



Introduction

These resources are designed to help students develop essay writing skills in A Level Government and Politics by providing teaching and learning resources to be used online and offline, independently and in the classroom.

The resources break down the components of a good essay and consider how each of these elements can be achieved, and then consider how elements can be assembled into a cohesive whole.

The examples are all taken from essays written by students either under exam conditions or as class or homework tasks.

Teacher Notes for each resource

	Focus of Resource	Teacher notes
1	What makes a good essay?	<p>Research has shown that although it can be difficult to get people to reliably apply a mark scheme, we are generally good at rank ordering pieces of work.</p> <p>Activity 1a) asks students to rank order essays from best to worst. The marks given under timed conditions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A: AO1=7, AO3=7, Total=14B: AO1=8, AO3=9, Total=17C: AO1=4, AO3=5, Total=9D: AO1=10, AO3=12, Total=22 <p>Activity 1b) asks students to use the outcome of the rank ordering exercise to come up with a checklist for a good essay that could be used for self and peer assessment. A suggested checklist is also given. At this stage students can also be asked whether they could tell what the question was, from the answers, and why/why not. The question was: 'How effective are referendums as a means of resolving political issues?' (22). This is an essay from Section C of the Summer 2018 Unit 2 examination paper.</p>
2	Overall Structure of an Essay	<p>Activity 2 asks students to drag and drop chunks of an essay into a broad essay outline to help them organise an answer appropriately to address a question. Students should then be asked why they chose this order – what words or phrases have been used that perform the role of 'cues' or 'signposts' about where the essay is going? This provides a link to Activity 3. They should be asked what was the question? And why were they easily able to work this out? The question was: 'Assess whether the process of electing the US president is now too candidate-centred.' A suggested response is provided. Students can check their ordering against this original student response to the question.</p>



	Focus of Resource	Teacher notes
3	Transitional, Linking and Signposting Words and Phrases	<p>Clear signposts are important in introducing new points, linking paragraphs into a coherent flow of argument, signposting evaluations and conclusions, developing good explanation of arguments and helping to directly address the question set.</p> <p>Activity 3a) is designed to help students expand their vocabulary by asking them to sort words and phrases under the appropriate headings. An answer sheet is also provided for printing. This could be done as a card matching activity with students.</p> <p>Activity 3b) encourages students to utilise some of these words in an example by improving a paragraph using them. There is a suggested response but there are a number of ways in which it could be improved using the words and phrases suggested. The paragraph is from a student response to the question on the politics of the USA, 'The core vote for the two main parties is loyal and can be depended upon.'</p> <p>Discuss.</p> <p>Activity 3c) helps students to identify the key components of a good paragraph, using the paragraph in this section.</p>
4	Identifying arguments and selecting evidence – the 'Big Points' and the examples	<p>Activity 4 addresses the skills of identifying relevant arguments and of using appropriate details to illustrate these. Students often confuse their 'Big Points' with the examples or explanation of them, and sometimes they treat examples as arguments, attempting to drive a paragraph with an example of a point they have already made, developed and supported elsewhere. This activity helps to clarify this.</p>
5	Elaboration, explanation, development and discussion of a point of argument within a paragraph.	<p>Activity 5 looks at the skill of elaboration, explanation, development and discussion of a point of argument within a paragraph. The example consists of two paragraphs about the same issue, which students should compare and contrast to establish why and how the quality of explanation is better in example A than in example B.</p>
6	Drawing Conclusions	<p>Activity 6a) looks at drawing mini conclusions.</p> <p>Activity 6b) considers conclusions being drawn at the end of essays.</p>
7	Meeting the Assessment Objectives throughout the essay	<p>Activity 7 asks students to identify where in a complete essay each assessment objective is being met by using different colour highlighters.</p>



Student Resources:

Activity 1a: 4 Essays to Rank Order

A

05

In contrast to other European nations, Britain does not have a history of many nationwide referendums. Referendums are a vote on a single issue, either advisory or binding, in which a simple majority of voters determines a winner, generally between two binary options for example 'leave' or 'remain' in the 2016 European Union membership referendum.

Referendums give the general populace a say on constitutional issues, and the clear majority of voters needed to accept or deny the proposal ensures that the result of any referendum is clear and decisive, even when it is close. They are also arguably positive for the health of democracy as they are an example of direct democracy in its present form.

Referendums also often give governments legitimacy to perform large constitutional reforms such as devolution. The post 1997 government of Tony Blair wanted to undertake a program of devolution which was accepted by Welsh voters in 1998 in a close 'Yes' vote, but sadly rejected by citizens of the North-East in a lower postal referendum.

However, as decisive as they may be, referendums are also invertible and divisive. The fact that most referendums are conducted on contentious issues in the UK, ensures that results are close (52% for leaving the EU, 55% against Scottish independence, approximately 50.2% for Welsh devolution), this produces a divisive and often bitter atmosphere around politics. Due to the typically close nature of results, the outcome may also be challenged, examples of which include the SNP calling for a second independence referendum, or overturned, as was the case with the 2016 European Union Membership Referendum, which overturned a prior vote in 1974.

