5.3 The US Constitution: Principles and the Amendment Process: 10-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short-answer questions may be brief but must be precise. For levels-marked questions (the 12-mark source question and the 30-mark essay) write a developed response with evidence, clear reasoning and a concluding judgement.

1 State two methods by which an amendment to the US Constitution can be proposed under Article V (name both proposal routes).

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Explain what is meant by the US Constitution being 'entrenched' and give one consequence of entrenchment for constitutional change.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Explain the principle of separation of powers in the US Constitution and name the three branches involved.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

4 Explain how the Bill of Rights contributes to the idea of limited government under the US Constitution.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 5.3 The US Constitution: Principles and the Amendment Process: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

Proposal by two-thirds of both Houses of Congress (House of Representatives and Senate) cao	**B1**
Proposal by a national constitutional convention called for by two-thirds of state legislatures	**B1**

Answer: Two methods: proposal by a two-thirds vote of both Houses of Congress; or proposal by a national constitutional convention called when two-thirds of state legislatures apply.

Question 2

Defines entrenchment, e.g. rights and rules are protected from ordinary law by requiring special procedures to change them	**B1**
Identifies a consequence, e.g. amendments require a supermajority making change difficult	**B1**
Explains the consequence, e.g. protecting minority rights but slowing policy adaptation	**B1**

Answer: Entrenchment means the Constitution and certain rights require special procedures, not ordinary legislation, to be altered. A consequence is that amendments need supermajorities in Congress and among states, which protects minority rights but makes adapting the document to new conditions slow and difficult.

Question 3

States separation of powers distributes government functions across branches to prevent concentration of power	**B1**
Names the three branches: legislative, executive, judicial cao	**B1**
Briefly explains the intended effect, e.g. checks abuse and protect liberty	**B1**

Answer: Separation of powers divides government functions between three branches, the legislative (Congress), the executive (President) and the judicial (federal courts), to prevent any one branch concentrating power and thereby protect liberty.

Question 4

Identifies that the Bill of Rights (first ten amendments, 1791) lists specific individual rights	**B1**
Explains that enumerated rights limit governmental powers by forbidding certain actions	**B1**
Provides an example, e.g. First Amendment protects free speech from government restriction	**B1**
Links to limited government principle, e.g. rights protect citizens and constrain state authority	**B1**

Answer: The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments ratified in 1791, enumerates individual rights such as free speech and due process, thereby restricting what government may lawfully do. For example, the First Amendment prevents Congress from enacting laws that unduly restrict speech, illustrating the Constitution limits government power to protect citizens.

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