

BWS A LEVEL POLITICS HANDBOOK 2019/21



A Level Politics students at Number 10 Downing St

Content and assessment overview

The Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Politics consists of three components of equal value, each of which will be examined in a separate 2-hour exam paper in the summer of 2020

Component 1: UK Politics (9PL0/01) Year 12

1. Political Participation, students will study:

- democracy and participation, political parties, electoral systems, voting behaviour and the media.

2. Core Political Ideas, students will study:

- conservatism, liberalism, socialism.

Component 2: UK Government (9PL0/02) Year 12

1. UK Government, students will study:

- the constitution, parliament, Prime Minister and executive, relationships between the branches.

2. Non-Core Political Ideas, students will study:

- feminism

Component 3: Comparative Politics (9PL0/3A) Year 13

We will study the Politics of the USA:

- the US Constitution and federalism, US Congress, US presidency, US Supreme Court and civil rights, democracy and participation, comparative theories.

Mrs Anders and Mr Mc Intyre share the teaching of each component in Year 12 and Mrs Anders and Mr Stamp share the teaching of Component 3 in Year 13..

From the Edexcel Specification -

Key terms and concepts

Students must use appropriate vocabulary. The content supports this skill by listing key terminology in each content area. The lists are to support teaching of the main content and help students to use appropriate vocabulary in assessment. Students should, therefore, familiarise themselves with the definitions of key terminology for each section (listed in each Learning guide topic page)

Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas

There are two compulsory sections to this component: UK **Politics** and **Core Political Ideas**.

UK Politics

This section explores the nature of politics and how people engage in the political process in the UK.

Students will investigate in detail how people and politics interact. They will explore the emergence and development of the UK's democratic system and the similarities, differences, connections and parallels between direct and indirect democracy. They will focus on the role and scope of political parties that are so central to contemporary politics, including the significance of the manifestos they publish at election time and their relevance to the mandate of the resulting government.

This section allows students to understand the individual in the political process and their relationship with the state and their fellow citizens. Students will examine how electoral systems in the UK operate and how individuals and groups are influenced in their voting behaviour and political actions. This component will further examine the role of the media in contemporary politics. It will also give students an understanding of voting patterns and voting behaviour.

There are four content areas in UK Politics:

1. Democracy and participation
2. Political parties
3. Electoral systems
4. Voting behaviour and the media.

Core Political Ideas

This section allows students to explore the three traditional political ideas of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. Students will learn about the core ideas and principles and how they apply in practice to human nature, the state, society and the economy, the divisions within each idea and their key thinkers.

There are three content areas in Core Political Ideas:

1. Liberalism
2. Conservatism
3. Socialism.

Component 2: UK Government and Non-core Political Ideas

There are two sections within this component, **UK Government** and **Political Ideas**. Students study UK Government and one political idea from a choice of five from the Political Ideas section.

Overview

Politics is ultimately about people, but most political decisions are made by a branch of government whose roles and powers are determined by a set of rules: the constitution. This component is fundamental to understanding the nature of UK government, since it enables students to understand where, how and by whom political decisions are made.

The component also gives students a base of comparison to other political systems. The component introduces students to the set of rules governing politics in the UK, the UK constitution, which is different in nature from most of the rest of the world. It further introduces students to the specific roles and powers of the different major branches of the government – legislative, executive, and judiciary – as well as the relationships and balance of power between them, and considers where sovereignty now lies within this system. Students will explore the following key themes: the relative powers of the different branches of UK government; the extent to which the constitution has changed in recent years; the desirability of further change; and the current location of sovereignty within the UK political system.

UK Government

There are four content areas:

1. The constitution
2. Parliament
3. Prime Minister and executive
4. Relationships between the branches.

Non-core Political Ideas – Feminism

This section allows students to explore an additional set of political ideas. Students will learn about the core ideas and principles of Feminism, the effects of these ideas, the divisions within each idea and about key feminist thinkers.

Component 3: Comparative Politics

There are two optional sections within this component, Government and Politics of the USA and Global Politics. Students study one of these. – *the USA will be our option*

Government and Politics of the USA

Overview

The USA has been considered by some to be a 'beacon of democracy'. As a world power, understanding the nature of US democracy, and the debates surrounding it, is crucial given the considerable impact that the USA has on UK, European and global politics.

Students will explore the US Constitution and the arguments surrounding this guiding document of US democracy. In learning about the key institutions of government in the USA and analysing the manner in which they achieve this power and exercise it over their citizens, students will judge ultimately whether 'liberty and justice for all' has been achieved in the USA. Students will be expected to highlight the debates on the nature of democracy in the USA and evaluate the extent to which it remains an issue.

