



Pearson

Pearson Edexcel A and AS level Politics

Making connections on the new Politics specification.

Synopticity, comparisons, links and rubrics explained

This supporting document clarifies the requirements for synopticity and how performance can be improved by establishing links, comparisons and parallels, and heeding rubrics.

Synopticity has always been a feature of advanced level study – and this continues on the new specification. The specification notes and provides details where synopticity is assessed in the new specification.

What is synopticity and how is it credited on the Politics specification?

Examination Paper	Synoptic element	Sanction
AS 8PLO1	No synopticity required	None
AS 8PLO2	Synopticity applies on the two essays 4a and 4b – where links have to be established with any aspect of 8PLO1 – do note that excludes core political ideas as it is on the 9PLO1 (not on the 8PLO1) specification	Level 5 – the highest mark tier is denied if ‘synoptic points’ are not raised – its absence may also mean a reduction within the level given to the response as the synoptic element is included as part of the A01 descriptors.
A level 9PLO1	No synopticity required	None
A level 9PLO2	Synopticity applies on the two essays 4a & 4b (not the source questions); here the link has to be made with 9PLO1 and covers both UK Politics and the core political ideas.	Level 5 – the highest mark tier is denied if ‘synoptic points’ are not raised – its absence may also mean a reduction within the level given to the response as the synoptic element is

		included as part of the A01 descriptors.
A level 9PLO/3A (US)	Synopticity is explicitly demanded for Q1a, Q1b and Q2 The style of the question explicitly asks for comparison to the US and UK based on section 6 of the USA (comparative) specification. The synoptic link covers both 9PLO1 (including core ideas) and 9PLO2 (including non-core ideas)	As it is so explicit here – the MS will not let answers get past Level 1 if two countries (the US and UK) are not cited.
A level 9PLO/3B (Global)	Synopticity is required for Q2 only. This link is to the core political ideas on 9PLO1 (liberalism, conservatism and socialism)	If there are no synoptic points, the mark awarded cannot exceed Level 3

Will synopticity be specifically mentioned in the examination question?

Examination Paper	Question Number	Command request on examination
AS 8PLO1	Not Applicable	None
AS 8PLO2	4a& 4b (the two essays)	In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study from Component 1: UK politics.
A level 9PLO1	Not Applicable	None
A level 9PLO2		In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK politics and core political ideas.
A level 9PLO3A	1a & 1b	There is no formal statement to refer back to Component 1 and Component 2 but the demand for UK references makes synopticity explicit.
A level 9PLO3A	2	There is no formal statement to refer back to Component 1 and Component 2 but the demand for UK references makes synopticity explicit
A level 9PLO3B	2	In your answer you must discuss any relevant core political ideas from 9PLO1

What makes synopticity unique and distinct on the new Politics specification?

In essence synopticity with regard to individual examination questions requires candidates to remember and build relevant and explicit links to parts of the course they have studied previously and strict limits are imposed if this does not happen.

Component 2 - looks back on Component 1

Component 3A - looks back on Components 1 & 2 (UK only)

Component 3B - looks back on the Core Political Ideas from Component 1

How detailed should the synoptic points be in a candidates response?

Here there is no official guide or measurement. Obviously the synoptic point has to be clear and manifest in order to be credited. It must be remembered that synopticity is not the core of the question it is a supplementary requirement and impinges on levels. Synopticity should not take over the wider demand of the question but is aimed to compliment the response. Clearer and more detailed synopticity may raise a mark within the level.

What other connections can be credited on the Politics specification?

The above notes the formal demand for synopticity across all the components on the new Politics specification. Furthermore it points out where marks may be limited if the synoptic element is not covered; the specification is designed to ensure candidates practice linking all the knowledge and understanding they have acquired so they are able to achieve a coherent whole.

The design of the new A levels and Politics in particular is that it is linear instead of a modular format and that the concept of taking all papers after two years of study means that holistic and pertinent themes and topics should be have to be linked.

Hence making other links and comparisons can be relevant and gain credit - such links can add depth to knowledge and understanding – in AO1, and it is crucial in AO2 where the assessment objective has at its core the need to make comparisons as it states

‘Analyse aspects of politics and political information, including in relation to parallels, connections, similarities and differences.’

Equally AO3 is important as substantiated judgements are required where students are required to come down on one side and show how one side is stronger than the other. This may be done when we compare and make a case for a point by using an example as evidence.

Holistic connections in the new Politics specification

Continuing the theme of a holistic approach in the new specification it is important to note that in the legacy Politics papers there was a tendency to 'compartmentalise' questions – in the fact that they often were sourced from one discreet section of the specification with no connection or overlap. That rigidity of format has now gone.

Essay questions on the new linear papers can draw on individual sections of the paper and/or combine sections in order to facilitate wider-ranging questions and to encourage holistic learning.

