

AS and A level Politics 2017

Scheme of Work – UK Politics

April 2017

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| **Week** | **Specification** | **Teaching Detail** | **Activities (Act) Assessment/Test (AT)) and Extension paths (E)** |
| 1 | Introduction to UK Government topic  1.1 The nature and sources of the UK constitution, including:   * an overview of the development of the constitution through key historical documents: * Magna Carta (1215); Bill of Rights (1689); Act of Settlement (1701);Acts of Union (1707); Parliament Acts (1911 and 1949); The European Communities Act (1972) * the nature of the UK constitution: unentrenched, uncodified and unitary, and the ‘twin pillars’ of parliamentary sovereignty and the rule of law * The five main sources of the UK constitution: statute law; common law; conventions; authoritative works and treaties (including European Union law). | Introduction to the unit, and to the structure of UK Government  Definitions of key terminology.  Outline of the details and impact of each of the named historical documents.  Consideration of the theme of constitutional development   * no single dramatic change or codification of the constitution; * a slow transfer of power away from a central monarchy towards Parliament, especially the House of Commons; * a steady increase in the rights of citizens.   Examination of how each of the features and pillars of the constitution (exemplified in glossary) affects it in practice.  *Comparison to the US constitution to elucidate the features and principles.*  Explanation of the nature and relevance of each of the sources, and of how they interact with each other.   * EU Law takes precedence over other sources * Statue law supersedes all sources excepting EU Law * Common Law cannot contradict existing statute law, but once established has equal authority superseding authoritative works and conventions * Authoritative works and conventions are not binding but are considered strong guidance, and are often consulted when interpreting the constitution. | Mix and match of key terms (Act)  Constitution storyboard of key developments, specifically for visual learners (Act)  *Venn diagrams showing the comparisons between the UK and US constitutions (E)*  Assessment: short response question on the sources of the UK constitution (AT) |
| 2 | 1.2 How the constitution has changed since 1997.   * Under Labour 1997–2010: House of Lords reforms, electoral reform; devolution; the Human Rights Act 1998; and the Supreme Court. * Under the Coalition 2010–15: Fixed Term Parliaments; further devolution to Wales. * Any major reforms undertaken by governments since 2015, including further devolution to Scotland (in the context of the Scottish Referendum). | Tracing the progress of constitutional reform since 1997, divided into the three identified historical periods.  Consideration of the purpose and impact of each of the changes, in terms of democratisation, modernisation, devolution and the protection of rights  Details of further devolution to Scotland when passed by parliament, as well as any other major reforms.  At time of writing post 2015 changes should also include English Votes for English Laws (EVEL); and regional devolution deals  Consideration of the overall impact of these changes. | Timeline of change (Act)  Persuasive writing piece on which of the reforms was the most significant (E)  Essay question: how significant were the constitutional reforms since 1997? (AT) |
| 3 | 1.3 The role and powers of devolved bodies in the UK, and the impact of this devolution on the UK.   * Devolution in England. * Scottish Parliament and Government. * Welsh Assembly and Government. * Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. | Understanding the reasons for different settlements in the different parts of the UK.  Examination of the different aspects of devolution in England – the London Assembly, directly elected mayors, regional devolution deals, localism, and EVEL.  Comparison of the powers of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly and their governments to better understand each, including the areas of which they have primary legislative powers, any tax varying powers, and whether areas not specified are devolved or reserved.  Consideration of the specific circumstances in Northern Ireland, and how they are reflected in the cross-party working of the assembly and executive, and in the division between devolved powers (such as justice), reserved powers (transport) and excepted powers (constitutional matters) | A list of examples of different policies resulting from devolution in each area (Act)  A Venn diagram of the three sub-national devolved bodies’ powers (or an integrated mind-map if preferred) (Act)  A sketch proposal for an English Parliament or fully Regional England (E)  Consideration of who is the most influential groups in the political environment and why (AT)  Assessment: short response or source question on the powers of the Scottish Parliament (AT) |
