

## AS and A level Politics

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### **1. Is the AS content the same as the UK A level content?**

Yes. The AS qualification content is all the UK content (UK Politics and UK Government). The extra content that forms the A level qualification is the Political Ideas and the Comparative Politics components (USA or Global Politics). The difference is how this content is assessed between the two qualifications. So while it is the same UK content at AS and A level, all content will be assessed to a higher standard at A level.

#### **2. Are the skills for the AS different from A level?**

No. The skills (listed on page 6 of the A level specification) are the same at AS and A level. There is however a difference in emphasis of the assessment objectives between the two qualifications. At AS there is a greater emphasis on AO1 knowledge and understanding, while at A level there is a greater emphasis on AO3 evaluation. Please refer to the assessment objective weightings tables in the specifications (page 19 for AS and page 54 for A level). This is due to the fact that the A level qualification is assessed to a higher standard than the AS.

#### **3. Will there be more sample assessment materials?**

Yes. There will be a second set of sample assessment materials (SAMs) published in September 2017. These will be called specimen papers, and available on our website. These will be password protected so students cannot download them and centres may use them as mock exams if they wish.

#### **4. Will there be model students' answers or exemplars?**

Yes. We will publish exemplars of students' answers to the SAMs questions on an ongoing basis from September 2017. These will have been marked by examiners and will be accompanied by examiners' commentaries explaining why and how the marks were, or were not, awarded. Some model answers will be available at the free Getting Ready to Teach events – held nationwide from March 2017 onward.

## **5. What was the rationale for the weighting of different elements of the A level specification?**

Our research indicated that teachers felt the UK content should be worth c. 50% of the qualification, and as this is the AS content we anticipate teachers spend a year teaching it. The qualification had to reflect the Department for Education's Politics subject content, so the Political Ideas and the Comparative (USA or Global) papers needed to occupy the other 50% of teaching time and candidates' examination time. To increase Political Ideas to 33% of the whole qualification was not popular if it meant reducing UK coverage from 50% to 33%

Furthermore, research with teachers showed that it would have been unpopular to have a question paper longer than 2 hours - a single paper assessing 50% of the A level content would have had to be 2.5 or 3 hours, in order to be accredited by Ofqual. Nor was it popular in our research to have four papers - other reformed A levels typically have no more than three papers. Our research indicated, and our examining/writing team agreed, that we should keep the US/Global content in one assessment as this is an optional topic, and should be assessed all together.

So we decided it was the best option to split the ideas content across two papers. Teachers may choose to teach all the political ideas as one 'unit' or in one term.

## **6. How will the political ideas be assessed now? What are the changes? Will it be more about the thinkers and their texts?**

The purpose of these political ideas is to introduce students to each political idea. The students need to know and understand the core principles of each idea, the divisions within each idea, and the key contributions of the thinkers to the idea. These three sections should be taught in relation to the idea's relationship with the state, society, human nature and the economy. The depth and breadth is outlined in both the specification and the getting started guide.

Students do not need to read texts or publications written or produced by the thinkers. Students only need to cover the ideas per thinker as indicated in the specification content.

Teachers are free to teach other thinkers related to the political ideas. But the five per idea listed in the specification content are the minimum students must know and understand about.

Questions will ask students about how an idea relates to the state, society, human nature and/or economy, and/or about the divisions/conflicts within the idea. The questions will not focus on or about the thinkers. Students should use the thinkers to provide exemplification or support in their answers. Students should reference at least two thinkers in each of their answers. These thinkers may be from those indicated in the specification, or other suitable thinkers with a relevant connection to the idea and the question set.

We have summarised the benefits of our splitting the political ideas across two assessments in four easy to understand bullet points below:

- **Core political ideas underpin the political parties.**

The three core political ideas reinforce learning about the three main political parties studied in the UK Politics component: the political ideas are the theories underpinning the values of each political party.

- **Non-core political ideas challenge the UK Government and establishment.**

Through the non-core political ideas students learn how certain alternative political ideas can be incorporated into the mainstream, e.g. feminism, multiculturalism and ecologism, and about those political ideas which are opposed because they are seen as a threat to the establishment, e.g. nationalism and anarchism.