Referendums have also been described as the tyranny of the majority since a small majority of voters dictate the direction of the entire country. One way to curb this effect is to mandate a turnout requirement, which ensures that a certain number of electors must vote for the result to be accepted.



Overall, while clear and decisive referendums create conflict and division, and arguably run contrary to the nature of representative democracy. There is a strong case to be made that a more proportionally representative voting system which would give voice to parties with minority views on constitutional questions, such as UKIP, may ultimately show as a more effective means of settling political issues in future.

**B**

C5

In recent times, there has been a growing debate about how effective referendums actually are in resolving political issues. On one hand, it could be argued that they are effective as they are a simple YES/NO vote and the side with the most votes wins. In addition, there are clear examples that help to support this view such as the devolution referendum held in Wales in 1997 and the voting system referendum held in 2011. However, some referendums can result in an unlikely result which may not be linked and can lead to calls for a second referendum such as the Brexit referendum. These referendums don't resolve the political issues as the result is not respected by all.

There is a clear argument to illustrate that referendums are effective in resolving political issues as it's a YES/NO vote where the plurality wins i.e. the side with the most votes wins. This creates a simple vote that everyone can understand and should respect the result of. Furthermore, there are clear examples of referendums that have helped to resolve political issues such as the Devolution in Wales's referendum that was held in 1997. This referendum gave the people of Wales a choice of whether they wanted a devolved assembly created in Wales, which would give the Assembly in Wales powers devolved from Westminster. These powers include being able to pass legislation in certain fields such as education, environment and transport. This referendum was held as a result of calls from Welsh MPs and the people of Wales to be given more power from Westminster. At the time of the referendum being held, the Labour government of Tony Blair had a majority of over 160 MPs, so they were very powerful inside parliament and this led to calls from some power to be given to Wales so the People of Wales interests could be better represented. 60% voted for devolution and as a result the Welsh Assembly opened in 1999. This example clearly highlights how referendums are effective in resolving political issues as the question of whether Wales should be given devolved powers at the time was a big question in Wales, and this referendum helped settle the issue once and for all.

Whilst there is an argument to show that referendums are effective in solving political issues, there's also a clear argument to support the view that they don't and there are clear examples of where referendums haven't necessarily solved the political issue in question. A key example of this would be the Brexit referendum held in June 2016 that was held to decide whether the UK would leave or remain in the EU.



One of the main reasons why it was called by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, was because it was supposed to help right the Conservative Party, who was split on the issue of the EU, as well as the whole country. Despite the fact that the UK voted to leave the EU by 51% to 49% it could be argued that the referendum hasn't solved the political issues. This can be seen through the fact that the Conservative Party is still split, as well as the general public with there being calls for a second referendum to be held in order to reverse the result. This example shows how referendums aren't always effective in solving political issues.

To conclude, having looked at both sides of the argument as to whether referendums are effective in resolving political issues, I believe that they are. This is because, although there are examples where they have caused a split in the country, such as the Brexit referendum, the fact that it's a simple YES/NO vote where the plurality win coupled with key examples of referendums which have solved political issues such as Devolution in Wales referendum held in 1997.



C

C5

A referendum is when parliament cannot make a clear judgement on a particular issue, usually a decision that will follow huge consequences on the public, so instead of voting on the issue parliament they put on the issue parliament they put the issue to the electorate to decide. They are an example of direct democracy in its purist form. Referendums are usually used for YES or NO questions so that it is straight forward for the public.

Referendums are the purist form of democracy. This means that nobody can argue the outcome because it is what the majority voted for. For example, in 2015 the UK held a referendum to decide on it is membership to the EU. The country voted roughly 52% to leave, meaning that Britain will now leave the EU because that is what the majority voted for. They are effective in settling political disputes because no matter the argument against the political system, it simply does not matter and it is decided by the will of the entire electorate.

However, because of the nature of the issues that referendums are used for, it means that the argument for each side is usually very close and so the outcome of referendums are usually by very small majority. For example, in the EU referendums the split was around 48% voted to remain and 52% voted leave. This means that although the majority voted leave, still almost half of the population voted remain which can potentially cause divisions within Society and also huge divisions within political parties which can confuse voters and weakness governments.

In conclusion, there is no doubt in the effectiveness of referendums. They simply are the purist form of democracy; however, they do have the potential to have collateral and create more political issues. On the whole, referendums are extremely effective in resolving the single political issue they are used for.



D

C5

It is debateable as to whether or not referendums are effective at resolving political issues. They have both their advocates and detractors, and thus a number of matters must be considered before making an overall judgement.

On the one hand, many would argue that referendums do in fact help to solve political issues. This is due to the fact that they put important questions directly to the electorate. This is direct democracy, arguably the purest form of democracy. This means that voters are fully able to voice an opinion on matters of significance thus ensuring a concrete, firm result. For example, the EU referendum 2016 and the Irish Abort Law referendum 2018, both gave clear results which then could be acted upon. Therefore, referendums resolve political issues as the verdict of a nation can't be disregarded lightly.