| 4 | 1.4 Debates on further reform.   * The extent to which devolution should be extended within England. * An overview of the extent to which the individual reforms since 1997 listed in section 1.2 above should be taken further. * Whether the UK constitution should be changed to be entrenched and codified, including a bill of rights. | Explanation of the West Lothian Question and its impact.  Consideration of the possibilities of localism, regionalism, or an English Parliament.  Examination of the limitations of the reforms since 1997, and the possible options for their extension.  Examination of the benefits of compromise between reform and continuity since 1997, and the disadvantages of further extension.  Consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of codification and entrenchment. | Compile a pros and cons list for extending each reform (Act)  Class debate on whether the UK should adopt a US style constitution (Act)  Research party positions on further constitutional reforms (E)  Assessment: essay question ‘Should there be an English Parliament?’ (AT) |
| 5 | 3.1 The structure, role, and powers of the Executive.   * Its structure, including Prime Minister, the Cabinet, junior ministers and government departments. * Its main roles, including proposing legislation, proposing a budget, and making policy decisions within laws and budget. * Its main powers of the Executive, including Royal Prerogative powers, initiation of legislation and secondary legislative power. | Definitions of key terminology.  Building a clear awareness of the structure of the UK Government and the different levels and roles within in.  Definitions of the specific roles of the Prime Minister and of the Cabinet, and the importance of the relationship between the two.  Explanation of the different roles and powers of government, using recent examples, such as the Brexit Bill (legislation), 2016 Budget, and the response to ISIS (policy decisions)  Examples of prerogative powers, such as the appointment of ministers (Prime Minister), issuing of pardons (another Minister), military action (Cabinet) and awarding of honours (not mostly done independently) | Mix and match of key terms (Act)  Research and report back on one government department (Act)  Write a report on whether the Royal Prerogative is out of date and should be abandoned E)  Source or short response question on the significance of the royal prerogative (AT) |
| 6 | 3.2 The concept of ministerial responsibility.   * The concept of individual ministerial responsibility. * The concept of collective ministerial responsibility.   3.3 The Prime Minister and the Cabinet.  3.3.1 The power of the Prime Minister and cabinet.   * The factors governing the Prime Minister’s selection of ministers. | Definition and contrast between the two kinds of ministerial responsibility.  Examples of individual responsibility including departmental responsibility (such as Critchel Down, and the Falklands War), personal political failure (Lamont and Black Wednesday, Morris and school targets), and scandal (Profumo, Mandelson)  Examples of collective responsibility such as Cook during the Iraq War and Duncan Smith over welfare reform.  Examples of exceptions to collective responsibility both within coalition (boundary changes) and outside of coalition (EU referendums)  Discussion of the different factors behind ministerial selection, such as political balance, demographic representation, rewarding allies, appeasing opponents etc. | Research a specific example of individual and collective responsibility (Act)  Choose and present ‘an issue I would resign over’ (Act)  Research and write a report on the significance of the ‘quad’ in coalition (E)  Short response question on the distinction between individual and collective ministerial responsibility (AT)  Fantasy cabinet – assign each member of the class or year group to a different cabinet position with reasons (Act). |
| 7 | * The factors that affect the relationship between the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, and the ways they have changed and the balance of power between the Prime Minister and the Cabinet   3.3.2 The powers of the Prime Minster and the Cabinet to dictate events and determine policy.   * Students must study the influence of one Prime Minister from 1945 to 1997 and one post-1997 Prime Minister. * Students may choose any pre-1997 and any post-1997 Prime Minister, provided that they study them in an equivalent level of detail, covering both events and policy, with examples that illustrate both control and a lack of control. | Overview of the main factors affecting Prime Ministerial and Cabinet relations such as the size of the majority, Prime Ministerial popularity, political unity, major events.  Consideration of the 1945-1997 Prime Minister in detail. For example   * + Harold Wilson, with reference to the Britain’s Membership of the European Community, comprehensive education, and government economic policy (including the renationalisation of steel and devaluation of the pound) OR   + Margaret Thatcher with reference to the Falklands War, the Poll Tax and government economic policy (including the privatisation of utilities and monetarism)   With a focus on their ability to dictate events and determine policy. | Essay question: to what extent are Prime Ministers able to dominate their cabinets? (AT)  Research and write a brief biography of one of your chosen Prime Ministers (Act)  Chart the rise and fall of one Prime Minister’s influence during their time in officer (E) |
