
AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

Inside:

Free-Response Question 1

- ✓ Scoring Guidelines
- ✓ Student Samples
- ✓ Scoring Commentary

Question 1: Conceptual Analysis**4 points**

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- (a) Describe an action a legislature in a parliamentary system can take to limit executive power. **1 point**

Acceptable descriptions include:

- Parliaments can dismiss a prime minister at any time through a vote of no confidence.
- Parliaments can remove cabinet officials.
- When the governing party controls a plurality, but not a majority, the legislature can threaten to dissolve the coalition to pressure the prime minister to make a decision or compromise.

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- (b) Explain how a presidential system could lead to an inefficient legislative process. **1 point**

Acceptable explanations include:

- In presidential systems the executive and the legislature are separately elected and may be controlled by opposing parties, which can result in a legislative process that is slow.
- Presidential veto powers can invalidate legislative work because the executive and legislature have the ability to check one another.
- Compromise may be required to produce legislation because the executive and the legislature are elected separately and may be controlled by opposing parties.

-
- (c) Explain why the legislative process is often less efficient in a presidential system than in a parliamentary system. **1 point**

Acceptable explanations include:

- Presidential systems can be less efficient because the executive and legislative institutions can be from different parties, which may have different policy preferences that would require negotiation or compromise. In a parliamentary system the executive is chosen by the majority party or governing coalition of the legislature and has shared policy interests with the majority party or coalition.
- Votes of no confidence are not found in presidential systems but are present in parliamentary systems. The threat of a vote of no confidence encourages cooperation and increases legislative efficiency.
- Presidential systems can be less efficient because branches of government are independent from each other, which makes it more difficult to coordinate legislating, whereas a parliamentary system fuses legislative and executive power.
- The legislative process is designed to be slower and more deliberate in a presidential system because founding leaders in some countries were concerned with concentration of power in one branch/political instability with frequent changes in legislators.

(d) Explain how legislative efficiency affects political efficacy in democratic systems. **1 point**

Acceptable explanations include:

- Governments with efficient legislative processes are more likely to respond to the needs of citizens, which would cause citizens to feel that their voices are being heard, thus improving their feelings of political efficacy.
- Governments with inefficient legislative processes are less productive and are less likely to be seen by citizens as a vehicle for social change, thus reducing feelings of political efficacy.
- Legislators in inefficient legislatures may have an oversized influence on the process, which could enable them to represent the interests of their constituents well and enhance feelings of political efficacy.

Total for question 1 4 points

Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

- a) An action that a legislature could take to limit executive power in a parliamentary system is a vote of no confidence, when the party thinks the current executive is not fit to rule and calls on a vote to remove him from office. Legislatures may also conduct publicized Prime Minister question hours, like in the UK, where opposition parties in the legislature ask the executive questions about actions and policies in order to keep them in check.
- b) A presidential system separates the executive and legislative branches, so there may be disagreement of policies between the two branches when it comes to lawmaking, which tends to slow down the lawmaking process. In presidential systems, the majority party in the legislature may be different than the executive, and so many of their views may not align, making it difficult to pass laws they both agree on.
- c) The legislative process in ~~parliamentary systems~~ ^{presidential systems} is usually less efficient because in parliamentary systems the legislative and executive branches are fused, while ~~the~~ in presidential systems they are separate. In parliamentary systems, the prime minister is selected from the majority party in the legislature, so the executive and legislative branches will almost always agree. On the other hand, in a presidential system, the president and legislative branch are selected separately, so they may have opposing views, making it more difficult to make

Page 2

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Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

laws and less efficient.

~~d) Based on legislative efficiency, a democratic system may have higher or political~~

d) In democratic systems, higher legislative efficiency tends to correlate with high political efficacy because when legislation is able quickly and effectively address the needs of the citizens, the people will believe they have more ability to create change in the government, or higher political efficacy. With lower legislative efficiency, governments won't be able to quickly address the needs of citizens, which can make them feel like the government has low democratic responsiveness, and decreases political efficacy.

