

TCEAT Curriculum & Assessment Overview: Politics

Course description and overarching aims (Intent)

Curriculum model overview (Implementation) The Twyford Politics curriculum aims to teach our students to be critical thinkers with an informed understanding of contemporary political structures and issues in their historical context, both within the UK and globally. Students develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, institutions and processes, using their knowledge to gain an informed understanding of the influences and interests, which have an impact on decisions in government and politics. Students develop an informed understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups; develop the ability to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate political information to form arguments and make judgements; develop an interest in, and engagement with, contemporary politics.

There are three broad areas of study in the AQA specification:

- the government and politics of the UK
- the government and politics of the USA, and comparative politics
- political ideas.

The AQA specification requires in depth study of UK and US government and politics. Comparisons across the two political systems are required. Students identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of politics. This will ensure that students develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, political institutions and political processes. The political ideas to be studied have relevance to both of the systems of government and politics. The study of the six ideologies enhance the students' knowledge and understanding of politics, political debate and political issues in both the UK and the USA.

Skills: In all components of this subject students must demonstrate the following skills:

- to comprehend and interpret political information
- to critically analyse and evaluate the areas of politics studied
- to construct arguments and explanations leading to reasoned conclusions
- to identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the areas studied
- to construct and communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence

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- to use appropriate political vocabulary
- to make connections between the different areas of politics studied
- to make comparisons across two political systems.

Synopticity is an essential element of the assessment of students' work in A-level politics - to demonstrate this, students inter-relate areas of content within each module and, when appropriate, across modules, to address the requirements of the exam papers. They must use appropriate concepts and knowledge as well as the skills listed above in developing their answers. Politics, as a subject, is inherently synoptic. The political knowledge, concepts, behaviours and institutions studied in any particular module can often be used and applied to new contexts in other parts of the course. The essay questions are particularly synoptic, giving students the opportunity to draw on and synthesise the knowledge, understanding and skills gained throughout the course.

Assessment Objectives

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of political institutions, processes, concepts, theories and issues.
- AO2: Analyse aspects of politics and political information, including in relation to parallels, connections, similarities and differences.
- AO3: Evaluate aspects of politics and political information, including to construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions.
- Students are taught to demonstrate their ability to: • recall information • draw together information from different areas of the specification • apply their knowledge and understanding in practical and theoretical contexts.
- Students are taught to answer three broad question types.
- 9 mark questions require students to explain and analyse different political institutions, processes, concepts, theories and issues prescribed in the specification. Students are required to develop and substantiate at least three points in a structured, analytical answer, making use of appropriate political vocabulary and examples to substantiate their answer.
- 25 mark extract based questions require students to comprehend and interpret the argument(s) contained in political information, using their knowledge and understanding of the issue to analyse and evaluate the argument(s) put forward. The answer should be balanced, maintain a sustained line of reasoning and lead to a reasoned conclusion, communicated with relevance, clarity and coherence. The political information used in exams may take the form of political publications, government publications, newspaper extracts, manifestos, visual material and data.
- 25 mark essay questions require students to analyse and evaluate a given statement using their knowledge and understanding of the issue under discussion. The question may draw from different sections of the specification, requiring students to identify and substantiate parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of politics studied. The answer should take the form of a structured and balanced argument, maintaining a sustained line of reasoning, communicated with relevance, clarity and coherence and leading to a reasoned conclusion. The 25 mark essay questions for comparative politics (component 2, section C), will require students to make explicit comparisons between UK and US government and politics.

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Knowledge:

Substantive knowledge - The main categories that account for the accepted conventions and facts of our subject:

The aim of the course is to

- develop knowledge and an informed understanding of contemporary political structures and issues in their historical context, both within the UK and globally
- develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, institutions and processes
- develop knowledge and an informed understanding of the influences and interests which have an impact on decisions in government and politics
- develop knowledge and an informed understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups
- develop the ability to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate political information to form arguments and make judgements
- develop an interest in, and engagement with, contemporary politics

Disciplinary knowledge - The main subject skills, procedures, thinking structures and behaviours of our subject such as:

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

Analyse aspects of politics and political information, including in relation to parallels, connections, similarities and differences

Evaluate aspects of politics and political information, including to construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions.

