



National
Qualifications
2026

2026 Politics Paper 2

Higher

Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by Qualifications Scotland appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

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General marking principles for Higher Politics

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) Marking must be consistent. Never make a hasty judgement on a response based on length, quality of handwriting or a confused start.
- (d) Use the full range of marks available for each question.
- (e) The detailed marking instructions are not an exhaustive list. Award marks for other relevant points.

Marking principles for each question type

For each of the question types the following provides an overview of marking principles.

The types of questions used in this paper are:

- To what extent . . . [20-mark information-handling question]
- Compare . . . [8-mark information-handling question]

Source-based compare question that assesses information-handling skills (8 marks)

- Candidates will have two sources at an appropriate SCQF level
- Credit candidates who synthesis information between sources
- For full marks candidates must refer to both sources in their answer

Source-based interpreting electoral data question that assesses information-handling skills (20 marks)

- Candidates will have up to seven sources at an appropriate SCQF level
- Credit candidates who synthesis information both within and between sources
- For full marks candidates must refer to all sources in their answer

General marking guidelines for source-based questions (compare) – 8 marks

	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks
Analysis Identification of relevant points of comparison. Award up to 3 marks .	One accurate point of comparison identified from two sources.	Two accurate points of comparison identified from two sources.	Three accurate points of comparison identified from two sources.
Analysis Comments that identify relationships/implications/make judgements. Award up to 3 marks .	One relevant analytical comment based on one point of comparison.	Two relevant analytical comments based on two points of comparison.	Three relevant analytical comments based on three points of comparison.
Overall conclusion Award up to 2 marks .	Straightforward overall conclusion about the comparison based upon analysis of evidence.	Detailed overall conclusion about the comparison based on analysis of evidence.	

General marking guidelines for source-based question (interpretation of electoral data) – 20 marks

		1 mark	2 marks	3 marks
Interpretation of data linked to the first part of the viewpoint	Component 1	One aspect of data is interpreted accurately and linked to the first component of this part of the viewpoint.	All relevant aspects of data are interpreted accurately and linked to the first component of this part of the viewpoint.	In addition, all identified aspects of data are synthesised to provide a commentary linked to this component.
	Component 2	One aspect of data is interpreted accurately and linked to the second component of this part of the viewpoint.	All relevant aspects of data are interpreted accurately and linked to the second component of this part of the viewpoint.	In addition, all identified aspects of data are synthesised to provide a commentary linked to this component.
Interpretation of data linked to the second part of the viewpoint	Component 1	One aspect of data is interpreted accurately and linked to the first component of this part of the viewpoint.	All relevant aspects of data are interpreted accurately and linked to the first component of this part of the viewpoint.	In addition, all identified aspects of data are synthesised to provide a commentary linked to this component.
	Component 2	One aspect of data is interpreted accurately and linked to the second component of this part of the viewpoint.	All relevant aspects of data are interpreted accurately and linked to the second component of this part of the viewpoint.	In addition, all identified aspects of data are synthesised to provide a commentary linked to this component.
	Component 3	One aspect of data is interpreted accurately and linked to the third component of this part of the viewpoint.	All relevant aspects of data are interpreted accurately and linked to the third component of this part of the viewpoint.	In addition, all identified aspects of data are synthesised to provide a commentary linked to this component.
Evaluation of extent of validity of the viewpoint	Evaluation of first part of the viewpoint	An overall evaluative comment is made on the validity of one component of the first part of the viewpoint with supporting justification.	An overall comment is made on the validity of both components of the first part of the viewpoint with supporting justifications.	
	Evaluation of the second part of the viewpoint	An overall evaluative comment is made on the validity of one component of the second part of the viewpoint with supporting justification.	An overall evaluative comment is made on the validity of two components of the second part of the viewpoint with supporting justifications.	An overall evaluative comment is made on the validity of all components of the second part of the viewpoint with supporting justifications.

