence that may be drawn from the whole specification; c) make effective comparisons, explaining parallels, connections, similarities or differences. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) construct and communicate cogent and coherent arguments and explanations b) illustrate a clear sense of direction and, where appropriate, culminate in a coherent conclusion which flows from the discussion; c) use a range of relevant evidence and appropriate political vocabulary.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate an outline knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes, political concepts, theories and debates, with evidence of some relevant specification content; b) make a limited attempt at answering the question; c) demonstrate some basic contextual awareness; d) provide some relevant evidence or examples. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) offer limited analysis that shows some awareness of differing ideas; b) attempt a simple evaluation of political institutions, processes, behaviour, arguments or explanations, and make some comparisons; c) outline basic concepts and theories; d) demonstrate some recognition of basic parallels and connections or similarities and differences. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) construct and communicate some arguments and explanations with a structure that is narrative or descriptive; b) illustrate a sense of direction and, where appropriate, offer a conclusion, though relationship to the preceding discussion may be tenuous or implicit; c) use some relevant evidence and some appropriate political vocabulary.

Appendix B: Levels of Assessment in Question Papers – The Assessment Matrix

AS GCE Assessment Matrix

There are **four** levels of assessment of all three AOs in the AS units. Level 4 is the highest level that can reasonably be expected from a candidate at the end of the first year of study of an Advanced GCE course.

Level	Assessment Objective 1	Assessment Objective 2	Assessment Objective 3
4	Thorough and accurate knowledge and clear and detailed understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Where appropriate candidates will provide convincing comparisons between them.	High level of skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of relevant political information (including, where appropriate, the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences with other political systems including the EU). Ability to recognise bias and faulty argument and to reason effectively towards an individual and informed conclusion.	Ability to distinguish relevant and important factors correctly and integrate these into a balanced, well-focused argument. Ability to communicate this clearly and present it legibly and logically in fluent coherent style containing few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
3	Good knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Where appropriate candidates will provide good comparisons between them.	Good level of skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the relevant political information (including, where appropriate, the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences with other political systems including the EU). Some attempt to recognise bias and faulty argument and to reason sensibly towards a sound conclusion.	Ability to identify the most important factors and present a relevant argument legibly and clearly if, at times, lacking incisiveness. There may be occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
2	Limited knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Limited awareness of standard points of comparison.	Limited level of skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the relevant political information (including, where appropriate, the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences with other political systems including the EU). Limited attempt to explain a few of the more obvious points central to the question and to recognise and describe some differing viewpoints. Reasoning may be incomplete and, while opinions may be offered, they are unlikely to be supported by argument.	Limited attempt to distinguish relevant material, which is assembled into a limited argument with some sense of order and legibility. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
1	Basic and generalised knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Such knowledge and understanding will be incomplete and/or of tenuous relevance and may contain significant errors. Basic awareness of standard points of comparison.	Basic skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of some of the relevant political information (including, where appropriate, the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences with other political systems including the EU). Basic attempt to explain the simpler points central to the question and it is likely that only one viewpoint will be recognised. There will be little evidence of reasoning.	An attempt is made to shape an argument at a basic level, which lacks coherence, legibility and direction, and is unselective. Contains intrusive errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Advanced GCE Assessment Matrix

There are **four** levels of assessment of all three AOs in the A2 units. Level 4 is the highest level that can reasonably be expected from a candidate at the end of an Advanced GCE course.

Level	Assessment Objective 1	Assessment Objective 2	Assessment Objective 3
4	Thorough and accurate knowledge and clear and detailed understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Ability to make valid comparisons between them.	High level of skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of relevant political information (including the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied). Ability to recognise bias and faulty argument and to reason effectively towards an individual and informed conclusion.	Ability to distinguish relevant and important factors correctly and integrate these into a balanced, well-focused argument. Ability to communicate this clearly and present it legibly and logically in fluent coherent style containing few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
3	Good knowledge and confident understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Ability to make some valid comparisons between them.	Good level of skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the relevant political issues (including the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied). Some attempt to recognise bias and faulty argument and to reason sensibly towards a sound conclusion.	Ability to identify the most important factors and present a relevant argument legibly and clearly if, at times, lacking incisiveness. There may be occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
2	Limited knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Limited awareness of standard points of comparison.	Limited level of skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the relevant political issues (including the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied). Limited attempt to explain a few of the more obvious points central to the question and to recognise and describe some differing viewpoints. Reasoning will be incomplete and, while opinions may be offered, they are unlikely to be supported by argument.	Limited attempt to distinguish relevant material, which is assembled into a limited argument with some sense of order and legibility. There may be some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
1	Basic and generalised knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, ideas and political systems. Such knowledge and understanding will be incomplete and/or of tenuous relevance and may contain significant errors. Basic awareness of standard points of comparison.	Basic skill in the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of some of the relevant political issues (including the identification of parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied). Basic attempt to explain the simpler points central to the question and it is likely that only one viewpoint will be recognised. There will be little evidence of reasoning.	An attempt is made to shape an argument at a basic level, which lacks coherence, legibility and direction, and is unselective. Contains intrusive errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.