Conversely, it has been argued that referendums are ineffective as misleading and/or inaccurate information can be disseminated. This means that an issue may become even less clear than it was before, thus impeding the democratic process as both sides of the campaign produce heavily questionable arguments that do not carry much weight in reality. For example, the UK's 2016 EU Referendum produced questionable claims on both sides. The Leave Campaign presented a misleading promise of £350 million per year in additional NHS funding, while the Remain Campaign inaccurately predicted economic disaster and a potential European war. Therefore, if anything referendums may actually worsen political issues as opposed to resolving them.

A point in favour of referendums is that they can resolve divisions within governing parties. This means that significant political issues which have been developed with the government itself can be resolved, as a verdict from the electorate is generally regarded as the ultimate decision. Namely, in both the 1975 EEC Referendum and the 2016 EU vote, issues were present regarding splits in the governing parties, Labour and Conservative respectively. The votes effectively silenced a dissenting wing of each party. This means that referendums can be effective as they give governments and parties alike a more singular, united direction.

On the other hand, referendums can be ineffective when the question posed is particularly complex.



This is because certain issues are virtual impossible to put a simple 'yes' or 'no' vote, as they may have various facets and features which must be considered in detail on their own merits. Again, returning to the 2016 EU referendum, the vote failed to resolve the question of the UK's future relationship with the European Union; advocates of 'Hard Brexit' and 'Soft Brexit' have waged an increasingly bitter war due to this confusion. Thus, referendums can be ineffective as they do not resolve all facets of complicated issues; they represent a starting point yet cannot ensure every stage is properly fulfilled.

Referendums are praised for helping to resolve a particular issue; that of political participation. This means that by presenting a binary choice on a single issue, voters may be more inclined to turn out; it cuts across usual partisan politics and presents an image of great national importance. Specifically, the EU referendum produced a turnout of 72.1%, the highest in many years. Thus, referendums can help to resolve declining participation by appealing directly to the public.

On the other hand, biased and/or misleading questions may render referendums ineffective. This means that if the choice presented to voters is skewed in any way, it creates political issues all of its own and is viewed as undermining the democratic process. Namely, in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, the Scottish Government was ruled as biased by the electoral commission, with the proposed question changed as it appeared to encourage the electorate to vote 'yes'. As a result of this, referendums are simply unable to resolve political issues if the basis and context upon which they are held is intrinsically flawed.

In overall summation, it is clear to see that referendums do have a certain place within the political atmosphere. While certainly possessing a number of flaws such as bias and/or complication, they can be of value by settling important constitutional questions with a democratic vote, allowing the people the ultimate say in national affairs.



Suggested checklist

In the right hand column is the activity in this resource pack you should look at if you need help with this particular skill or feature:

Overall Structure	
Logical order	1/2
Brief introduction	1/2
Presenting both sides of the argument	4
Appropriate conclusion reached	6
Literacy	
Addressing the question directly, using transitional and linking words	3
Appropriate subject terminology	
Avoiding repetition of language	3
Use of paragraphs	2
Content	
Accurate range of arguments identified	4
Accurate and relevant examples and details chosen to support arguments	4
Elaboration and development	
Depth and range of arguments/supporting material	5
Clear explanation of arguments and examples	5



Activity 2: The Overall Structure of an Essay

Instructions

A good essay should be like a TV Series such as CSI. There are some stories that run through an entire series, just the same as there should be an argument running through an essay. However, within a TV series there are separate episodes, each with their own clear beginning, middle and end. These are your individual paragraphs.

Look at these different chunks of an essay and think about how they could be organised into the different paragraphs. Write them into the boxes on the template, name or number each paragraph and then compare it to the actual response.

What was the question for this essay? Why is this quite clear from this response?

However, for all of this it must be remembered that when looking at the process of electing a candidate, it may not be too candidate focused with evidence given from previous elections that other factors play as important a role in the elections as candidates. Elizabeth Dole's famous remark "money is the message" has come to show that perhaps the campaign is not too candidate focused. In modern election history, bar a few anomalies, the candidate who wins is the candidate who raises and spends the most money in the election. Obama, Bush Jr and Clinton all lay testament to this, with Obama's 2008 focus on small individual donations (setting the record for the most raised by small individual donations) a major contributor of his win. Furthermore, the Supreme Court's modern day ruling in Citizens United v FEC saw the linking of freedom of speech and expression to campaign finances lead to the rise of Super PACS and the so-called shadow campaign. This has led to more attack ads, more issue advocacy ads leading to a diminishing of importance of the candidate with the importance of money in modern day elections showing the process of electing presidents is not too candidate-focused.

Overall, this displays that on the whole the process for electing a president is not too candidate-centred. In recent years it certainly has shifted more towards that and away from ability to govern, but on the whole, there are mechanisms in place from the time of the founding fathers, and modern day barriers to stop a president being elected solely on his character.