- **Enables holistic teaching and assessment.**

By linking the core and non-core political ideas with the relevant UK content, it encourages holistic learning, and enables students to use their knowledge of the political ideas in their other answers.

- **A simpler model of assessment: three papers, not four.**

Based on teacher research, we chose an assessment model of **three two-hour exam** papers. Splitting the political ideas across the papers enables us to have this simpler model of assessment and give the UK content an appropriate weighting.

Further guidance on approaches to take when teaching the political ideas can be found in a document on our website entitled *Approaches to teaching the political ideas*.

## **7. Will the split of ideas across two papers not confuse students and teachers?**

No, because the split is logical based on the different types of political ideas. The core political ideas support the UK Politics knowledge and understanding (primarily of political parties) and the non-core political ideas support learning about the UK Government, and how the Government is challenged by and reacts to non-traditional, non-mainstream political ideas.

The expectations of the papers are clear, and students will benefit from the clear separation of the political ideas and consistent style of questions.

There is no expectation that students will be assessed on comparing different political ideas nor will they be expected to bring in knowledge of their core political ideas into their non-core political ideas answers, or vice versa.

## **8. How will the specification content be covered in the assessments?**

Questions will be extended response questions which will be broad and open-ended, enabling students to answer holistically, using as much of their knowledge and understanding from across the specification in their responses as they see fit.

There will not be questions on very specific elements of the specification, as these would not allow students to demonstrate fully all their knowledge and understanding nor meet the assessment objectives fully as set by Ofqual.

Nor will extended response questions be set on only one section or piece of content from within the specification. Questions in the new specification may have a focus e.g. prime ministerial power, but students should be encouraged, and examiners will reward, knowledge and understanding sourced from throughout the specification, as long as it is correct and relevant to the question being asked. Candidates should be ready to use key terms as listed in the specification whenever relevant opportunities occur.

As is the case, with any qualification, not every single piece of content will be examined in any given year. Our sampling strategy ensures that a range of content is assessed in any one set of assessments, and that over the lifetime of the qualification, all content is appropriately assessed.

**9. Will we need to teach everything? Will it all need to be taught to the same depth and breadth?**

Everything in the specification must be taught. This is especially important as content is sampled for the assessments, so there is less predictability of what questions may appear each year.

The exceptions are where there is choice – for example, from among the five non-core political ideas, students must study only one.

Centres also have choice in the Comparative Politics component, where they will decide to teach either the USA or Global Politics content but not both.

In the specification, words such as ‘overview’ (less) or ‘case study’ (more) indicate the appropriate depth to go into for that piece of content.

The Getting Started Guide exemplifies and clarifies the content, and should be referred to alongside the specification. The schemes of work and course planners show how the content can be delivered over a one or two-year course.

The sample assessment materials indicate what type of content will be assessed in particular questions and how responses are intended to be marked.

Attending our free getting ready to teach events will help teachers further understand the teaching requirements, and enable teachers to network and share best practice with colleagues.

**10. There is extensive reference to key historical events in the UK - how should these be covered?**

There are historical reference points on Component 1 with regards to the emergence of representative democracy (franchise extension) in the UK and the emergence of human rights and civil liberties; on Component 2 historical reference points cover the emergence of the UK constitution. The main impetus behind these historical landmarks is to put UK politics in context. In essence to see how the right to vote progressed over time, as did human rights and civil liberties and how we emerged with our current constitution as the Monarch withdrew from active political life. Students may reference these historical events in their answers but they should never be the main or whole focus of their answer.

**11. With regards to the origin and historical development of political parties, how much detail should there be on the historical background? How will this historical knowledge be rewarded?**

Students should have a brief overview of the historical context in which the political parties were formed. The level of detail is set out in the Getting Started Guide, available from our website. Understanding the origin and historical development of political parties can link to the teaching and learning of the core political ideas. Students may refer to the origins and historical developments of

political parties in their answers, and would receive credit (if relevant and correct), but they should not be the whole or main focus of a student's answer; nor would a question ever be asked which only related to the origins and historical development of political parties, as this is too niche a piece of knowledge, and would not enable students to demonstrate their broad knowledge and understanding of politics, let alone provide opportunity for sufficient analysis or evaluation.