The second set of sample papers (the EAMS) provides clear evidence of this practice. More so than the first set of sample papers (the SAMS), and the examples draw on multiple sections from across the specification within each and between components.

Rubric requirements for specific questions

Candidates must pay particular attention to rubrics which apply to specific questions since these may contain serious implications for marks awarded or not awarded:

Component	Question	Rubric	Implications for marking
AS 8PL01 8PL02	3	In your response you must compare and contrast similarities and differences and consider competing points by analysing and evaluating them; only knowledge which supports this analysis and evaluation will gain credit.	Candidates who do not undertake any comparative analysis of the source cannot achieve beyond Level 1
AS 8PL01	4(a) & 4(b)	In your answer you must refer to at least two and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.	Candidates who have not referred to at least two types of and/or have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve beyond Level 2 .
AS 8PL02	4(a) & 4(b)	In your answer you must refer to at least two and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way and draw on relevant knowledge and understanding from Study of Component 1: UK Politics	Candidates who have not referred to at least two types of and/or have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve beyond Level 2. Candidates who do not make any synoptic points cannot achieve Level 5 .
A level 9PL01 9PL02	1(a) & 1(b)	In your response you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> compare and contrast the different opinions in the source examine and debate these views in a balanced way analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source. 	Candidates who do not undertake any comparative analysis of the source and/or have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2
A level 9PL01	2(a) & 2(b)	You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.	Candidates who have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2 .

<p>A level 9PL01</p>	<p>3(a) & 3(b)</p>	<p>You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.</p>	<p>Candidates who do not refer to specific thinkers from the specification (ie for conservatism <i>at least two of</i>: Thomas Hobbes, Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, Ayn Rand, Robert Nozick; for liberalism <i>at least two of</i> John Locke, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, Betty Friedan; for socialism <i>at least two of</i> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Beatrice Webb, Rosa Luxemburg, Anthony Crosland, Anthony Giddens) and/or consider only one side cannot achieve beyond Level 2.</p>
<p>A level 9PL02</p>	<p>2(a) & 2(b)</p>	<p>In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK politics and core political ideas. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.</p>	<p>Candidates who have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2. Candidates who do not make any synoptic points cannot achieve Level 5</p>
<p>A level 9PL02</p>	<p>3(a) & 3(b)</p>	<p>You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.</p>	<p>Candidates who do not refer to specific thinkers from the specification - ie for anarchism <i>at least two of</i>: Max Stirner, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman and/or consider only one side cannot achieve beyond Level 2.</p>
<p>A level 9PL02</p>	<p>4(a) & 4(b)</p>	<p>You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.</p>	<p>Candidates who do not refer to specific thinkers from the specification - ie for ecologism <i>at least two of</i>: Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, E F Schumacker, Murray Bookchin, Carolyn Merchant and/or consider only one side cannot achieve beyond Level 2.</p>
<p>A level 9PL02</p>	<p>5(a) & 5(b)</p>	<p>You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.</p>	<p>Candidates who do not refer to specific thinkers from the specification - ie for feminism <i>at least two of</i>: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, Sheila Rowbotham, bell hooks and/or consider only one side cannot achieve beyond Level 2.</p>

A level 9PL02	6(a) & 6(b)	You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.	Candidates who do not refer to specific thinkers from the specification - ie for multiculturalism at least two of : Isaiah Berlin, Charles Taylor, Bhikhu Parekh, Tariq Modood, Will Kymlicka and/or consider only one side cannot achieve beyond Level 2 .
A level 9PL02	7(a) & 7(b)	You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.	Candidates who do not refer to specific thinkers from the specification - ie for nationalism at least two of : Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Giuseppe Mazzini, Charles Maurras, Marcus Garvey and/or consider only one side cannot achieve beyond Level 2 .
A level 9PL03A	1(a) & 1(b)		Candidates who refer to only one of the terms or institutions mentioned cannot achieve beyond Level 1
A level 9PL03A	2	In your answer you must consider the relevance of at least one comparative theory.	Candidates who refer to only one named country cannot achieve beyond Level 1 Candidates who do not make any comparative theory (ie <i>referring to</i> rational, cultural or structural theory) cannot achieve beyond Level 3 .
A level 9PL03A	3(a), 3(b) & 3(c)	You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.	Candidates who have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2 .
A level 9PL03B	1(a) & 1(b)		Candidates who refer to only one of the terms or institutions mentioned cannot achieve beyond Level 1
A level 9PL03B	2	In your answer you must discuss any relevant core political ideas.	Candidates who refer to only one named theory (ie realist or liberal theory) cannot achieve beyond Level 1 Candidates who do not make any synoptic points (ie from 9PL01) cannot achieve beyond Level 3
A level 9PL03B	3(a), 3(b) & 3(c)	You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.	Candidates who have not considered both views in a balanced way cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2 .