The candidate-centred aspects of the election arise from the very beginning of the intra-party primaries. The success of a candidate in getting their name recognised and on local media, especially in swing states, leads to these accusations. With book publications and air time these candidates try and become as recognised as they can, at the expense of talking about any policy. This was most startling in 2007-8 when a relatively unknown ex-Illinois senator Barack Obama made his bid to run, his dependence on local media to carry his name to gain the crucial votes in the primaries. This shows the candidate-centred nature of the process is inherent to the campaign and in the election throughout.



In extension to the above points there have been arguments made, that a candidate is made or broken on television in America, showing it's too candidate focused in nature. From live televised debates to so called poll ratings and adverts played by their campaigns, with all the focus shifted onto how good, or how bad a candidate is, could be reinforcing the fact it is too candidate focused. Presidential nominee Obama's success was seen to come after his 2008 debate success against John McCain leading to a boost in polls and another contributory factor to his win. Conversely this was seen strongest with the Willie Horton advert of 1988 from Bush Sen. campaign, showing his rival Dukakis as a weak candidate on crime and punishment, coupled with his weak response to a question posed about violence against his wife and children, in debate we saw his chances at the presidency shatter. This all shows that with most Americans watching these events, the campaign is clearly too candidate focused for the election of the president.

In modern USA elections it has been argued that elections are far more based on the candidate and their personality than policy and ability. Indeed, it has been argued Abraham Lincoln would not have been able to run due to his looks; however, the true candidate-centred nature of the campaign has been called into question over recent times with many claiming the process is no longer decided on meritocracy and ability.

Furthermore, regardless of the candidate, events during the campaign can dictate anything. The so called "October Surprise" and making the most of advantages in elections can have far more of an impact on the process of electing a president than the candidate themselves. In 2016 Clinton was seen as, on the whole, the better candidate to control the country than Trump, however the re-opening of the FBI email investigation days before the election day could have been one of the major reasons why she lost the election. Additionally these surprises can certainly have a positive impact with President Obama trailing in some polls in the final few weeks of the 2012 election the Hurricane Sandy disaster (with even Republican Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie, thanking Obama personally for his actions for the state) won him huge praise, and put rival Romney at a major disadvantage and ultimately saw Obama re-elected. These all aim to demonstrate that the actions of the time can help or ruin a candidate regardless of the candidate as it can build up or break down the chances of a candidate winning which is completely removed from their image or the shallow nature of the campaign as it does show their true character almost.

Furthermore, arguments of this kind arise from the candidate-focused nature of the campaign. The inter-party campaign sees the focus put on the respective candidates, with the buying of the best spin doctors and campaign managers to put sole focus on their candidate's ability to make speeches and seem "presidential". From Reagan's photo opportunities in front of the Statue of Liberty, Clinton's appearance on the Aresno Hall Show to Trump's appearance on Jimmy Fallon mocking his hair, the campaign is able to not only put focus on the candidate but show their more affable, humorous side. Additionally, the campaign is able to draw attention to the candidate's history and ability, "selling" them to the American people. This has been seen with presidents focusing on their Washington Experience, from Kennedy, up to modern day Governors such as Bush Jr and Clinton and their popular touch, showing that the campaign is personality-based shows. Indeed, it was Trump's personal campaign team that decided to "let Trump be Trump" in the campaign, ultimately securing him the presidency. This displays that in modern campaigns the election of the president is far too candidate focused, having lost any policy focus.

Yet, what is most important when considering the process of electing a president is the Electoral College system. Without success in this the candidate has not a chance of winning, positive image or otherwise. Indeed, Clinton did win the popular vote in 2016 but because of her vote share she did not in the popular vote, and as such did not win the presidency. The process of electing a president clearly all comes down to the Electoral College system and if a candidate is unsuccessful in that, regardless of image of presidency in the months and year or so leading up to the election it is impossible for them to win, ultimately removing the cult of personality from the election in the final hurdle. This shows finally that the process cannot be too candidate-centred as at the end if the candidate cannot win the Electoral College they cannot win.



Activity 2: The Overall Structure of an Essay – Template

Title:

Introduction		
Paragraph 1	Paragraph 2	Paragraph 3
Paragraph 4	Paragraph 5	Paragraph 6
Conclusion		



Activity 2: The Overall Structure of an Essay – Suggested Response

In modern USA elections it has been argued that elections are far more based on the candidate and their personality than policy and ability. Indeed, it has been argued Abraham Lincoln would not have been able to run due to his looks; however, the true candidate-centred nature of the campaign has been called into question over recent times with many claiming the process is no longer decided on meritocracy and ability.

The candidate-centred aspects of the election arise from the very beginning of the intra-party primaries. The success of a candidate in getting their name recognised and on local media, especially in swing states, leads to these accusations. With book publications and air time these candidates try and become as recognised as they can, at the expense of talking about any policy. This was most startling in 2007-8 when a relatively unknown ex-Illinois senator Barrack Obama made his bid to run, his dependence on local media to carry his name to gain the crucial votes in the primaries. This shows the candidate-centred nature of the process is inherent to the campaign and in the election throughout.