The impact of the US government on the world beyond its borders is increasingly a feature of international politics. Students will begin to engage with this interaction by comparing and contrasting politics and institutions in the US with those in the UK. This will develop a wider understanding of politics as a discipline, underpinned by the theoretical concepts of comparative politics.

Content

There are six content areas:

1. The US Constitution and federalism
2. US Congress
3. US presidency
4. US Supreme Court and US civil rights
5. US democracy and participation
6. Comparative theories

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

Students are expected to follow the news, usually by reading a serious newspaper most days of the week (= *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Guardian* or *Independent*); these are all available online and both schools have subscriber access. You should also watch or listen to a reputable news programme regularly, e.g. *Newsnight*, *Channel 4 News*, *Radio 4's Today*, *PM*, etc. Websites such as BBC News are also highly recommended – put it in your favourites on your smartphone.

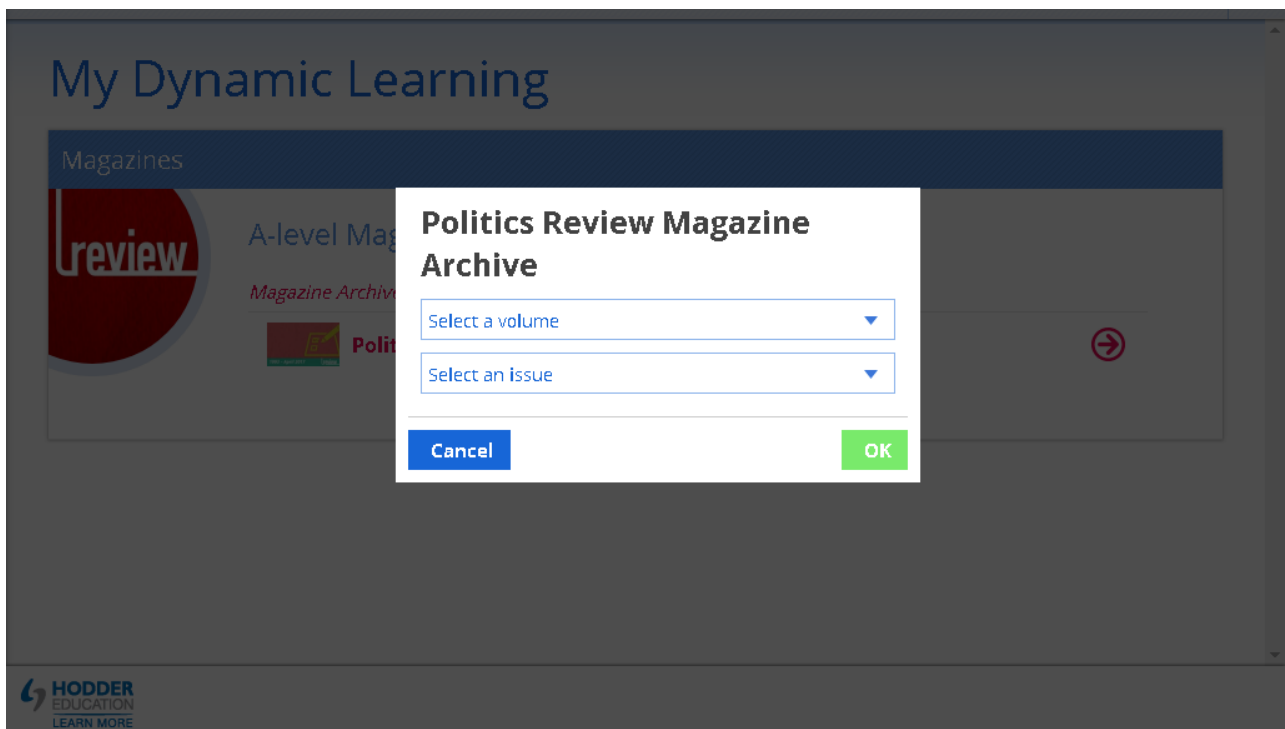
The Department also maintains a regularly updated webpage on the BWS website - <http://www.bws-school.org.uk/Curriculum-Exams/Politics/resources/> where links to other useful news sources can be found, and articles and documents of particular relevance to our topics are frequently posted. Please bookmark this and check it at least weekly, as well using resources on it when asked.

Students would also benefit from reading one of the weekly news magazines, such as *The Economist*, *The Spectator* or *The Week* (student subscriptions available but all have free online access) and from following political blogs (e.g. Nick Robinson of the BBC, Guido Fawkes, Labour List, LSE Politics and Policy). Give several different ones a try and subscribe/follow one or more that suit you.