**12. Will there be a choice of questions or are all questions compulsory?**

There are very few compulsory questions on the A level. All papers will present a choice in questions as can be seen in the SAMs. In the two UK A level papers, component 1 and component 2, each offers a choice of two source-based question with one to complete and two essay questions, again with one to complete. On the Political Ideas section on Component 1 there will be a choice of two questions with one to complete, and on the non-core Political Ideas section there will be a choice of two questions from each of the five additional political ideas again with one to complete. On Component 3 both Global and US, the only compulsory question is Question 2 which is worth 12 marks. On the AS papers the only compulsory questions are the two short source-based questions.

**13. Will there be a 30 mark question on, for example, STV? Or for example a very specific/niche part of the specification content?**

Questions will be broad and open-ended, enabling students to answer holistically, using as much of their knowledge and understanding from across the specification in their responses. However, in terms of knowledge and understanding, candidates will need to be able to demonstrate enough of the detail of a particular voting system to differentiate it meaningfully from other systems listed in the specification. There will not be narrow questions on very specific elements of the specification, as these would not allow students to demonstrate fully all their knowledge and understanding, nor opportunities for sufficient analysis or evaluation, nor meet the assessment objectives fully as set by Ofqual.

**14. How much detail and what use of statistics should be made when teaching voter behaviour?**

The depth and breadth with regards to this, and all content, is explained in the Getting Started Guide, available from our website. Both teachers and students should follow the specification detail. Students should have knowledge of statistics as demonstrating voter behaviour, but will not be expected in their answers to go into lots of detail or write answers based wholly around statistics. A limited table of statistics could be a source which will help candidates to respond to a question. The use of examples of statistics to support their arguments in their answers should be encouraged. But there would never be a question set requiring students simply to calculate statistics or data.

**15. How will you reward knowledge and understanding from across the specification in answers?**

The levels based mark schemes build in reward for students' demonstration of synopticity in their answers. The indicative content will provide examples of how and where students may refer to other examples/evidence in their answers in order to demonstrate synopticity.

The specification expects, and teachers should ensure, that students appreciate and have the confidence to exploit all the appropriate links and connections between the content within and across components.

AS Component 2, questions 4(a) and (b) and A level Component 2, questions 2(a) and (b) are synoptic, requiring candidates to draw widely on UK Politics content.

**16. How is it fair if they learn about all three core political ideas, but are only assessed on one in the exam?**

The core political ideas are content, just like any other, and will be sampled as such in the assessments. It is the case, as with any qualification, that not every single piece of content is examined on in any given year. Our sampling strategy ensures that a range of content is assessed in any one set of assessments, and that over the lifetime of the qualification, all content is appropriately assessed. All three core political ideas must be taught, as these three provide much of the foundation knowledge and understanding required to learn about other parts of the qualification.

In every exam paper for Component 1: UK Politics, there will be one question (from a choice of two) where students will have to answer on the core political ideas. One year this may be a question on liberalism and the other on socialism. The next year it may be that there are two questions on conservatism. This is to avoid predictability in terms of question setting year to year and to ensure all the core political ideas content is taught by teachers.

**17. How will the exams be timed in the Summer? Students need sufficient time between exams to prepare and revise.**

This information will be published in due course. Full account is taken of the time students require for revision between exams. But as the culmination of a one or two year course, it has to be recognised that revision for Paper 2 or Paper 3 will have commenced long before Paper 1 (or Paper 2) has been taken.

**18. When will the last re-sit be for the current AS and A2? When will the first papers be set for the new specifications?**

The final re-sit opportunity for AS will be in the Summer 2019. The final re-sit opportunity for A2 will also be Summer 2019.

The first AS paper based on the new specification will be set for Summer 2018 and the first A level paper for Summer 2019. Under the new arrangements, an AS taken in Summer 2018 or subsequently will not count towards the A level taken in 2019 or subsequently.

**19. Could Pearson produce a document each year summarising the key policies of the three main parties, so teachers know what to teach and do not have to go searching for the information?**

Unfortunately we do not have the resources to do this. If we singled out this piece of content, then others would ask us to do something similar for other parts of the content. The information about parties' policies is publically and readily available. Monitoring policy debates and changes within parties could be a profitable addition to their learning by students.