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Furthermore, regardless of the candidate, events during the campaign can dictate anything. The so called "October Surprise" and making the most of advantages in elections can have far more of an impact on the process of electing a president than the candidate themselves. In 2016 Clinton was seen as, on the whole, the better candidate to control the country than Trump, however the re-opening of the FBI email investigation days before the election day could have been one of the major reasons why she lost the election. Additionally these surprises can certainly have a positive impact with President Obama trailing in some polls in the final few weeks of the 2012 election the Hurricane Sandy disaster (with even Republican Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christy, thanking Obama personally for his actions for the state) won him



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Overall, this displays that on the whole the process for electing a president is not too candidate-centred. In recent years it certainly has shifted more towards that and away from ability to govern, but on the whole, there are mechanisms in place from the time of the founding fathers, and modern day barriers to stop a president being elected solely on his character.



Activity 3a: Transitional, Linking and Signposting Words and Phrases

An important part of writing a good essay is to make sure you use appropriate language to link points together and create a good flow of argument and discussion. Using the examples to help, sort the remaining words into the correct categories then check your answers.

Explain or develop an argument or point		
so this suggests that because this leads to	it follows that consequently as a result i.e.	this means that thus for this reason in other words
Evaluate		
especially particularly most notably above all key	in particular chiefly mainly mostly	most importantly most significantly the most convincing (argument/ example) crucially
Provide supporting evidence		
this can be seen an example is for instance this is suggested by X	consider this X provides proof namely	evidence of this is X supports this argument such as



Activity 3b: Transitional, Linking and Signposting Words and Phrases – Improve a Paragraph

Student activity

Use some of these linking words and phrases to improve the paragraph below on voting behaviour.

The question (on politics of the USA) was, “The core vote for the two main parties is loyal and can be depended upon.’ Discuss.” The candidate has been arguing that voting behaviour is volatile and changeable, and this is the first paragraph of the next section of the essay.

Long term factors that influence voting behaviour are still largely significant. One of the primacy factors in American voting behaviour is gender. Traditionally and currently, men and women have different voting patterns. The Democrat vote is strongly affiliated with the female vote as the Democrats have championed women’s rights and still have a large amount of their party platform dedicated to long term policy plans to combat the pay gap, female representation in the workplace and domestic violence. In 2016 there was a Republican candidate who had numerous sexual assault allegations and made many misogynistic comments, and there was the highest gender gap in history - a 24% difference in male and female voting for Clinton. The female core vote for the Democrats remains strong and dependable.



Suggested response (actual candidate response)

However, to analyse this in more detail, long term factors that influence voting behaviour are still largely significant. One of the most important primacy factors in American voting behaviour is gender. Traditionally and currently, men and women have different voting patterns. The Democrat vote is strongly affiliated with the female vote as the Democrats have championed women's rights and still have a large amount of their party platform dedicated to long term policy plans to combat the pay gap, female representation in the workplace and domestic violence. In 2016 this, combined with a Republican candidate who had numerous sexual assault allegations and made many misogynistic comments, resulted in the highest gender gap in history as there was a 24% difference in male and female voting for Clinton. Therefore, this suggests that the female core vote for the Democrats remains strong and dependable.



Activity 3c: Transitional, Linking and Signposting Words and Phrases – Identify the Key Components of a Good Paragraph

Student activity

Use the paragraph on voting behaviour and gender from activity 3b) and different colour highlighters to identify the following elements of a good paragraph.

POINT – where the candidate states the argument that will be made in the paragraph, and how this directly answers the question set.

EXPLANATION – where the candidate develops the point by explaining it and setting it out.

EVIDENCE – where the candidate provides supporting facts and examples, evidence, statistics etc.

LINK – where the candidate links the preceding paragraph back to the question and/or on to the next argument or paragraph.

Suggested response:

However, to analyse this in more detail, long term factors that influence voting behaviour are still largely significant. One of the most important primacy factors in American voting behaviour is gender. Traditionally and currently, men and women have different voting patterns. The Democrat vote is strongly affiliated with the female vote as the Democrats have championed women's rights and still have a large amount of their party platform dedicated to long term policy plans to combat the pay gap, female representation in the workplace and domestic violence. In 2016 this, combined with a Republican candidate who had numerous sexual assault allegations and made many misogynistic comments, resulted in the highest gender gap in history as there was a 24% difference in male and female voting for Clinton. Therefore, this suggests that the female core vote for the Democrats remains strong and dependable.



Activity 4: Identifying Arguments and Selecting Evidence – the ‘Big Points’ and the Examples

Student activity:

Consider this essay question: ‘Evaluate the view that the power of the US president is severely constrained.’

The following are all on the side of this debate that *disagrees* with this view. Which of these are ‘Big Points’ which can drive a paragraph? Which are examples or evidence? Which are further elaboration or development of a point?

The president can issue orders and memoranda to clarify how the executive should carry out its role.

Some of the president’s actual modern-day powers are not listed in the Constitution.

Constitutional checks and balances do not always work to constrain the executive branch.

