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# AP<sup>®</sup> Comparative Government and Politics

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

### **Inside:**

#### **Free-Response Question 3**

- ☒ **Scoring Guidelines**
- ☒ **Student Samples**
- ☒ **Scoring Commentary**

**Question 3: Comparative Analysis****5 points**


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**(A)** Describe the main function of the legislative branch of government in most countries. **1 point**

**Acceptable descriptions include:**

- The legislative branch is typically responsible for creating and passing laws.
- The legislative branch represents the interests of the people.
- The legislative branch can check the power of the executive branch.
- The legislative branch usually oversees the budget.

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**(B)** Describe the selection process of members of the lower or single house of the legislative branch in two AP Comparative Government and Politics course countries. **2 points**

**Acceptable descriptions include the following (max one point per country):**

**China**

In China, the National People's Congress is indirectly elected by the local peoples' congresses or a series of local and regional elections.

**Iran**

In Iran, the Majles is directly elected in single-member or multimember districts after being vetted by the Guardian Council.

**Mexico**

- Mexico uses a mixed system to elect members of the lower house (Chamber of Deputies) in which some members are elected by single-member district plurality and others through proportional representation.
- Some members of Mexico's lower house (Chamber of Deputies) are directly elected, and some members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected through proportional representation.

**Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the lower house (House of Representatives) is elected through single-member district plurality.

**Russia**

In Russia, half the Duma is elected from single-member districts, and the rest through proportional representation.

**The United Kingdom**

In the United Kingdom, members of the lower house (the House of Commons) are elected through a single-member district plurality or first-past-the-post rules.

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- (C)** Explain the extent to which legislative power is formally constrained in the two AP Comparative Government and Politics course countries described in (B). **2 points**

**Acceptable explanations include the following (max one point per country):**

**China**

- In China, the Chinese Communist Party is the actual center of power in the Chinese state, which constrains the NPC from acting independently.
- In China, the NPC is constrained by its two-week session that serves to pass CCP policies without extensive debate.

**Iran**

- In Iran, the Guardian Council and/or the supreme leader has the power to veto laws that are not compatible with Sharia and can overrule the Majles.
- In Iran, the Expediency Council resolves disputes between the Majles and the Guardian Council, overruling the decisions of the Majles.

**Mexico**

- In Mexico, the president can veto laws passed by the legislature, overruling the decisions by the legislature.
- In Mexico, the Supreme Court can declare laws unconstitutional, overruling decisions by the legislature.
- In Mexico, bicameralism makes lawmaking more difficult because laws have to pass two chambers.

**Nigeria**

- In Nigeria, the president can veto laws passed by the legislature, overruling the decisions by the legislature.
- In Nigeria, the Supreme Court can declare laws unconstitutional, overruling decisions by the legislature.
- In Nigeria, bicameralism makes lawmaking more difficult because laws have to pass two chambers.

**Russia**

- In Russia, the president can veto laws passed by the legislature, overruling the decisions by the legislature.
- In Russia, the president can issue decrees contradicting the laws passed by the legislature.
- In Russia, the Constitutional Court can declare laws unconstitutional, overruling decisions by the legislature.
- In Russia, the president can dissolve the Duma which constrains the president's ability to act independently.

**The United Kingdom**

- In the United Kingdom, the House of Lords can delay legislation and can force the lower house to modify legislation.
- In the United Kingdom, there are few limits on the legislative power as the parliamentary system fuses power and thereby avoids gridlock.

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**Total for question 3 5 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

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

A. The main function of the legislature is to draft laws and manage money in most countries. The legislature is typically in charge of drafting and voting on ~~to~~ bills before the executive signs them into law. They are also in charge of the federal budget and approving + allocating money (power of the purse).

B. In the United Kingdom, members of the House of Commons are elected in single member districts aiming for a plurality of the votes. In Mexico, there is a mixed election system. This means some seats are voted for through proportional representation, where people vote for parties instead of candidates. The other type of electoral process they use is single member districts with a plurality required to win the seat. Mexico also has gender quotas to give opportunity for female representation.

C. In the United Kingdom, checks on legislative power are very limited. ~~Since~~ Since the executive and legislative branches are fused, they ~~do~~ often work together to create the laws limiting checks. There can however be snap elections where

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

Question 1

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Question 4



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

the entire govt. is removed from office and new elections are held. Due to parliamentary sovereignty, judicial review is highly uncommon and only used in special cases.

In Mexico, The executive and legislative branches are not fused leading to a check on the legislature - veto. The president can veto <sup>(veto power)</sup> bills they do not wish to sign into law. Another check in Mexico is judicial review from the Supreme Court, a law can be declared unconstitutional.

Mexico has more formal constraints on legislature than the UK does.

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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.

In most countries the ~~function~~ main function of the legislative branch is to make and pass laws to govern the state.

The selection process for the lower house of the Russian legislature, ~~the~~ (the Duma) is a mix of single member districts\* and proportional representation ~~systems~~ in their elections, and the selection process for the ~~lower~~<sup>only</sup> house of the ~~Iranian~~<sup>Iranian</sup> legislature<sup>(the majlis)</sup> is single elections with a mix of single member and multi-member districts where you need a plurality to win seats.