| 8 | Above continued.  2.1 The structure and role of the House of Commons and House of Lords.   * The selection of members of the House of Commons and House of Lords, including the different types of Peers. | Consideration of the 1945-1997 Prime Minister in detail.  For example:   * + Tony Blair, with reference to the Northern Ireland Peace Process, the Iraq War, and government economic policy (including the ‘The third way’ and Bank of England independence) OR   + David Cameron, with reference to same-sex marriage, the 2016 EU referendum, and government economic policy (including austerity and the increase in the income tax allowance) OR   + Theresa May or any post-Cameron Prime Minister with reference to their contrasting influence over two events, and government economic policy.   With a focus on their ability to dictate events and determine policy.  Definitions of key terminology.  Consideration of the contrast between elected MPs and Lords appointed or indirectly elected in a variety of ways.  Comparison between Life Peers (both political and independently appointed), Hereditary Peers (indirectly elected), and Spiritual Peers (Archbishops and Senior Bishops of the Church of England). | Write an assessment of the relative effectiveness of the two Prime Ministers (Act)    Essay question: to what extent are British Prime Ministers able to control the political agenda? (AT)  Mix and match of key terms (Act)  Research two Life Peers – one party political and one cross-bencher – and compare the reasons for their appointments. (E) |
| 9 | 2.1 The structure and role of the House of Commons and House of Lords.   * The main functions of the House of Commons and House of Lords and the extent to which these functions are fulfilled.   2.3 The legislative process.   * The different stages a bill must go through to become law. * The interaction between the Commons and the Lords during the legislative process, including the Salisbury Convention. | Consideration of the function of legislation, scrutiny of the executive, providing ministers, and debate, and the specific House of Commons function of representation of the electorate; and the extent to which these functions are successfully fulfilled.  Critical discussion of the limitations on each of these functions  How representative is parliament, with respect to both political and demographic representation/  Overview of the first reading, second reading, committee stage, report stage, third reading and royal assent.  The potential for political ‘ping pong’ between the Houses, and how this is limited by both convention and the Parliament Acts. | Chart the progress of a current bill in Parliament over a series of lessons (could combine with watching clips of debates) (Act)  Mock bill activity (with students playing different roles as govt/backbenchers/Lords etc.) (Act)  Draft your own Private Members Bill proposal and critically evaluate its chances of success (E)  Research the background to the 1911 Parliament Act (Act)  Short response question on the main stages of a legislative bill (AT) |
| 10 | 2.2 The comparative powers of the House of Commons and House of Lords.   * The exclusive powers of the House of Commons. * The main powers of the House of Lords. * Debates about the relative power of the two houses. | Evaluation of the exclusive powers of the Commons, particularly in terms of finance and the right to insist on legislation.  Consideration of the Lords’ ability to scrutinise legislation based on a lack of majority, additional expertise, and additional time.  Examples of recent influence of the House of Lords – for example of benefits cuts. | Research a recent example of a disagreement between the Commons and Lords (Act)  Write a proposal for either increasing or decreasing the powers of the House of Lords. (E)  Essay question ‘To what extent is the House of Commons more powerful than the House of Lords?’ (AT) |
| 11 | 2.4 The ways in which Parliament interacts with the Executive.   * The work of select committees. * The purpose and nature of ministerial question time, including Prime Minister’s Questions. * The role and significance of backbenchers in both Houses, including the importance of parliamentary privilege. * The role and significance of the opposition. | Examination of the work of an example select committee, such as the Public Accounts Committee, with a focus on their powers (such as calling witnesses and issuing reports) and limitations (such as resources and lack of legislative powers)  Detailed consideration of the role backbenchers play in each of the functions of Parliament outlined above.  The difference between government backbenchers (‘lobby fodder’) and opposition backbenchers who have more freedom to scrutinise.  Powers and limitations of the opposition, with reference to specific examples.  Understanding factors that can limit or increase opposition power, such as a government’s majority or popularity. | Watch PMQs and rate the effectiveness of Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition with reasons (Act)  Read and summarise a select committee report (E)  Role play a conversation between a whip and a rebellious backbencher (Act)  Essay question ‘How significant is the role of the opposition in the British political system’ (AT) |
