5.9 US Elections: The Electoral College, Primaries and Caucuses: Test Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 20 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief but must be clear. For levels-marked questions, write a developed response using accurate political knowledge, examples and clear evaluation where required. The final two questions are source-based and essay tasks and require full-sentence answers.

1 State who formally casts votes for President and Vice President in the US Electoral College.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Explain how Electoral College votes are allocated to states in US presidential elections, and state how many electoral votes the District of Columbia has.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Define a faithless elector and state how significant faithless electors have been in recent US presidential elections.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Explain what the invisible primary is and how it can affect the US presidential nomination process.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 State how Maine and Nebraska allocate electoral votes differently from winner-takes-all, and briefly explain the consequences of this approach.

(Total for Question 5 is 5 marks)

6 Explain how the Electoral College affects US presidential campaign strategy. Include the role of winner-takes-all allocation, the attention given to swing states and safe states, and one campaign example.

(Total for Question 6 is 5 marks)

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Mark scheme · 5.9 US Elections: The Electoral College, Primaries and Caucuses: Test Pack

Question 1

States that electors in the Electoral College formally cast votes for President and Vice President **B1**

Answer: Electors in the Electoral College formally cast the votes for President and Vice President.

Question 2

Identifies that each state's electoral votes equal its number of Senators plus its number of Representatives in the House **B1**

States that the District of Columbia has three electoral votes; naming the amendment or its date is not required **B1**

Answer: Each state has electoral votes equal to its two Senators plus its number of House Representatives; the District of Columbia has three electors under the 23rd Amendment (1961).

Question 3

Defines a faithless elector as an Electoral College elector who does not vote for the candidate they pledged to support **B1**

Notes that faithless electors have been rare and have not changed a successful presidential result in modern times **B1**

Answer: A faithless elector is an Electoral College elector who casts a vote different from the candidate they were pledged to support; such cases are rare and have not altered the outcome of a successful presidential election in recent history.

Question 4

Identifies the invisible primary as the period of fundraising, persuasion and elite endorsement before voting begins **B1**

Explains that it involves securing endorsements, building campaign organisations and fundraising to show viability **B1**

Gives a consequence, e.g. strong performance in the invisible primary can deter rivals and shape media coverage **B1**

Links to nomination outcomes, e.g. candidates who fail to build support may drop out before the first contests **B1**

Answer: The invisible primary is the pre-voting period when candidates seek endorsements, raise funds and build campaign organisations to demonstrate viability; success can shape media narratives, deter rivals and influence who remains standing by the time primaries and caucuses begin.

Question 5

States that Maine and Nebraska award one electoral vote to the winner of each congressional district **B1**

States that two additional electoral votes go to the statewide winner **B1**

Contrasts this with winner-takes-all allocation, used by most states, where the statewide winner receives all the state's electoral votes **B1**

Explains that district and statewide winners can differ, allowing the state's electoral votes to be split between candidates **B1**

Explains a campaign consequence, such as candidates targeting competitive congressional districts even where the statewide result is relatively safe; a historical example or evaluation is not required **B1**

Answer: Maine and Nebraska award one electoral vote to the winner of each congressional district and two additional votes to the statewide winner. Most states instead award all their electoral votes to the statewide winner. Because district winners can differ from the statewide winner, Maine and Nebraska can split their electoral votes between candidates. This gives campaigns a reason to target competitive districts even where the statewide result is relatively safe.

Question 6

Identifies that candidates focus on swing states rather than campaigning evenly across all states **B1**

Explains that swing-state focus leads to resource concentration and tailored policy messages for competitive states **B1**

Explains that safe states receive less campaign attention because their electoral votes are less likely to change hands **B1**

Explains strategic use of battleground states due to winner-takes-all allocation in most states **B1**

Offers a brief example, e.g. 2016 or 2020 campaigns prioritised states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin **B1**

Answer: Because most states use winner-takes-all allocation, winning a competitive state delivers all its electoral votes. Campaigns therefore concentrate time, spending and tailored messages on swing states where these resources could change the result. Safe states receive less attention because their electoral votes are less likely to change hands. For example, the 2016 campaigns prioritised Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin.

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