Disciplinary Literacy -

Opportunities for promoting and developing students' literacy are fully embedded throughout the A-level course and these are reviewed and improved on continuously.

Curriculum two-year plan:

The Politics curriculum is designed to converge at key points throughout the academic year. Students will follow the TCEAT curriculum as mapped below:

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Course content is split into 3 papers:

- Government and Politics of the UK
- Government and Politics of the USA and Comparative Politics
- Political Ideas

The Politics curriculum map is as follows:

Units/modules	% A level	Hours teaching required	AOs	Sub topics	Assessment
1. Government and Politics of the UK (Paper 1)	33%	Autumn Term - year 12 Spring Term - year 12	AO1: 30 – 40% AO2: 35 – 45% AO3: 25 – 35%	Government of the UK	Year 12 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4
				Politics of the UK	Year 12 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4
2. Government and Politics of the USA and Comparative Politics (Paper 2)	33%	Summer term – year 12 Autumn term – year 13	AO1: 30 – 40% AO2: 35 – 45% AO3: 25 – 35%	Government and Politics of the USA	Year 13 Q1 Q2
				Comparative Politics	Year 13 Q1 Q2
3. Political Ideas (Paper 3)	33%	Spring term – year 13	AO1: 30 – 40% AO2: 35 – 45% AO3: 25 – 35%	Socialism	Year 13 Q3
				Liberalism	Year 13 Q3
				Conservatism	Year 13 Q3
				Nationalism	Year 13 Q3
				Feminism	Year 13 Q3

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	HT1 7 weeks	HT2 6 weeks	HT3 6 weeks	HT4 6 weeks	HT5 5 weeks	HT6 4 weeks
Year 12	UK Constitution UK and Devolution UK Democracy and Participation Q1 assessment	UK and Devolution UK and EU UK Parliament UK Elections and Referendums Q2 assessment	UK Parliament UK Prime Minister and Cabinet UK Political Parties	UK Prime Minister and Cabinet UK Judiciary UK Pressure Groups Q3 assessment	US +C Constitution US Judiciary US +C Electoral Processes and Direct Democracy US Electoral process and Direct Democracy	Q4 assessment
Year 13	US + C Political Parties US + C Congress US + C Presidency Q1 assessment	US + C Presidency US + C Pressure Groups US + C Civil Rights Q2 assessment	Socialism Liberalism Conservatism	Nationalism Q3 assessment Feminism	Revision EXTERNAL EXAMS	

Curriculum Content in depth:

Government and Politics of the UK

- The nature and sources of the British Constitution
- The structure and role of parliament
- The prime minister and cabinet
- The Judiciary
- Devolution
- Democracy and Participation
- Elections and Referendums
- Political Parties

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- Pressure Groups
- The European Union

Government and Politics of the USA and Comparative Politics

- The Constitutional Framework of the US Government
- The Legislative Branch of Government: Congress
- The Executive Branch of Government; President
- The Judicial Branch of Government
- The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy
- US Political Parties
- Pressure Groups
- Civil Rights
- Comparative Politics

Political Ideas

- Liberalism
- Socialism
- Conservatism
- Nationalism
- Feminism

Approaches to learning

Lessons are sequenced in accordance with the syllabus for each unit according to the curriculum overviews provided by AQA. There are 23 teaching units altogether with each broken down into further sub-sections. All politics classes are mixed ability and lessons tend to follow established patterns and routines which students become familiar with over time. Every lesson starts with a starter task, linked to students' lesson prep task, or learning from a previous lesson, or as an introduction to the current lesson. Learning is then scaffolded – starting with the minimum essential knowledge for a C grade student, gradually building up to more detailed knowledge. Students will then complete additional tasks independently. These activities range in difficulty and are graduated with additional extension stretch tasks available as needed. This part of the lesson is flexible and may include paired work, whole class discussion, targeted questioning and further teacher explanation where necessary. Understanding is checked and/or solutions are provided. Lessons finish with plenary that checks the learning aims by way of a low-stakes assessment or relevant assessment planning task.

