

POLITICS - Year 12 A Level



Autumn Term



Government and politics of the UK: The government of the UK

AQA: A Level Politics explores 3 units and all three are assessed in three exams at the end of Year 13.

- **Paper 1: Government and Politics of the UK**
- **Paper 2: Government and Politics of the US and Comparative Politics**
- **Paper 3: Political Ideas**

For further information, past papers and examiners reports visit - [AQA | Politics | A-Level | A-level Politics](#)

In the autumn term of year 12 students will study the nature and the sources of the British Constitution and the UK legislature - Parliament. They will explore the contemporary legislation and current issues regarding rights. They will also explore issues and debates around recent constitutional changes. They will discuss the issues surrounding the extent of rights within the UK and will be able to cite examples of where individual and collective rights agree and conflict. They will understand the complex nature of the UK constitution and explore topical debates regarding the need for an entrenched and codified document. Where the UK parliament is concerned, they will understand the interdependent nature of our bicameral legislature, understanding the role of both houses and the role of our representatives in each house. They will explore the recurring debate on reform of the House of Lords and will evaluate the record of the key MPs, locally and nationally.

The Governing the UK unit will cover the following topics:

- ✓ **Constitution:** The key features and sources of the UK constitution and what has shaped it. Changes to the constitution and arguments for further reform. How devolution and relations with Europe have changed the UK constitution.
- ✓ **Parliament:** The different roles and powers of the two houses – House of Commons and House of Lords. How legislation is passed and the benefits and challenges of this process. The types of MPs, their roles and how effectively they represent their constituents. Whether there is a case for further reform of Parliament?

Specialist key terms: UK Constitution

Codified, uncoded

Statute, common law

Conventions

Authoritative opinions

The royal prerogative

Rule of law

Parliamentary sovereignty

Individual and collective rights

Specialist key terms: Parliament

Scrutiny of executive

Commons, Lords

MPs and peers

delegates and trustees

Burkean theories of representation

Delegate theories, mandate theories

Trustees

Parliamentary privilege

Opposition

Assessment:

Students' knowledge and understanding skills are assessed through 9-mark explain questions. Evaluation and judgment skills are assessed through a 25-mark extract question and a 25-mark essay questions. In Autumn term 1 students will focus on developing skills to be able to tackle the 9-mark questions and begin to create plans, and responses to the longer essay questions.

Suggested Enrichment Activities

To watch, read and listen to:

- Follow the news and read news articles relating to politics.
- BBC News politics - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics>
- A Level Politics show - <https://open.spotify.com/show/0pdAY6egNBq0tFOLFjMk7O>
- Politics Review (subscription) - <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/subjects/government-politics/products/16-18/politics-review-magazine>
- Alan History Nerd Youtube channel - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKfZgevdrkM&list=PL6DY9psvTXR9j2_AtEvM6jzBMSqEtJkin&index=12
- UK Politics Annual Survey 2025 – this annual book written for A Level Politics students includes all of the recent big political events. Events this time include the 2024 general election, first year of Keir Starmer's premiership and the split in opinion on the right of British politics.
- This Land – written by Owen Jones, a columnist for the Guardian and activist for Labour, this book looks to build a more equal society using figures from across the political spectrum.
- We're Living Through the Breakdown – this book is written by Tatton Spiller of Simple Politics and looks at how we can understand politics in an age of huge change.
- The Life of an MP – Jess Phillips, Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley, discusses the role an MP and the that happen in their personal and political lives.
- A good primer for the course is Tony Wright, "British Politics: A Very Short Introduction" in the Oxford University Press series (2020 edition; an older version was published in 2013). Wright, a former university politics lecturer turned influential backbench Labour MP for many years, provides a clear and accessible guide to the machinery of UK politics.



POLITICS - Year 12 A Level



Government and Politics of the US and Comparative Politics The US Constitution, Federalism and Congress

AQA: A Level Politics explores 3 units, which are all assessed in three exams at the end of Year 13.

- **Paper 1: Government and Politics of the UK**
- **Paper 2: Government and Politics of the US and Comparative Politics**
- **Paper 3: Political Ideas**

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In the Autumn term of year 12, students will be introduced to US Politics and how the USA is governed. They will become familiar with the roles and powers of the 3 branches of US government; legislative, executive and Judiciary and will focus on developing a thorough understanding of the US the constitution, the concept of federalism and then move onto focusing on Congress. Towards the end of the term students will have covered enough content to be able to compare the UK and the USA constitutions and begin to explore the merits and issues of the different approaches to constitutional matters. As well as learning the theory students are encouraged to keep up to date with political developments and to build up a comprehensive record of contemporary political examples which they can use to support their explanations, arguments and comparisons with the UK.

The Constitution unit will cover the following topics:

- ✓ **Constitution:** The origin and key features of the US constitution and what has shaped it. How effective the system of checks and balances is to uphold the aims of the founding fathers and why so few amendments are successful. How relevant it is for modern America.
- ✓ **Federalism:** An understanding of the federal system of government and issues surrounding federal state relations.

The Congress unit will cover the following topics:

- ✓ the structure, role and powers of the US Congress
- ✓ composition of Congress, the different terms of office and party allegiance
- ✓ debates concerning the functions, powers and effectiveness of Congress in legislation, oversight and the power of the purse
- ✓ party system and committee system and their significance within Congress
- ✓ representative role of senators and representatives
- ✓ relative strengths of the House of Representatives and the Senate
- ✓ relationship of Congress to the executive branch of government and the Supreme Court.

Specialist key terms: US Constitution & Federalism

- **Bill of Rights**
- **separation of powers**
- **checks and balances**
- **federalism**
- **Articles**
- **Founding fathers**
- **Marble cake federalism**
- **Layer cake federalism**

Specialist key terms: Congress

- **separation of powers**
- **checks and balances**
- **federalism**
- **Articles**
- **Founding fathers**
- **Marble cake federalism**
- **Layer cake federalism**

Assessment:

Students' knowledge and understanding skills are assessed through 9-mark explain questions. Evaluation and judgment skills are assessed through a 25-mark extract question and a 25-mark essay questions. In Autumn term 1 students will focus on developing skills to be able to tackle the 9-mark questions and begin to create plans, and responses to the longer essay questions.

Suggested Enrichment Activities

To watch, read and listen to:

- A Level Politics show - <https://open.spotify.com/show/0pdAY6egNBq0tFOLFjMk7O>
- The rise and fall of President Nixon https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tV9JT4pZH_o
- America decides – Trump's indictment 2023 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nD65rEkKujA>
- US Politics Annual Update 2025 – similar to the UK edition, this book is written for A Level Politics students, and includes updates about the 2024 Presidential Election and first part of Trump's second term
- Unpresidential– written by the BBC's North America correspondent, this book looks at the 2020 presidential election from behind the scenes, an election like no other.
- The Federalist Papers – essential reading on the principles and arguments that shaped the American Constitution.
- The American Political Tradition – offers a critical perspective on the American political system and its leaders