Elections sometimes return a Congress wholly dominated by the party of the president.

The president’s foreign policy role is often a source of greater power than the domestic role.

The president is a statesman on an international stage, attending summits, controlling US international relations and negotiating treaties.

The president can nominate Supreme Court justices who support his ideological outlook.

Trump, Obama and George W Bush all signed just over 100 executive orders in their first three years of power.

The Roberts Court has more conservative than liberal justices; 2 of them (Gorsuch and Kavanaugh) were nominated by Trump.

President Trump has attended two summits with North Korean leader Kin Jong-un which addressed N. Korea’s nuclear weapons programme.



Suggested solution:

FURTHER ELABORATION OR DEVELOPMENT OF A POINT

The president can issue orders and memoranda to clarify how the executive should carry out its role.

Elections sometimes return a Congress wholly dominated by the party of the president.

The president is a statesman on an international stage, attending summits, controlling US international relations and negotiating treaties.

The president can nominate Supreme Court justices who support his ideological outlook.

BIG POINTS

Some of the president's actual modern-day powers are not listed in the Constitution.

Constitutional checks and balances do not always work to constrain the executive branch.

The president's foreign policy role is often a source of greater power than the domestic role.

EXAMPLES OR EVIDENCE

Trump, Obama and George W Bush all signed just over 100 executive orders in their first three years of power.

The Roberts Court has more conservative than liberal justices; 2 of them (Gorsuch and Kavanaugh) were nominated by Trump.

President Trump has attended two summits with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un which addressed N. Korea's nuclear weapons programme.



Activity 5: Elaboration, Explanation, Development and Discussion of a Point of Argument Within a Paragraph

Student activity:

Compare these two paragraphs. Each is part of the answer to the same question by two different candidates. The question is: 'Assess whether the process of electing the US president is now too candidate-centred.'

Which is the better paragraph, and why?

PARAGRAPH A

The candidate-centred media is an indication that the process as a whole has been 'hijacked' by candidate image. Judgements about how presidential a candidate is, are made through soundbites, gaffes and airbrushed images that depict one candidate as a capable and charismatic leader and another as a mistake-prone buffoon. Yet critics will argue that soundbites – such as Obama's 'Yes we can!' and Reagan's 'There you go again' – have very little political content that would translate into a good leader. Therefore, voters are almost 'wooned' into voting for a candidate rather than comprehending their genuine capabilities.

PARAGRAPH B

TV show appearances help a candidate and their image. It helps them to appear more humanised and have emotions. Candidates don't face the really weighty questions they do during TV debates. Both Clinton and Trump appeared on Jimmy Fallon's late night show and the electorate could build a clearer candidate image of each of the nominees. The fact that candidates even appear on talk shows demonstrates how candidate-centred campaigns have become. Candidates effectively separate themselves from their party and become individuals to the electorate who vote for candidate quality as opposed to party policies. It appears that candidates separate themselves from their parties to appeal to the electorate.



Suggested points that can be made in contrasting Paragraphs A and B

Paragraph A is the better paragraph; it flows better, is more fluent and clearly has sentences that state the argument. It also has sentences that develop the argument, supporting facts and examples. Paragraph B, by comparison, is repetitive, and tends to make statements which are then not developed (the reader is left asking, 'How?', 'Why?'). Paragraph A uses more explanatory vocabulary than paragraph B, such as 'yet', and 'therefore'. Both paragraphs can be improved by the greater use of linking vocabulary (see Activity 3), and whilst both contain evidence to support their point, neither has very detailed evidence. This is something that could also be improved in both paragraphs.



Activity 6a: Drawing Mini Conclusions

The PEEL structure allows for mini conclusions to be drawn throughout the essay in either the Point part or the Link part of each paragraph. If done well, this allows candidates to access the skill marks for Assessment Objective 3 throughout the essay (analysis and evaluation). Students need to revisit Activity 3 to remind themselves of a range of words and phrases that can be used to indicate the drawing of a conclusion.

This student activity uses paragraphs in answer to the question, 'Assess whether the process of electing the US president is now too candidate-centred.'

Use the example below to improve the paragraph that follows by the addition of mini conclusions:

Example:

Although the media are centred on candidates, in some instances they also serve other purposes and focus on other aspects, suggesting that campaigns are not too candidate centred. TV debates are full of political content and genuine debate on the key issues of the campaign and the hosts will try to make the candidates give detailed answers on items of policy. In 2016 Trump, notorious for his poor grasp of detail, was vague and evasive when asked questions of policy whereas Clinton, with greater experience in government was more prepared and was deemed to have 'won' all three TV presidential debates. In modern TV debates the focus is almost as much on the team of hosts as on the candidates, the focus is not entirely on them. The debates are now broadcast live and are long (over an hour) which gives time for the issues to be fully explored. Soundbites and gaffes do not win or lose elections but good policy explanation can be the decisive factor, whoever the candidate is.