**20. Can you explain the types of essay styles expected from students? Either a balanced account of for and against and a judgement, or a polemic/persuasive argument just pushing the candidate's own view with a justification?**

It is very important that both teachers and students are aware of and understand fully the requirements of each particular question in the question papers. Certain questions require different things. For example, some require students to demonstrate synopticity (i.e. recognising, bringing together and hopefully resolving contrasting ideas or evidence), or comparative analysis, or to reference two factors/ideas etc in their answers. The indicative content in the mark scheme for the SAMs contains instructions and further guidelines as to how examiners expect the questions to be answered.

Exemplar answers will be published, demonstrating how students may approach different questions and the marks that have been awarded. Further guidance on approaches to the exams will be available in the coming months.

**21. Explain what is meant by 'case study' with regards to the PMs and general elections, and how much detail is involved when doing an 'overview' (e.g. historical documents)?**

The use of terms such as 'case studies' and 'overview' indicates the level of depth to which the content must be taught. A case study indicates that students must understand the specified content in a greater level of depth and be able to refer to it as a source of evidence for different questions and in different contexts. The detail is explained in the Getting Started Guide, available to download from our website, here - <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=Pearson-UK:Category%2FTeaching-and-learning-materials>

## **22. Will a draft version of the textbooks be put online before they are ready as hard copies to purchase?**

A sample chapter of Pearson's new Politics textbook is available here to download - <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017/published-resources.html>

The whole textbook is available for purchase in hard copy or as an online version. This can be downloaded from this website -

<http://www.pearsonschoolsandcolleges.co.uk/FEAndVocational/SocialScience/Politics/Politics.aspx>

The textbook will cover the whole A level specification content, including both USA and Global Politics options.

Other publishers are also publishing textbooks and materials to support teaching these qualifications.

- Hodder Education (Philip Allan) are publishing a student book supporting Edexcel UK Politics, which is in the process of being endorsed
- Separate Hodder Education (Philip Allan) books suitable for Edexcel and AQA for US Politics, Political Ideas and Global Politics
- A sample chapter of the Edexcel UK Politics book is here - <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/Product?Product=9781471889318>
- A monthly updated digital service called Politics Unravelling, aimed at supporting the Edexcel specification, as well as AQA and WJEC – there is more information here - <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/Product?Product=9781471889561>
- Palgrave Macmillan are publishing a joint Edexcel/AQA book: Andrew Heywood's Essentials of UK Politics
- Zig Zag also publishing resources. Their website is here <http://zigzageducation.co.uk/teaching-resources-for-government-and-politics.asp>

There is no requirement to purchase any textbook(s) for the delivery of these qualifications.

## **23. What is the cost of Pearson's textbook?**

The new Pearson Politics textbook costs £35, but this may be subject to change over the lifetime of the qualification.

There is no requirement to purchase any textbook for the delivery of these qualifications.

## **24. How can I divide up the amount of content into teaching time?**

Please refer to the course planners and schemes of work which are available to download from our website - <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.coursematerials.html#filterQuery=Pearson-UK:Category%2FTeaching-and-learning-materials>

The Getting Started Guide also sets out the depth and breadth to which the content should be taught.

Teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgement in determining the amount of teaching time for specification content, taking into account the amount of time allocated to the subject, numbers of teachers and abilities and pace of the students.

**25. How contemporary must teaching be? And how contemporary should the examples be in students' answers?**

This detail is explained in the specification, where we provide dates and years to teach from/between. This is the minimum that must be taught. Teachers and students may use other examples in their teaching and answers. Students will be credited for any appropriate examples they use (i.e. there is no time limit on when examples can come from, nor must they necessarily be the most recent, e.g. the latest general election figures). However, it is important to remember that this is a Politics qualification, not a History qualification, and so students' answers must be fixed in the present with contemporary examples, and not over-rely on historical evidence or examples.

**26. Can you tell me more about the USA comparative theories?**

A requirement from the DfE is for students to demonstrate understanding of theoretical approaches to comparative politics, as specifically related to the USA-UK content.

The specification outlines the three theories in detail (rational, cultural and structural) and which parts of the USA-UK synoptic content students will be expected to apply the theories. The Getting Started Guide also provides extra information about these theories. They are relatively simple to apply to the content.

