



Rewarding Learning

GCE

Government and Politics

New Specification:
What's changed and
What's stayed the
same

For first teaching from September 2016

GCE Government and Politics

New Specification – What’s changed, what’s stayed the same.

There have been limited changes to the **content** of each of the four units. All four units retain the same titles as under the legacy specification, indicating that only limited change to the overall content has taken place.

There have, however, been changes to **assessment** with changes to the number of questions on some papers, types of questions and assessment objective weightings.

AS1: The Government and Politics of Northern Ireland

Content

What has stayed the same

- The focus is still on Political Institutions and Political Parties, as under the legacy specification; and
- As indicated in the Scheme of Work accompanying the new specification, teaching time should be split evenly between these two topics.

What has changed

- The legacy specification included Electoral Systems but this is not in the revised specification. Candidates may refer to how the different electoral systems affect party representation but electoral systems will **not** be the focus of a discrete question; and
- A second change is that the “start date” for the unit has shifted from 1993 to 1998 and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Candidates may include information from before 1998 in answers but this will not be the focus of discrete questions.

Assessment

What has changed

- Four questions as opposed to three under the legacy specification;
- Question 1 (4 marks) requires the identification of two things;
- Question 2 (6 marks) requires the identification of a term or phrase used in the Source;
- Question 3 (15 marks) requires a longer explanation of three things, with one of these things being identified in the source material; and

Questions 1 and 2 will only assess AO1. Questions 3 and 4 will assess all three AOs.

What has stayed the same

- Examination length and total marks; and
- Candidates will still have to answer an extended essay question (25 marks) and will continue to have a choice of two options.

AS 2: The British Political Process

Content

What has stayed the same

- The core of this unit remains the UK Executive and Legislature.

What has changed

- The Judiciary was a core part of the legacy specification but is an optional element of the revised specification;
- Pressure Groups have been added as a second, optional element; and
- The legacy specification made reference to the policies and strategies of the main British political parties. This is not referred to under the revised specification and discrete questions will not be asked on this topic. Candidates may legitimately refer to party policies and strategies as part of an answer, for example, on constitutional reforms to the Lords.

Assessment

What has changed

- The paper now consists of 3 sections: a compulsory **Section A** (40 marks in total) and an optional **Section B** (20 marks) or **Section C** (20 marks);
- **Section A** consists of three questions on the UK legislature and executive;
- Question 1 (4 marks) requires the identification of two things;
- Question 2 (10 marks) requires candidates to explain two things, e.g. two criticisms, ways, reasons, or features; and
- Question 3 (26 marks) requires an extended essay answer and candidates will have a choice of two options.

- **Section B** consists of two questions on the British judiciary;
- Question 4 (5 marks) is an explanation question; and
- Question 5 (15 marks) requires an extended explanation of an argument or point of view.

- **Section C** consists of two questions on Pressure groups;
- Question 6 (5 marks) is an explanation question; and
- Question 7 (15 marks) requires an extended explanation of an argument or point of view.

Questions 1, 2, 4 and 6 will assess only AO1. Questions 3, 5 and 7 will assess all AOs.

What has stayed the same

- No source material; and
- Questions 1, 2 and 3 are similar to questions in the legacy papers.

A21 Option A: Comparative Government: The Government and Politics of the USA and UK

Content

What has stayed the same

- This unit still focuses on the government and politics of the USA, specifically the Legislature and the Executive; and
- Direct comparison with the legislative and executive branches of the UK also remains central to the unit.

What has changed

- The legacy specification included the US Constitution as a stand-alone topic. This is not the case under the revised specification. The Constitution is still included in terms of how it affects the operation of Congress and the Presidency and how constitutional changes have affected US government and politics. There will, however, be no discrete question on the Constitution; and
- Unlike the legacy specification, the revised specification explicitly refers to the impact of US lobby groups on the US Legislature and the Executive.

Assessment

What has changed

- There is no longer a discrete question on the US Constitution;
- Candidates now have to answer six as opposed to five questions;
- The paper consists of two sections. **Section A** consists of 4 questions on the government and politics of the USA (60 marks in total). **Section B** consists of 2 comparative questions on the USA and the UK (40 marks in total);
- **Section A** on the USA consists of 4 questions;
- Question 1 (5 marks) requires the definition of a term;
- Question 2 (10 marks) requires the identification and explanation of two things, one of which must come from the source material;
- Question 3 (15 marks) requires a more extended explanation of some aspect of the US political system; and
- Question 4 (30 marks) requires an extended essay answer on a central aspect of the US system, using source material.

- **Section B** requires comparison of the US and UK systems;
- Question 5 (10 marks) requires a comparison of some aspect of the operation, structure and effectiveness of the two political systems; and
- Question 6 (30 marks) requires an extended essay answer comparing and contrasting a central aspect of the US and UK systems. There will be a choice of two options.

Questions 1, 2 and 5 will only assess AO1. Questions 3, 4 and 6 will assess all three AOs.