Podcasts are also a great way of getting political analysis –try the *Guardian's Politics Weekly*, *Times Red Box*, and the BBC's *Week in Westminster*, *Westminster Hour* and *BrexitCast*, for example.

The Politics Department subscribes to *Politics Review*, a journal written for A level students. The journal is published four times a year and students are encouraged to read it, either in the printed copies on our magazine rack, or online. You will also be set articles to read and note from the online archive, which can be accessed from the web link below:

From the entry page, click on *Politics Review Magazine Archive* which brings up the option box shown in the picture below.



To find the issue of Politics Review you need use the drop down menus to select the Volume and Issue required – Volume Number covers four issues in an academic Year: 1990-91 = Volume 1; 2016-17 = Volume 26.

You can then choose the issue you want from within the Year: September, November, February or April.

ASSESSMENT

All assessment is by external exams (no coursework) at the end of Year 13.

Paper 1 Assessment information

- Sat in: May/June 2020.
- The assessment is 2 hours.
- The assessment is out of 84 marks.
- The assessment consists of **two** sections:

Section A – Political Participation: this section is worth 60 marks

Students answer one source question requiring comparative analysis from a choice of two and one non-source question from a choice of two.

AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

Section B – Core Political Ideas: this section is worth 24 marks

Students have a choice of two questions and they answer one.

AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

These questions will focus on content areas 1 and 2 and require students to use the key ideas of thinkers (content area 3) in their answers. These questions will cover either one core political idea or two core political ideas.

Sources

AO2 and AO3 require students to study and respond to 'political information'. In this qualification, this is carried out through the questions in Section A that use a source. These sources will be a single written (text) source only or a single source that combines both text and data (pie chart, tables, simple graphs such as a bar chart), all related in some way to UK politics. Sources will be selected to ensure that they give students opportunities to bring in their own knowledge and understanding, to engage in comparative analysis and to evaluate by making judgements and drawing conclusions.

For each source, information relating to the context of the source is provided. This information will not be discretely assessed, however it is provided to help students to engage with the information provided in the source.

Paper 2 Assessment information

- Sat in: May/June 2020.
- The assessment is 2 hours.
- The assessment is out of 84 marks.
- The assessment consists of **two** sections.

Section A – UK Government: this section is worth 60 marks

Students answer one source question requiring comparative analysis from a choice of two and one non-source question from a choice of two.

AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

Section B – Non-core Political Ideas: this section is worth 24 marks

Students have a choice of two questions from the non-core idea they have studied and they answer one.

AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

These questions will focus on content areas 1 and 2 and require students to use the key ideas of thinkers (content area 3) in their answers.

Sources

AO2 and AO3 require students to study and respond to 'political information'. In this qualification, this is carried out through the questions in Section A that use a source. These sources will be a single written (text) source only or a single source that includes both text and data (pie chart, tables, simple graphs such as a bar chart), all related in some way to UK government. Sources will be selected to ensure that they give students opportunities to bring in their own knowledge and understanding, to engage in comparative analysis and to evaluate by making judgements and drawing conclusions.

For each source, information relating to the context of the source is provided. This information will not be discretely assessed, however it is provided to assist students in engaging with the information provided in the source.

Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment requires students to work across different parts of a qualification and to show their accumulated knowledge and understanding of a topic or subject area. Synoptic assessment enables students to show their ability to combine their skills, knowledge and understanding with breadth and depth of the subject. This paper assesses synopticity in Section A in the non-source questions, which require students to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1: UK politics and core political ideas.

Paper 3 Assessment information

- Sat in: May/June 2020.
- The assessment is 2 hours.
- The assessment is out of 84 marks.
- The assessment consists of three sections.

Section A: this section is worth 12 marks.

Students answer one question from a choice of two.

AO1 and AO2 are assessed.

Section B: this section is worth 12 marks.

Students answer one compulsory question, which will focus on topics from the comparative theories section.

AO1 and AO2 are assessed.

Section C: this section is worth 60 marks.

Students answer two questions worth 30 marks each from a choice of three.

AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment requires students to work across different parts of a qualification and to show their accumulated knowledge and understanding of a topic or subject area.

Synoptic assessment enables students to show their ability to combine their skills, knowledge and understanding with breadth and depth of the subject.

This paper assesses synopticity: In Paper 3A, this is assessed in Sections A and B as students are required to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1: UK politics and Component 2: UK government.