AP | (acorn logo)

AP® United States Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary
Set 1

Inside:

Free-Response Question 2

☑ **Scoring Guidelines**

☑ **Student Samples**

☑ **Scoring Commentary**

Question 2: Quantitative Analysis   **4 points**

A. Identify the type of spending that comprised the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016.   **1 point**

Acceptable identifications include:

- Mandatory spending

B. Describe the difference in the trends in mandatory versus discretionary spending as illustrated in the graph.   **1 point**

Acceptable descriptions include:

- As a percentage of total federal spending, mandatory spending increased whereas during that same time frame discretionary spending decreased.

C. Draw a conclusion about Congress's budgetary choices based on trends in the data.   **1 point**

Acceptable conclusions include:

- Mandatory spending increases over time, so Congress decreases discretionary spending.
- Mandatory spending increases over time, so Congress raises taxes.
- Mandatory spending increases over time, so Congress continues similar funding levels and increases the budget deficit.

D. Explain how an interest group might respond to trends shown in the graph.   **1 point**

Acceptable explanations include:

- As discretionary spending decreases, interest groups might be more motivated to fight for the survival of policies they support.
- Interest groups might lobby for changes to programs funded by mandatory spending that would benefit their members.
- Interest groups may lobby more aggressively for programs funded by discretionary spending since discretionary spending is decreasing as a percentage of the total budget.

Total for question 2   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) Mandatory spending ~~was~~ made up the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016.

b) As time progresses, ~~mandatory~~ the percentage ~~amount~~ of mandatory spending in the federal budget has increased, and the ~~percentage amount~~ of discretionary spending in the federal budget has decreased. The percentage of net interest has remained some what constant, but the percentage of mandatory and discretionary spending went through a drastic ~~change~~ overall change.

c) Congress has been forced to cut down on discretionary spending in the budget because of the large percentage ~~it~~ of mandatory spending that is required. This is most likely due to inflation in the economy, as things have become far more expensive over ~~the~~ time. This ~~will pro~~ trend will probably continue in future years, as inflation is still very much present.

d) An interest group that strives to achieve more discretionary spending ~~might try~~ in the budget might try to gain support to ~~cut make budget~~ try and cut things from the mandatory budget. They may also try to support a candidate that promises greater discretional spending by holding rallies for that candidate and that goal in mind. Since interest groups rarely directly affect actual passage of legislation, these are ways they gain support at the social level.

Page 3

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Q5387/03

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. Mandatory spending was the biggest percent of federal spending in 2016

B. As time goes on the percent of spending on mandatory spending increases while discretionary decreases. Mandatory spending has increased greatly from 1962 to 2019.

C. Congress had to begin spending more money on mandatory because of the rising number of elders in America. Social security is part of mandatory spending, and something the government has to give money to. Because of the baby boomer generation there is more people qualifing for social security then ever before. This means congress has to set aside more funds for social security, which is mandatory spending, more than they used to.

D. An intrest group might ~~decide to~~ notice that there is less money going into discretionary funding. This could be a problem for many intrest groups, so they would attempt to lobby and convince members of congress to put a limit on Mandatory spending. This would leave more room for discretionary spending, which is what the intrest groups want.

Page 3

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Q5387/03

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 2016, the type of spending that comprised the greatest percentage of the federal budget was discretionary spending, which peaked at nearly 70% in the 1960s and early 1970s. B.) The graph shows a trend that indicates discretionary spending has decreased, starting at close to 70% in 1962 and ending up at nearly 30% in 2019. The decrease in discretionary spending has resulted in more mandatory spending, with mandatory spending being about 30% in 1962 and about 65% in 2019. C.) From this graph, it can be concluded that Congress, over time, has put less funding towards discretionary spending and more funding towards mandatory spending, while net interest remains relatively the same. This may be because American citizens have become more aware of Congress's spending trends and Congress is adapting it's spending in response to the public. D.) An interest group might respond to trends shown in the graph by participating in political and fundraising activities like accepting donations and lobbying. They may also attempt to get involved with Congress.

Page 3

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Q5387/03

Question 2

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

Overview

Responses to the quantitative analysis question are expected to demonstrate the ability to read and interpret data related to changes in the patterns of federal spending between fiscal years 1962–2019. In part A responses were expected to identify the largest percentage of spending during a particular year based on an accurate reading of the data. In part B responses were required to describe changes in spending patterns across the period. In part C responses were expected to draw a conclusion regarding the impact that these changes had on Congress' budgetary choices through an analysis of the data. In part D responses were expected to explain how an interest group might respond to the trends represented in the data.

Sample: 2A
Score: 4

The response earned 1 point in part A. The response states "Mandatory spending made up the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016." This is a sufficient identification because it correctly identifies mandatory spending as the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016.

The response earned 1 point in part B. The response states "As time progresses, the percentage of mandatory spending … has increased, and the percentage of discretionary spending … has decreased." This correctly identifies a difference illustrated in the graph.

The response earned 1 point in part C. The response states "Congress has been forced to cut down on discretionary spending … because of the large percentage of mandatory spending that is required." This is a sufficient conclusion because it accurately connects the change in Congress' budgetary choices to the trends in the data.

The response earned 1 point in part D. The response states "An interest group … may also try to support a candidate that promises greater discretional spending by holding rallies for that candidate and that goal in mind." This is a sufficient explanation because it shows how an interest group might be more motivated to fight for the survival of the policies they support.

Sample: 2B
Score: 3

The response earned 1 point in part A. The response states "Mandatory spending was the biggest percent of federal spending in 2016." This is a sufficient identification because it correctly identifies mandatory spending as having the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016.

The response earned 1 point in part B. The response states "As time goes on the percent of spending on mandatory spending increases while discretionary decreases." This is a sufficient description because it shows that mandatory spending increases over time while discretionary spending decreases.

Question 2 (Continued)

The response earned 0 points in part C. The response states "Congress had to begin spending more money on mandatory because of the rising number of elders in America … This means Congress has to set aside more funds for Social Security … than they used to." This is not a sufficient conclusion because it does not explain how Congress would get more funds to set aside and therefore does not show how the trends in the data could impact Congress' budgetary choices going forward.

The response earned 1 point in part D by stating "An intrest group … would attempt to lobby and convince members of Congress to put a limit on Mandatory Spending. This would leave more room for discretionary spending, which is what the intrest groups want." This is a sufficient explanation because it shows how interest groups might lobby more aggressively for programs funded by discretionary spending.

Sample: 2C
Score: 1

The response earned 0 points in part A. The response states that "the greatest percentage of the federal budget was discretionary spending." This is inaccurate because mandatory spending was the largest percentage in 2016.

The response earned 1 point in part B. The response states "The graph Shows a trend that indicates discretionary Spending has decreased … with mandatory Spending being about 30% in 1962 and 65% in 2019." This is a sufficient description because it shows the trend of discretionary spending decreasing over time, with mandatory spending increasing.

The response earned 0 points in part C. The response states "it can be concluded that Congress, over time, has put less funding towards discretionary spending and more funding toward mandatory spending." This is not a sufficient response because it does not show how the trends in the data impact Congress' budgetary choices.

The response earned 0 points in part D. The response does not explain how an interest group would respond to the trends shown in the graph. Stating that interest groups can respond "by participating in political and fundraising activities" is not a sufficient explanation of how interest groups might respond the trends shown in the graph.