They will be assessed in a consistent way in every USA question paper. Question 2 on the USA paper will ask students to analyse something about the USA and UK, and in their answer they 'must consider the relevance of at least one comparative theory' as it applies to that comparison.

**27. Which is the more difficult option, the USA or Global Politics?**

The content was agreed and set by the DfE. Content for Global Politics was designed to be different to the USA (obviously, as it covers Global Politics content) but comparable in both amount and demand. Pearson has designed the specification so the amount of content is the same (same number of topics, number of key terms), and the question papers (USA and Global Politics) are fully comparable with the same time, number of marks and question structures.

**28. Is there a theoretical element to Global Politics?**

On the Global Politics option the theories of realism and liberalism provide the background to making comparisons. Both these theoretical approaches are examined in themselves and as they apply to contemporary Global Politics as set out in the specification.

**29. Can you tell me more about how students should approach source-based questions?**

A DfE requirement was for students to analyse and evaluate 'political information'. Therefore we have designed questions which feature contemporary and engaging sources.

For AS Components 1 and 2, question 2 contains a source which students have to analyse in order to answer a question.

For AS Components 1 and 2, question 3 contains two sources which students have to compare in order to answer a question.

In each, students must only refer to points raised in the sources in their answers. Students should use their knowledge and understanding to support and develop their analysis and evaluation. See individual questions for specific candidate instructions and requirements.

For A level, Component 1 and 2, question 1 contains two sources from which students select one to analyse in order to answer the question. They must compare the different points of view presented in the source, and use their own knowledge and understanding arising from the source to help them to analyse and evaluate.

**30. In the A level specifications it says 'a requirement to respond to a wider range of concepts within each section at A level than AS.' And also says - 'Lower demands in terms of content' Is this really true if the content is the same?**

That is an error (and will be correct in issue 2 of the specifications). The content is the same, but the questions will be pitched at a higher demand at A level than AS, and candidates will be expected to give more developed answers with more examples at A level than AS (since they'll have been studying for two years, not one)

**31. When comparing AS to A level, what does 'differentiated mark scheme' mean?**

It means the levels based mark schemes contain different words and emphases to distinguish between the different demand of AS ('easier') compared to A level ('harder')

**32. With regard to pressure groups, and the use of two case studies, does this mean that no other examples are required to answer questions in this area? Will examiners still give full reward?**

Examiners only positive mark, so anything on the page that's correct and relevant will receive credit. Students as a minimum need to study two pressure groups as case studies (so, in detail - successes, methods etc - more info on this is in the online getting started guide - (GSG)) However, the more examples that are taught, the better for the students. This crosses over with other sections, including groups to extend the franchise and civil liberties groups.

**33. With regard to the debates on the extent, and limits of rights based culture, is this culture or actual level of protection via political/legal processes?**

It's a mixture of the two, and the GSG contains more examples on how this section can be delivered. Essentially it means that as the rights of citizens have increased exponentially over recent years, do citizens actually have the same level/feeling of their rights and freedoms. For example, we have the Equality Act to protect citizens, but we cannot protest within a kilometre of Parliament without getting permission. Is the balance between ensuring liberty and protecting security correct?

**34. Does the specification make it possible to have a question such as 'what kind of party system is the UK?' There seems to be an assumption in the specification that the UK is multi-party with questions arising from this.**

There is not such an assumption in the specification of that. The Westminster model could arguably be described as: one party dominant (Labour 1997-2010) or two party (Labour and Conservatives), or two and a half party (including the Liberal Democrats) or multi-party - with all the minor and SNP parties considered. It is not that the specification is saying what the system is, but that we are provoking debate and discussion among students.

**35. Regarding 'Various factors that affect party success' – is there anything which has to be used other than media? Can other factors be used?**

Yes, teachers can use their own discretion and judgement on other factors here – please refer to the GSG for examples.

**36. Regarding, Voting behaviour and media, is partisanship and attachment the same thing?**

Partisanship is the strength of a person's commitment to a party; partisan alignment or attachment is the strength of the link between a party and people from a particular class, so typically we used to regard Labour support as working class and Conservative support as middle class; that then led to discussion of people who didn't 'obey the rule' in terms of, for example 'working class Conservatives'. When such links began to break down and voting was seen to be more aligned to, for example geography, education or age rather than class, we spoke of 'class dealignment'. Theories based on this idea typically encountered problems when researchers discovered that the objective way they assessed the class of individuals was often not the same as the subjective way in which the individuals regarded themselves.

