5.13 Comparative US/UK Executives: The President and the Prime Minister: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief; extended answers and levels-marked responses should use full sentences and relevant comparative detail. The final question is a 30-mark evaluative essay. Total time suggested 30 minutes.

1 Evaluate the extent to which the US President is more constrained by other branches of government than the UK Prime Minister is constrained by Parliament and party mechanisms.

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(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 5.13 Comparative US/UK Executives: The President and the Prime Minister: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Limited knowledge of institutional constraints in either system; argument is undeveloped or descriptive with little analysis or evaluation.	**1-7**
Level 2 Knowledge of key constraints in both systems with some analysis of how they operate. Evaluation present but may be one-sided or lacking sustained comparative judgement.	**8-15**
Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge and developed analysis of constitutional and political constraints on both executives. Evaluation weighs evidence and begins to reach a comparative judgement supported by examples.	**16-23**
Level 4 Sophisticated, well-evidenced analysis and evaluation across AO1, AO2 and AO3. Direct, sustained comparison of the institutional and political constraints with precise examples and a clear, balanced final judgement on the extent of constraint.	**24-30**

Indicative content:

- Point: US President faces formal separation of powers meaning Congress can block legislation, control the purse, and the Senate confirms appointments and ratifies treaties; judicial review can overturn executive actions. Evidence: examples such as gridlock when opposition controls one or both houses, Senate rejection of nominees, and court decisions limiting executive orders.
- Point: The fixed term provides insulation from immediate removal but forces reliance on congressional coalitions; impeachment is rare and politically fraught, so removal is possible but difficult. Evidence: impeachment proceedings in modern history and their political dynamics.
- Point: UK Prime Minister is not constitutionally separated from the legislature and can usually pass legislation when commanding a Commons majority, but is vulnerable to loss of office via no confidence or party leadership challenges. Evidence: examples where PMs with large majorities passed major programmes, and instances where internal party challenges forced PMs to resign or moderate policy.
- Point: The UK PM appoints ministers without legislative confirmation, giving managerial freedom; however party discipline and the whip system act as both a tool and a constraint, since rebellion can force concessions. Evidence: use of the whip to secure votes, and cases where backbench rebellions constrained policy.
- Point: Compare how judicial review operates in both systems: US courts have a more prominent role in checking executive policy through constitutional litigation, while UK courts have more limited review of prerogative powers post-Miller but still respect parliamentary sovereignty; political mechanisms often dominate in the UK.
- Counterpoint: When the US President and the UK Prime Minister are from the same collaborative party position with legislative majorities, practical constraints can look similar: a President with a friendly Congress can pass much of their programme, and a PM without a Commons majority can be heavily constrained.
- Evaluation: weigh the formal, legal constraints in the US against the political, party-based constraints in the UK. Consider which type of constraint is stronger in practice and how context, such as divided government or a slim majority, changes the balance.
- Judgement: a reasoned conclusion might argue the US President is structurally more constrained in law by separate branches, but in practice constraint depends on political alignment; the UK Prime Minister can often act more decisively when commanding a majority, yet can be more quickly removed by party or parliamentary action, so neither office is uniformly more constrained in all circumstances.

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