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Assessment

The Trust assessment policy is central to support the 10:10 ethic which informs the ethos of all of the Trust's schools. Effective assessment allows students to know when and how they have done well, it identifies areas of weakness and supports students to know where they have got to improve. The school assessment system is entirely formative as all assessments are designed to be diagnostic for both the students and the teacher, designed to provide information on progress and provide feedback on areas for improvement as part of a feedback loop. The delivery of the curriculum in all subjects allows for a range of assessment activities including:

AfL – Assessment for Learning

AfL is critical to learning. Throughout each lesson students will be given opportunities test their understanding and give their teacher opportunities to identify issues and correct misunderstandings on the spot. All teachers utilise strategies to ensure they can assess whole class progress rapidly and target support within lessons. These strategies include the use of mini whiteboards, green pens (used to distinguish student self-marking /correction from that of the teacher), self-assessment, peer-assessment, circulation, live marking using a visualiser and various types of questioning. Low stakes questioning is used to gauge the extent of student knowledge and understanding.

Prep

Prep is designed to support learners to retain and retrieve information therefore strengthening long-term memory. In KS5 preps are no longer than 60 minutes in length, set each lesson with a due date of the next timetabled lesson. This work is to be completed outside of the classroom (at home or in study club) and is designed to consolidate learning and prepare students for their next lesson.

Year 12 and 13 students complete possible questions plans for all units when after the completion of each unit – these question plans a detailed number of questions designed to cover the whole course.

Standardised assessments

In Politics, students complete four timed mini assessments each term. This is in addition to the formal quarterly assessment points. The frequency of in-class assessments is intended to improve students timing and to foster a familiarity with the pressure of writing under timed conditions. Students always complete assessments under traditional exam style timed conditions.

All assessed work is marked to A-level standard using AQA general mark schemes, which are shared with students. Detailed written feedback is given.

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Quarterly assessments

At fixed points throughout the year students sit exams in a formal setting.

Twice per academic year (December Q2, June Q4) students will sit assessments that take the form of formal exams and examine cumulative skills and content acquisition. These milestones are opportunities for students, staff, parents & carers to take stock of progress and performance at this point. We then have the information and feedback needed to take the next steps in their learning.

Quarterly assessments consist of A-level exam papers and will be as full as possible, reflecting curriculum content covered so far in the course.

Year 12 Quarterly assessments	
Q1 (October)	Part Paper 40 minutes Part Paper 40 minutes
Q2 (December)	Full paper 2 hours (covering the first half of the UK course)
Q3 (March)	Part Paper 40 minutes Part Paper 40 minutes
Q4 (June)	Full Paper 2 hours
Year 13 Quarterly assessments	
Q1 (October)	Part Paper 40 minutes Part Paper 40 minutes
Q2 (December)	Full Paper – UK Politics 2 hours Full Paper – US and Comparative Politics 2 hours

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Q3 (March)	Full Paper – Political Ideas 2 hours
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Feedback routines.

Students are given feedback throughout the school year so they can improve.

In lessons students will regularly use their mini whiteboards to show their answers and give teachers the opportunity to correct misconceptions. Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques such as no hands up questions, the use of thinking time (e.g. Pose-Pause-Pounce-Bounce), pair talk (e.g. Think-Pair-Share), No opt-out (e.g. reframing the question to the same pupil) and follow up questions (e.g. asking pupil to elaborate, or avoiding paraphrasing pupils- instead pushing for the 'best version' answer). This allows teachers to adapt teaching as necessary.

Formal assessments and Quarterly assessments will be followed by feedback and opportunities to re-check understanding. This will include time for the student to respond to their feedback, time for the teacher to immediately address any significant misconceptions/errors in student understanding, a follow up task or prep that allows students to build on the feedback given and time for students to update their progress tracker at the front of their books.

All politics assessments are used formatively to embed students understanding of the politics, uncover misconceptions in their learning and, ultimately, to improve their exam skills.

Students receive detailed personal feedback for all politics assessments, with time given for self-evaluation and feedback learning. Time is taken to prepare and deliver thorough and impactful feedback lessons noticing what students have achieved and what areas need further instruction and support.

Several scripts are called back from the exam board each year to ensure ongoing scrutiny of the external assessment processes in order to better prepare students for future exams. Answers and essays are then selected from successful scripts for use in teaching and as model answers.

External examinations

KS5 exam board: AQA