**37. What does analysis of the national voting-behaviour patterns for these elections, revealed by national data sources and how and why they vary mean?**

Please refer to the GSG for specific examples, but it means looking at Parliament's website for the votes for the elections you've chosen to study and considering why different people vote for

different parties, based on gender, age, class, location. Other website will have similar breakdowns of voting statistics and analysis.

**38. Regarding Parliament, legislation and checks are mentioned in detail (2.3 and 2.4) but representation is not explicitly mentioned. Can there be exam questions on this role alone? Do we need to address this role under 2.1 main functions and extent to which they are fulfilled?**

One of the key roles of Parliament is to represent people, so that must be taught. But questions can only be asked on specific content in the specification. So a question could be phrased – ‘Describe main functions of Parliament (this is from one in the SAMs), and the answer would be: representation of people, checks on government power and making laws. Teachers are free to use their professional judgement to teach the specification content in any order or way they see fit, so long as it is all covered.

**39. Regarding the powers of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to dictate events and determine policy. PM choice – one pre and one post 1997. Can students/do students need to use more than two? Is it true!? Will the mark scheme stipulate two PMs maximum and will students get full reward if they do not deal with current PM?**

Students can (and should) learn about more than two Prime Ministers – it is good practice to have as many examples as possible. Those two stipulated in the specification are the minimum for students to learn. They should learn about the current Prime Minister as this will bring their knowledge up-to-date with the most recent examples.

The mark scheme may stipulate (and this will be indicated in the questions) reference to a minimum number of ‘x’ - so Prime Ministers, or elections. They will be able to get full marks if they don't deal with the current PM - as it does not say in the specification that they have to learn about the current Prime Minister.

**40. Will there still be questions on the EU once we've left the organisation in March 2019?**

Yes, as all the content in the specification must be taught, and will be sampled in the assessments over the lifetime of the qualification. Regardless of when/how we leave, understanding about the importance of the EU and its significant impact on the UK, is still very important for students of Politics.

**41. Why is using the levels based mark schemes (LBMS) better than the old way of marking?**

Due to the reforms from the Department for Education and Ofqual, all reformed GCSE and A level qualifications contain levels based mark schemes for extended pieces of writing. This ensures that all

answers are marked to a consistent and fair standard in a holistic way, rather than a 'points-based' approach.

**42. Why do the core ideas and non-core ideas have the same amount of marks, when students have to study three core ideas but only one non-core?**

All the content in the specification needs to be taught and studied. The three core ideas are mandatory and enable students to understand a lot of other content in UK Politics and UK Government components (e.g. political parties) and also enable better understanding of the chosen non-core idea. Assuming a 360 guided learning hours (as set by the DfE for an A level) we anticipate students are taught for 15 hours on each of the core ideas. The core ideas will then be sampled (the same as any other content) when setting the exam papers.

The exam papers (Components 1 and 2) are comparable in terms of number of marks and demand. As part of our research we discussed extensively with teachers the right amount of time to spend teaching the ideas, and found support for 60 hours out of 360 guided learning hours for the A level. This represents 1/6 the assessment time, so collectively they are assessed for one hour. And splitting this across the two papers fitted our three 2-hour paper model (which teacher research also indicated they wanted).

**43. Can the pressure groups chosen to teach in UK Politics 1.4 be the same as those in 1.3?**

Yes, but it's advisable to teach as many different examples of types of pressure groups, their activities and achievements as possible, so students are best prepared to use a range of knowledge and understanding of different examples in their answers.

**44. Can students use the first person, 'I', in their answers?**

Students may do this, and will not be penalised, but should be reminded that these are AS/A level qualifications and answers should be written in an academic style and in prose, in order for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a coherent and persuasive way.

**45. Are there marks for SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar)?**

No, but students should be reminded that to achieve the highest levels of marks students should write answers in an academic style and in prose. The key words from the levels based mark scheme (for example, *perceptive, logical, cohesive, fully effective, consistently substantiated*) all suggest strong SPAG skills.