What has stayed the same

- Exam length and total marks;
- The focus remains on the government and politics of the US and how this compares with the UK;
- One piece of source material will be included but it will no longer be the basis of a question on the US Constitution; and
- Questions 1, 2 and 6 are very similar to questions asked on legacy papers.

A21 Option B: Comparative Government: The Government and Politics of the Republic of Ireland and the UK

Content

What has stayed the same

- This unit still focuses on the government and politics of the Republic of Ireland, specifically the Irish executive and the Oireachtas; and
- Direct comparison with the legislative and executive branches of the UK also remains central to the unit.

What has changed

- The legacy specification included the Irish Constitution as a stand-alone topic. This is not the case under the revised specification. The Constitution is still included in terms of how it affects the operation of the Oireachtas and the executive and how constitutional changes have affected Irish government and politics. There will be no discrete question on the Constitution;
- Unlike the legacy specification, the revised specification explicitly refers to the impact of the judiciary and judicial decisions upon the Irish legislature and executive; and
- The revised specification also explicitly refers to the impact of coalition government upon the operation of the executive branch.

Assessment

What has changed

- There is no longer a discrete question on the Irish Constitution;
- Candidates now have to answer six as opposed to five questions;
- The paper consists of two sections. **Section A** consists of 4 questions on the government and politics of the Republic of Ireland (60 marks in total). **Section B** consists of 2 comparative questions on the Republic of Ireland and the UK (40 marks in total);
- **Section A** on the Republic of Ireland consists of 4 questions;
- Question 1 (5 marks) requires the definition of a term;
- Question 2 (10 marks) requires the identification and explanation of two things, one of which must come from the source material;
- Question 3 (15 marks) requires a more extended explanation of some aspect of the Irish political system; and
- Question 4 (30 marks) requires an extended essay answer on a central aspect of the Irish system, using source material.

- **Section B** requires comparison of the Irish and UK systems;
- Question 5 (10 marks) requires a comparison of some aspect of the operation, structure and effectiveness of the two political systems; and
- Question 6 (30 marks) requires an extended essay answer comparing and contrasting a central aspect of the Irish and UK systems. There will be a choice of two options.

Questions 1, 2 and 5 will only assess AO1. Questions 3, 4 and 6 will assess all three AOs.

What has stayed the same

- Exam length and total marks;
- The focus remains on the government and politics of the Republic of Ireland and how this compares with the UK;
- One piece of source material will be included but will no longer be the basis of a question on the Irish Constitution; and
- Questions 1, 2 and 6 will be very similar to questions asked on legacy papers.

A22 Option A: Political Power

Content

What has stayed the same

- The focus of the unit is still on (a) the factors involved in the exercise of political power and (b) theories of political power; and
- As indicated in the Scheme of Work, teaching time should be split evenly between these two topics.

What has changed

- The revised specification does not refer to any new topics but does give some more detail on content.

Assessment

What has changed

- Candidates will now answer 5 questions as opposed to three;
- The paper will consist of two sections. **Section A** will only focus on the factors involved in the exercise of power and **Section B** will only focus on the theories of power;
- **Section A** will consist of three questions (total marks 35);
- Question 1 (5 marks) requires the explanation of a term given in the source material;
- Question 2 (10 marks) requires the identification and explanation of two things, one of which is must come from the source material; and
- Question 3 (20 marks) requires extended explanation of an argument, point of view or issue identified in the source material.

- **Section B** will consist of two questions (total marks 40);
- Question 4 (5 marks) will require definition of a term; and
- Question 5 (35 marks) will require an extended essay response. Candidates will have a choice of two options.

Questions 1, 2 and 4 will assess only AO1. Questions 3 and 5 will assess all AOs.

What has stayed the same

- Exam length;
- Question 5 is very similar to the extended, synoptic question 3 under the legacy specification.

A22 Option B: Political Ideas

Content

What has stayed the same

- The focus of the unit is still on (a) the ideologies of Liberalism, Conservatism and Socialism and (b) the texts: - Mill's *On Liberty*, Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*.

What has changed

- The revised specification does not refer to any new material, but does give some more detail on content.

Assessment

What has changed

- Candidates will now answer 5 questions as opposed to three;
- The paper will consist of two sections. **Section A** will examine Texts and **Section B** will examine Ideologies;
- **Section A** will consist of three questions (total marks 35);
- Question 1 (5 marks) requires the explanation of a term given in the source material;
- Question 2 (10 marks) requires the identification and explanation of an idea or argument identified in the source material; and
- Question 3 (20 marks) requires extended explanation of an argument, point of view or issue identified in the source material.

- **Section B** will consist of two questions (total marks 40);
- Question 4 (5 marks) will require definition of a term; and
- Question 5 (35 marks) will require an extended essay response. Candidates will have a choice of two options.

Questions 1, 2 and 4 will assess only AO1. Questions 3 and 5 will assess all AOs.

What has stayed the same

- Exam length.