\*with plurality needed to win

In Russia legislative power is formally constrained<sup>to a large extent</sup> by the large power of the president because not only do they have the power to veto legislation, they also can make decisions with the power of laws which are often used to bypass the legislature, and in some cases can even dissolve the legislature. In Iran the legislature

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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

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

power is ~~constant~~ <sup>also constrained greatly</sup> both by the supreme leader who has veto power, but also the guardian council which is in charge of making sure the laws align with Islam so they also can stop legislation from passing the majlis if they think it does not ~~align~~ work with Islam.  
 and lots of discretionary power

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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) In most countries, the main function of the legislative branch is to create new policies as well as serve as a proper check on power to the executive. Drafting and passing legislation is the main function of this branch.
- (B) In the UK, the lower house is called the House of Commons. The representatives for this house are directly elected by the people in a single member district election model. In Mexico, the lower house is known as the House of Representatives. This house is also elected directly by the citizens in a plurality election model.
- (C) In China, legislative power is severely constrained because the party controls everything. The ~~Communist Party~~ CCP is the dominant party, therefore, whatever they say, goes, which limits any power legislation might have had. In Russia, the executive is so powerful that legislative power is essentially nonexistent. Russia is known for having no checks on power because Putin, the president, has corrupted all other branches of government to adhere to his laws. Putin has changed the election processes as well as the constitution to ensure that nobody, even legislative powers, can overrule his power.

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### **Question 3**

#### **Comparative Analysis**

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

#### **Overview**

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the concept of legislative systems and their ability to describe and explain to what extent legislative power is formally constrained in countries studied in the AP Comparative Government and Politics course. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students first were expected to describe the main function of the legislative branch of government in most countries. Then they had to demonstrate their understanding of how legislators are chosen by describing the selection process of members of the lower or single house of the legislative branch in two course countries. Finally, students needed to demonstrate their understanding of checks on legislative independence by explaining the extent to which legislative power is formally constrained in each of the same two course countries.

#### **Sample: 3A**

**Score: 5**

(A) The response earned 1 point for describing that the main function of the legislative branch of government in most countries is to be “in charge of drafting and voting on bills before the executive signs them into law.” The response could also have earned the point by describing that the legislature is “in charge of the federal budget.”

(B) The response earned 1 point for describing the selection process of members of the lower house of the legislative branch in the UK as “members of the House of Commons are elected in single member districts aiming for a plurality of the votes.” The response earned 1 point for describing the selection process of members of the lower house of the legislative branch in Mexico as “there is a mixed election system. This means some seats are voted for through proportional representation, where people vote for parties instead of candidates. The other type of electoral process they use is single member districts with a plurality required to win the seat.”

(C) The response earned 1 point for explaining that legislative power in the UK is formally constrained but that “checks on legislative power are very limited. Since the executive and legislative branches are fused, they often work together to create the laws limiting checks.” The response earned 1 point for explaining that legislative power in Mexico is formally constrained in that “the president can veto (send back) bills they do not wish to sign into law.” The response could also have earned the point for stating, “Another check in Mexico is judicial review from the Supreme Court, a law can be declared unconstitutional.”

#### **Sample: 3B**

**Score: 4**

(A) The response earned 1 point for describing that the main function of the legislative branch of government in most countries is “to make and pass laws to govern the state.”

(B) The response earned 1 point for describing that the selection process of members of the lower

### Question 3 (continued)

house of the legislative branch in Russia is for “(the Duma) ... a mix of single member districts with plurality needed to win and proportional representation.” The response did not earn a point for describing the selection process of members of the single house of the legislative branch in Iran because the response does not state that candidates must be vetted by the Guardian Council.

(C) The response earned 1 point for explaining that legislative power is formally constrained in Russia “by the large power of the president because not only do they have the power to veto legislation.” The response could also have earned the point by including the decree powers of the president or the ability to dissolve the legislature. The response earned 1 point for explaining that legislative power is formally constrained in Iran “by the Supreme Leader who has veto power and lots of discretionary power.” The response could have also earned the point with the statement that “the Guardian Council which is in charge of making sure the laws align with Islam so they also can stop legislation from passing the mjes, if think it does not work with Islam.”

#### **Sample: 3C**

#### **Score: 2**

(A) The response earned 1 point for describing that the main function of the legislative branch of government in most countries is “[D]rafting and passing legislation.”

(B) The response earned 1 point for describing the selection process of members of the lower house of the legislative branch in the United Kingdom as in “the House of Commons ... the representatives ... are directly elected by the people in a single member district election model.” The response did not earn a point for describing the selection process of members of the lower house of the legislative branch of government in Mexico because the response does not accurately describe the mixed nature of the Mexican electoral system.

(C) The response did not earn a point for explaining the extent to which legislative power is formally constrained in China because the response does not discuss China in part B. The response did not earn a point for explaining the extent to which legislative power is formally constrained in Russia because the response does not discuss Russia in part B.