

GCSE



CCEA GCSE Course Companion
**Government and
Politics**



For first teaching from September 2017

GCSE Government and Politics

Course Companion

This GCSE consists of two units, with the marks being split equally between them.

Unit 1: Democracy in Action

What is this unit about?

This Unit focuses on what democracy is by looking at some of the key elements of any democratic political system. These include elections, political parties, the media and pressure groups. However, not all countries are democracies and sometimes the best way of understanding what democracy is can be done by looking at political systems that are not democratic and to see how things are very different in those systems. By the end of the Unit you should have a clearer understanding of what democracy involves.

What are the main areas I need to study?

Having begun by looking at some political ideas and concepts used in the study of political systems you will look at:

- What is involved in decision-making in a democracy
- The role of elections and voting in a democracy
- The functions of political parties in a democracy
- The part that the media plays in promoting democracy
- The role of pressure and interest groups in making systems more democratic

More detail is available in the Specification for GCSE Government and Politics.

Unit 2: International Politics in Action

What is this unit about?

This Unit focuses on the international dimension of politics. We increasingly live in an interdependent world as a result of the process of *globalisation*. This Unit looks at some aspects of international politics, in particular the issues of conflict and migration. The aim is that you will gain a greater understanding of some of the global influences that affect our lives today.

What are the main areas I need to study?

Having begun by looking at the ideas of globalisation and interdependence, you will then consider:

- The impact of the European Union
- The causes of conflict between countries
- The role of the United Nations and NATO in dealing with conflict within and between countries
- The process of conflict resolution in Northern Ireland
- The causes, impact and consequences of mass migration in the 21st century

More detail is available in the Specification for GCSE Government and Politics.

How will I be assessed?

The structure of the examination is identical for both Unit 1 and Unit 2

Both examinations are 1 hour 30 minutes long.

Total marks for each paper is 75.

Both papers are divided into three sections:

Section A is worth 24 marks.

Section B, 25 marks.

Section C, 26 marks.

Section A

- is made up of 14 short questions requiring only brief answers
- the questions will ask you to “state” or “give” or to match terms with definitions
- quality of written communication is not being assessed
- about 30 minutes should be spent on this section
- example question: What is meant by the term ‘compulsory voting’? (1 mark)

Section B

- is made up of 4 questions
- questions use directions such as “explain” and “describe”
- questions require slightly longer written answers of one or two paragraphs
- in three of the questions you are given a source to interpret and to help you in answering the question
- quality of written communication is assessed
- you should spend about 30 minutes on this section
- example question: Using the Source and your own knowledge, explain why a number of young people choose not to vote. (6 marks)

Section C

- is made up of 2 questions that require short essay type answers
- in one question you have to make a case for **or** against a particular argument
- in the second question you have to present arguments for **both** sides of an issue
- quality of written communication is assessed
- you should spend about 30 minutes on this section
- example question: “Political parties are necessary in a democracy.” Make a case in support of this statement. (10 marks)

How can I do well in this subject?

To develop real understanding you need to relate what you study in class to the political events and issues that are reported in the media. Following the tips below will help to develop your interest in, and understanding of, the content of this unit.

Watch the news! Politics appears every day on TV, radio and in the papers. Paying attention to the news will not only increase your understanding but give you examples you can use in your examination.

Speak to your local MLAs. Almost all MLAs and parties are keen to make visits to local schools and be questioned by students.

Surf the net! There is a lot of valuable information about politics on the internet. The BBC and Guardian Politics sites are first class. Wikipedia is good too, with excellent links. Political blogs are not only informative and very funny but can also be critical of politicians which should assist you in developing your own evaluation skills.

Visit the Assembly. Ask your teacher to organise a visit to the Assembly. Meet your MLAs and ask them questions. The Education Service at the Assembly has produced a wealth of up-to-date information that is available online.

Being organised is crucial for success

- Organise your notes. Use the headings for each Unit given above.
- Be clear on the key issues. Keep them in your mind throughout your study of this unit.
- Understand fully what the examiners expect you to be able to do. Look at the specimen questions and mark schemes that CCEA has produced.
- Write practice answers to the different types of question and check them against your notes.

Good exam technique means increased marks

- ✓ The time spent on the question should reflect the mark allocation: a 1 mark question only needs a very short answer.
- ✓ Only do what the question asks you to do - there are no marks for including information that the question doesn't ask for.
- ✓ Make sure you use the Source when the question tells you to but don't rely only on it for your answer.
- ✓ Be sure to include examples and provide evidence to support your arguments.