| 12 | 2.4 The ways in which Parliament interacts with the Executive.  4.2 The relationship between the Executive and Parliament.   * The influence and effectiveness of Parliament in holding the Executive to account. * The influence and effectiveness of the Executive in attempting to exercise dominance over Parliament. * The extent to which the balance of power between Parliament and the Executive has changed. | The shifting of some powers from government to MPs, such as choosing the chairs of select committees and the introduction of the Backbench Business Committee  The increasing willingness of Government to consult Parliament on military action, for example in Syria  The increased willingness of the House of Lords, which lacks a government majority, to delay government business, for example over proposed cuts to tax credits  Factors that continue to limit Parliamentary scrutiny such as a small number of government defeats in recent years, lack of time and resources, and the important of the ‘payroll vote’ and the whips. | Research and produce a list of major government defeats (E)  Class debate on ‘who has the most power – Parliament or Government?’ (Act)  Essay question ‘How effective is Parliament in holding the Executive to account?’ (AT) |
| 13 | 4.1 The Supreme Court and its interactions with and influence over the legislative and policy making processes.   * The role and composition of the Supreme Court. * The key operating principles of the Supreme Court, including judicial neutrality and judicial independence and their extent. * The degree to which the Supreme Court influences both the Executive and Parliament, including the doctrine of ultra vires and judicial review. | Definitions of key terminology.  The move from the House of Lords to the Supreme Court, and the reasons behind this.  Consideration of the role of the Supreme Court as the final court of appeal for judicial review of government acts, for other significant appeals in criminal or civil cases and for jurisdiction disputes.  Consideration of the importance of neutrality and independence, and how they are guaranteed (such as independent appointments, contempt of court rules, independently set salaries, limitations on political activity.  Discussion of the limits on neutrality and independence, (such as Government role in appointment, lack of demographic representation, and judicial activism)  Debates on the level of influence exercised by the Supreme Court, with particular reference to recent cases (for example the Brexit ruling) | Mix and match of key terms (Act)  Case study of a Supreme Court ruling (Act)  Class mock court activity on Article 50 ruling (Act)  Research and report on the differences between the UK and US Supreme Courts (E)  Essay question ‘To what extent is the Supreme Court independent and neutral’ (AT) |
| 14 | 4.3 The aims, role and impact of the European Union (EU) on UK government.   * The aims of the EU, including the ‘four freedoms’ of the single market, social policy, and political and economic union and the extent to which these have been achieved. * The role of the EU in policy making. * The impact of the EU, including the main effects of the main effects of at least two EU policies’ and their impact on the UK political system and UK policy-making. | Background of the four freedoms of people, capital, goods and service  Recent developments in social policy including the Social Chapter and Charter of Fundamental Rights.  The moves towards Political and Economic Union including the reduction of the veto and the introduction of the Euro.  Consideration of the different ways in which the EU influences policy making including treaties, directives and regulations, and enforcement via the European Court of Justice  Detailed examples of impact of two policies, for example   * The Social Chapter – increasing workers’ rights, limiting working hours, and leading to the minimum wages; but arguably also increasing costs to business. * The Common Fisheries Policy – preserving fish stocks, but creating considerable controversy in the UK over the Factortame case, and the discards policy.   Consideration of overall impact on UK political system including on parliamentary sovereignty, pooled sovereignty, economic impact, and the 2016 referendum. | Write a case study on the impact of the Social Chapter or the Common Fisheries Policy (Ass)  Class debate on Brexit (Ass)  Research and report on an EU treaty (E)  Short response or source question on the loss of sovereignty (AT) |
| 15 | 4.4 The location of sovereignty in the UK political system.   * The distinction between legal sovereignty and political sovereignty. * The extent to which sovereignty has moved between different branches of government. * Where sovereignty can now be said to lie in the UK. | Exemplification of legal and political sovereignty as detailed in the glossary.  Consideration of major changes that have affected the location of sovereignty including constitutional reform, the use of referendums, EU membership, and shifting power between executive and parliament.  Discussion of the ways in which legal sovereignty remains with Parliament including examples.  Discussions of the limits to Parliament’s political sovereignty. | A class debate on whether greater sovereignty is now possessed by Parliament, Prime Minister and Executive, Judiciary or the EU (Act)  Essay question ‘To what extent has the location of sovereignty in the UK political system changed in recent years?’ (AT) |