#### **46. How do I create my own sources if I want to write my own mock questions for students?**

Teachers should look to the SAMs and specimen papers for examples of sources and how they're phrased. The material can come from a range of sources, for example: newspaper reports, current affairs magazine articles, interviews (transcribed from TV or radio), online blogs. Teachers will need to put across two contrasting views in the source to provide enough information for students to analyse and compare. The sides should be clearly indicated with phrases such as 'on the other hand...' or even separate sections within the source, putting a 'for' and 'against' point of view.

**46. Should there be a theme(s) to connect and link the three chosen general elections when teaching them?**

This is not a requirement, but teachers should consider when choosing the elections to study that there is enough to compare and contrast between them (for example, choosing three landslide victories for one particular parties may not provide sufficient material for students to analyse and evaluate), as well as enough evidence about them for students to have enough knowledge and understanding to use in their answers.

**47. Do students need to state that one side of the argument is stronger at the end of the essay, to meet AO3 requirements, or should they start the essay with a stated position and then try to defend it throughout?**

There is no prescribed or correct way to write an essay, and each individual student will have their own unique style. Students should be encouraged to make AO3 judgements throughout their answer (and not save their conclusions for their final paragraph).

Students will need to come down on one side of the argument or the other, having made their case, and dismissed the alternative views throughout their answer.

Suggested essay writing guidance will be published on the website shortly.

**48. How long should students spend answering each question?**

For AS students should spend 20 minutes answering each of the Section A questions, 20 minutes on the Section B questions, and 45 minutes answering the Section C question.

For A level students should spend 45 minutes each on the 30-mark essay and source questions; 30 minutes on the political ideas 24-mark questions (both core and non-core); and 15 minutes on the 12-mark questions in the Comparative component 3.

These timings include reading, planning and checking your answer time.

Students should practice timed questions before the live assessments.

**49. How are the comparative and theoretical elements assessed in the papers for Component 3?**

For the USA, questions 1 and 2 are comparative. Question 1 because students are expected to compare between the USA and UK. Question 2 because students are expected to compare between the USA and the UK.

For Global, questions 1 and 2 are comparative. Question 1 because students are expected to compare two different organisations or issues. Question 2 because students are expected to discuss any relevant core political idea. These may be chosen by the student, and selected on how they most appropriately help to respond to the question being asked.

For both USA and Global politics, the theories are assessed in section B, question 2.

For USA, students must analyse the x between the USA and UK, and consider the relevance of one comparative theory (structural, rational, cultural) in their answer. They may choose whichever theory they like (taking into account that some/one may be a better fit than others, depending on what they are analysing in the question).

For Global politics, students will always be asked a question on what realists and liberals think about an issue. This will be based on section 6 of the specification (page 53)

### **50. Which textbooks do you recommend and can students do well by just using this book?**

Several books have been published to support the new Pearson Edexcel A level Politics specification. Pearson have published a single book which covers the whole specification. Other publishers such as Hodder and Palgrave Macmillan have published books which target specific components such as UK Government and Politics, USA etc. We advise you to get inspection copies of all the available books and choose the ones you feel best suit you and your students. You could always use one as a class text and recommend that students use the others as further reading to help with their understanding of the course. For an A level subject we would not recommend that students rely solely on one course textbook and we would expect students to have read more widely as part of their studies.

### **I still have questions, how can I obtain answers to these?**

There are many avenues open to you to resolve any outstanding questions you may have now or later. These include:

- Attend one of the free face to face Getting Ready to Teach events held nationwide from March 2017 onwards – book on line on the Politics home page at Pearson
- If this is difficult, you can attend one these the Getting Ready to Teach events which are also available on-line at various times
- Keep checking our website for new details and resources – we constantly update this from the network of Politics teachers who have helped us put together a really exciting new specification. The link is: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.coursematerials.html###filterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FSpecification-and-sample-assessments>
- Use our *Ask The Expert* link – this feeds your question to one of the Senior Examiner team and you will be given personal feedback
- Get in touch with us by email at: [TeachingGovernmentandPolitics@pearson.com](mailto:TeachingGovernmentandPolitics@pearson.com)