Page 3

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Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

- a) An action that a legislature in a parliamentary system can take to limit executive power is by removing the prime minister in a vote of non-confidence.
- b) Presidential systems could lead to inefficient legislative process because ~~the president is elected directly by the people~~, ~~the party with the majority in the legislature may not be the same party of the president~~. This may cause grid-lock between the executive and legislative branch. ^{For example, if the president proposes a policy to the legislature, they could strike it down.}
- c) In parliamentary systems the people directly elect the parliament, ~~the president~~ and then ~~the parliament votes for the Prime Minister~~. Because of this, the party with the most seats will win and the PM will be a party member. This makes the legislative more efficient in a parliamentary system because ~~most of the parliament~~ ^{most of} the parliament ~~will~~ will be controlled by the PM ~~from the same party~~. So there is less gridlock.
- d) Legislative efficiency affects political efficacy because if the government is slow at making decisions, or if policies are hard to pass, then citizens will ~~think~~ think their voices have less influence over the already complicated ^{decision-making} ~~process~~. This may lead them to think they have a lower political efficacy.

Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

a) In a parliamentary system, the legislature may take a vote of no confidence.

b) In a presidential system, the legislature and executive could be dominated by different parties, leading to conflict and stalemates.

c) Contrary to a presidential system, parliamentary systems fuse the legislative and executive branches, which increases efficiency because ~~the~~ the party dominating the legislature elects the president, so the different branches do not clash as much.

d) When the legislature is efficient and implements policy quickly, citizens can more easily see the impact of their vote, and feel more strongly that they did something, and have influence, which increases efficacy.

Use a pen with black or dark blue ink only. Do NOT write your name. Do NOT write outside the box.

Question 1

Conceptual Analysis

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

The intent of this question was to assess students' ability to describe and explain. Students were expected to be able to describe one of the ways that a legislature can restrict the power of the executive. Then students needed to explain how a presidential system can be more inefficient than a parliamentary system and why the legislative process in a presidential system can be less efficient. Finally, students were expected to explain the relationship between legislative efficiency and political efficacy.

Sample: 1A

Score: 4

(a) The response earned 1 point for correctly describing an action the legislature in a parliamentary system can take to limit executive power by stating that the legislature can remove the executive by calling “on a vote to remove him from office.”

(b) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining how a presidential system could lead to an inefficient legislative process: “disagreement ... between the two branches ... tends to slow down the lawmaking process,” as “the majority party in the legislature may be different than the executive.”

(c) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining why the legislative process is often less efficient in a presidential system than in a parliamentary system, contrasting the presidential system where “the president and the legislative branch are elected separately, so they may have opposing views” with a parliamentary system where “the legislative and executive branches are fused.”

(d) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining how legislative efficiency affects political efficacy in democratic systems by stating, “higher legislative efficiency tends to correlate with high political efficacy because when legislation is able quickly and effectively address the needs of the citizens, the people will believe they have more ability to create change in the government.”

Sample: 1B

Score: 3

(a) The response earned 1 point for correctly describing an action the legislature in a parliamentary system can take to limit executive power as “removing the prime minister in a vote of non-confidence.”

(b) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining how a presidential system could lead to an inefficient legislative process: “[T]he party with the majority in the legislature may not be the same party of the president. This may cause grid-lock.”

Question 1 (continued)

(c) The response did not earn a point for correctly explaining why the legislative process is often less efficient in a presidential system than in a parliamentary system. “[T]he parliament will be controlled by the PM” does not correctly explain fusion of powers, and there is no comparison with the presidential system.

(d) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining how legislative efficiency affects political efficacy in democratic systems by stating, “if policies are hard to pass, then citizens will think their voices have less influence ... This may lead them to think they has a lower political efficacy.”

Sample: 1C

Score: 2

(a) The response did not earn a point for correctly describing an action the legislature in a parliamentary system can take to limit executive power, as the response identifies “vote of no confidence” but does not provide a description.

(b) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining how a presidential system could lead to an inefficient legislative process: “[T]he legislature and executive could be dominated by different parties, leading to ... stalemates.”

(c) The response did not earn a point for correctly explaining why the legislative process is often less efficient in a presidential system than in a parliamentary system, as the response incorrectly identifies the executive nominated in a parliamentary system as “president,” and there is no comparison with a presidential system.

(d) The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining how legislative efficiency affects political efficacy in democratic systems by stating, “When the legislature is efficient ... citizens can more easily see the impact of their vote, and feel more strongly that they ... have influence, which increases efficacy.”