Mini conclusions



Now add mini conclusions to this paragraph:

Events can have an impact. The 'October Surprise' is a common feature of US presidential campaigns that has a huge influence on the final result. This was particularly true in 2016 when James Comey reopened the FBI investigation into her emails from her time as Secretary of State, casting a shadow over her campaign only 11 days before voting day. This took her from leading in the polls to unsuccessful candidate – even though she was more traditionally media friendly and more experienced than her competitor. All candidates are at the whim of an 'October Surprise' that can derail their momentum.



Suggested response:

It can be argued that no matter how good and capable a candidate is, they are vulnerable to events which can play a more significant role in election outcomes than candidates alone do. Events can have an impact. The 'October Surprise' is a common feature of US presidential campaigns that has a huge influence on the final result. This was particularly true in 2016 when James Comey reopened the FBI investigation into her emails from her time as Secretary of State, casting a shadow over her campaign only 11 days before voting day. This took her from leading in the polls to unsuccessful candidate – even though she was more traditionally media friendly and more experienced than her competitor. All candidates are at the whim of an 'October Surprise' that can derail their momentum, suggesting that candidates alone are not the crucial factor in who wins.

Mini conclusions



Activity 6b: Drawing Conclusions at the End of Essays

You should be fairly certain of what your conclusion will be before you write the essay. In the examination, spend a few minutes thinking and planning. Your immediate response to the question is usually the basis for your conclusion, and you can spend a few minutes planning how to develop and substantiate this in the essay that will precede the conclusion.

Imagine you have been given these questions to answer as essays. What might your conclusion be for each one?

1. Discuss how effective Parliament is in legislating for the UK.

2. Assess the extent to which the powers of the Prime Minister of the UK and First Minister of Wales are mainly determined by the person holding the office.



3. 'A British Bill of Rights is needed for the benefit of individual citizens and the country.' Discuss.

4. 'Socialism is dead and the obituaries have been written.' Assess the accuracy of this view of socialism today.

5. Evaluate the view that by celebrating individualism, liberalism denies any important role to society.



Suggested response:

1. In conclusion, Parliament can be accused of ineffectiveness in legislating for the UK because usually it is dominated by the executive and on so many issues it is in reality a legislature for England due to devolution. However, as Brexit has shown, when a national crisis looms Parliament can reassert its authority.
2. To sum up, the character and personality of the person holding the office can make a huge difference to the way the role is performed, but this is more the case in the UK than in Wales because the UK Prime Minister has fewer constitutional restraints on their power than the First Minister does. Nevertheless, for both office-holders, the need to maintain the support of their cabinets is the more crucial factor in how powerful they can be.
3. Overall, whilst a British Bill of Rights would enshrine fundamental citizens' rights in law and make them more secure than they have been in the past, it is far from certain that such a thing could be achieved. There is no great consensus on what it would contain, and under the British Parliamentary system, such a piece of legislation could be repealed, making it hardly worth the paper it was written on.
4. In short, socialism is far from dead. Worldwide, although right-wing ideologies have in the last 40 years been resurgent and successful in national politics, left-wing socialist perspectives have not been crushed. Social media provides a new platform for all ideologies and protest movements with a socialist agenda have mobilised worldwide through this – protests at uneven wealth distribution, for example. Ideologies tend to experience ebbs and flows, and there are signs that socialism is making a comeback.
5. Finally, the balance between society and the individual differs within liberalism depending on which strand of liberalism you study. Whilst the role of the individual is a driving feature of all liberal ideologies, equality and freedom are also significant values and some liberals believe these can only be truly achieved through state and societal intervention. A focus solely on individualism, at the expense of society, can produce elites which undermine these other important liberal values.



Activity 7: Meeting the Assessment Objectives Throughout the Essay

The assessment objectives for the specification in Government and Politics are as follows:

AO1 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant institutions, processes, political concepts, theories and issues.

AO2 - Interpret and apply political information to identify and explain relevant similarities, differences, and connections.

AO3 - Analyse and evaluate the areas of government and politics studied to construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions.

The AOs are addressed as follows in the essay in each unit. Note that for Units 1 and 2 the essays are all in Section C. For Units 3 and 4 there are essays in Section B and Section C which address slightly different AOs:

Unit	AO1	AO2	AO3
Units 1 and 2 Section C	✓	X	✓
Units 3 and 4 Section B	✓	X	✓
Units 3 and 4 Section C	✓	✓	✓

Student activity

Use highlighters to show where in the following essay the relevant assessment objectives are being met. This is an essay where only AO1 and AO3 apply. The title is, 'Assess whether the process of electing the US president is now too candidate-centred.'

In modern USA elections it has been argued that elections are far more based on the candidate and their personality than policy and ability. Indeed, it has been argued Abraham Lincoln would not have been able to run due to his looks; however, the true candidate-centred nature of the campaign has been called into question over recent times with many claiming the process is no longer decided on meritocracy and ability.



The candidate-centred aspects of the election arise from the very beginning of the intra-party primaries. The success of a candidate in getting their name recognised and on local media, especially in swing states, leads to these accusations. With book publications and air time these candidates try and become as recognised as they can, at the expense of talking about any policy. This was most startling in 2007-8 when a relatively unknown ex-Illinois senator Barrack Obama made his bid to run, his dependence on local media to carry his name to gain the crucial votes in the primaries. This shows the candidate-centred nature of the process is inherent to the campaign and in the election throughout.

Furthermore, arguments of this kind arise from the candidate-focused nature of the campaign. The inter-party campaign sees the focus put on the respective candidates, with the buying of the best spin doctors and campaign managers to put sole focus on their candidate's ability to make speeches and seem "presidential". From Reagan's photo opportunities in front of the Statue of Liberty, Clinton's appearance on the Aresno Hall Show to Trump's appearance on Jimmy Fallon mocking his hair, the campaign is able to not only put focus on the candidate but show their more affable, humorous side. Additionally, the campaign is able to draw attention to the candidate's history and ability, "selling" them to the American people. This has been seen with presidents focusing on their Washington Experience, from Kennedy, up to modern day Governors such as Bush Jr and Clinton and their popular touch, showing that the campaign is personality-based shows. Indeed, it was Trump's personal campaign team that decided to "let Trump be Trump" in the campaign, ultimately securing him the presidency. This displays that in modern campaigns the election of the president is far too candidate focused, having lost any policy focus.

In extension to the above points there have been arguments made, that a candidate is made or broken on television in America, showing it's too candidate focused in nature. From live televised debates to so called poll ratings and adverts played by their campaigns, with all the focus shifted onto how good, or how bad a candidate is, could be reinforcing the fact it is too candidate focused. Presidential nominee Obama's success was seen to come after his 2008 debate success against John McCain leading to a boost in polls and another contributory factor to his win. Conversely this was seen strongest with the Willie Horton advert of 1988 from Bush Sen. campaign, showing his rival Dukakis as a weak candidate on crime and punishment, coupled with his weak response to a question posed about violence against his wife and children, in debate we saw his chances at the presidency shatter. This all shows that with most Americans



watching these events, the campaign is clearly too candidate focused for the election of the president.

However, for all of this it must be remembered that when looking at the process of electing a candidate, it may not be too candidate focused with evidence given from previous elections that other factors play as important a role in the elections as candidates. Elizabeth Dole's famous remark "money is the message" has come to show that perhaps the campaign is not too candidate focused. In modern election history, bar a few anomalies, the candidate who wins is the candidate who raises and spends the most money in the election. Obama, Bush Jr and Clinton all lay testament to this, with Obama's 2008 focus on small individual donations (setting the record for the most raised by small individual donations) a major contributor of his win. Furthermore, the Supreme Court's modern day ruling in *Citizens United v FEC* saw the linking of freedom of speech and expression to campaign finances lead to the rise of Super PACS and the so-called shadow campaign. This has led to more attack ads, more issue advocacy ads leading to a diminishing of importance of the candidate with the importance of money in modern day elections showing the process of electing presidents is not too candidate-focused.

Furthermore, regardless of the candidate, events during the campaign can dictate anything. The so called "October Surprise" and making the most of advantages in elections can have far more of an impact on the process of electing a president than the candidate themselves. In 2016 Clinton was seen as, on the whole, the better candidate to control the country than Trump, however the re-opening of the FBI email investigation days before the election day could have been one of the major reasons why she lost the election. Additionally these surprises can certainly have a positive impact with President Obama trailing in some polls in the final few weeks of the 2012 election the Hurricane Sandy disaster (with even Republican Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christy, thanking Obama personally for his actions for the state) won him huge praise, and put rival Romney at a major disadvantage and ultimately saw Obama re-elected. These all aim to demonstrate that the actions of the time can help or ruin a candidate regardless of the candidate, as it can build up or break down the chances of a candidate winning, which is completely removed from their image or the shallow nature of the campaign as it does show their true character almost.

Yet, what is most important when considering the process of electing a president is the Electoral College system. Without success in this the candidate has not a chance of winning, positive image or otherwise. Indeed, Clinton did win the popular vote in 2016 but because of her vote share she did not in the popular



vote, and as such did not win the presidency. The process of electing a president clearly all comes down to the Electoral College system and if a candidate is unsuccessful in that, regardless of image of presidency in the months and year or so leading up to the election it is impossible for them to win, ultimately removing the cult of personality from the election in the final hurdle. This shows finally that the process cannot be too candidate-centred as at the end if the candidate cannot win the Electoral College they cannot win.

Overall, this displays that on the whole the process for electing a president is not too candidate-centred. In recent years it certainly has shifted more towards that and away from ability to govern, but on the whole, there are mechanisms in place from the time of the founding fathers, and modern day barriers to stop a president being elected solely on his character.



Suggested response:

In modern USA elections it has been argued that elections are far more based on the candidate and their personality than policy and ability. Indeed, it has been argued Abraham Lincoln would not have been able to run due to his looks; however, the true candidate-centred nature of the campaign has been called into question over recent times with many claiming the process is no longer decided on meritocracy and ability.

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Assessment Objective 1

Assessment Objective 3