Marking instructions for each question

Question	General marking instructions	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
1.	Candidates must demonstrate they can make accurate comparisons and draw valid conclusions. For full marks, candidates must refer to all sources and also say to what extent the evidence supports the viewpoint. Analysis Comparisons involve: - identifying areas of differences - identifying areas of similarity - making evaluative comments on the extent of these - differences/similarities For full marks, candidates must use both sources and make three points of comparison. Award up to 2 marks for each accurate point of comparison and analytical comment. Award up to a maximum of 6 marks for accurate comparisons with associated analysis. Award up to 2 marks for an overall conclusion.	8	Award marks where candidates refer to the following aspects of the question: Source A - age as an influence on voting behaviour was the dominant factor in 2019 - social class became less important as an influence on voting behaviour in 2019 - leadership played a key role in influencing voting behaviour in 2019 Source B - age was not as dominant as 2019 - social class had almost no influence on voting behaviour in 2024 - leadership as an influence on voting behaviour was not as important in 2024 Award marks for any other relevant comparisons. Analysis Candidates may make individual evaluative comments as they address each point of comparison, or they may produce a summative evaluation of each part of the viewpoint in the conclusion to their answer – award marks for both approaches. The following response would be awarded 1 mark as it identified one point of comparison from two sources. <i>Source A states that social class became significantly less important to the British electorate in 2019. Whereas Source B states that in 2024 social class was not an accurate predictor of voting behaviour.</i> The following response would be awarded 2 marks as it identifies one point of comparison from two sources (1 mark) and makes a relevant analytical comment. (1 mark) <i>Source A states that social class became significantly less important to the British electorate in 2019. Whereas Source B states that in 2024 social class was not an accurate predictor of voting behaviour. This means that while social class still played some role in the 2019 General Election, by 2024 it played virtually no role in determining how people would vote.</i>

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					The following response would be awarded 1 mark as it makes a straightforward overall conclusion. <i>Overall, the importance of key influences on voting behaviour changed between 2019 and 2024.</i> The following response would be awarded 2 marks as it makes a detailed, overall conclusion (2 marks). <i>Overall, the importance of key influences on voting behaviour changed between 2019 and 2024. Whereas voters overwhelmingly voted in line with age group in 2019, this was much less clear in 2024. Social class continued to become less important at each election. Leadership, whilst playing a significant role in 2019, was less of a factor in 2024.</i>

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
2.			Candidates must demonstrate that they can interpret and evaluate electoral data. For full marks, candidates must refer to all sources and also say to what extent the data supports the statement made. Analysis/evaluation Award up to 3 marks for answers that correctly interpret electoral data that links to an individual component of the viewpoint. Award 1 mark for an evaluation of the validity of each individual component. For full marks, candidates must address both parts of the viewpoint.	20	Award marks where candidates refer to the following aspects of the question: Component 1 – ‘By all four measures, the Democratic Party did not do as well in 2024 as it did in 2020.’ Award 1 mark if a candidate only addresses one aspect of the data, award 2 marks if they address all four aspects of data. Aspect 1 (Electoral College vote) – Source A Source A shows that the Democrats did not do as well in 2024 as in 2020 they had 306 Electoral College votes, but they had 80 less in 2024. Aspect 2 (% of popular vote) – Source A Source A shows that the Democrats had over 50% of the popular vote in 2020, but in 2024 this had reduced to under 50%. Aspect 3 (Senate) – Source B Source B shows that the Democrats had 50 seats in the Senate in 2020, but this reduced to 47 in 2024. Aspect 4 (House) – Source B Source B shows that the Democrats had 222 seats in the House in 2020 which, by 2024, had reduced by seven to 215 seats. Synthesis – 1 mark The sources show that by all four measures the Democrats lost ground. Evaluation of the validity of the component – 1 mark By all four measures the Democratic Party did not do as well in 2024 as it did in 2020. In 2024 they lost both the Senate and House of Representatives, and they also lost the presidency when they had controlled all three in 2020. Along with a drop in the popular vote in 2024, this shows that the Democrats did worse in all areas in 2024 compared to 2020. Component 2 – ‘By these same measures, the Republican Party had their most successful year ever in 2024.’ Award 1 mark if a candidate only addresses one aspect of the data, award 2 marks if they address all four aspects of data.

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Aspect 1 (Electoral College vote) – Source A Source A shows that in 2024 the Republicans had their highest ever number of Electoral College votes with 312, compared to the next highest of 304 in 2016. Aspect 2 (% of popular vote) – Source A Source A shows that in 2024 the Republicans won 49.8% of the popular vote. However, this was surpassed in 2004 where it was 50.7%. Aspect 3 (Senate) – Source B Source B shows that in 2024, 53 Republicans returned to the Senate which matched their 2018 result, but which was one member less than in 2014. Aspect 4 (House) – Source B Source B shows that the Republicans had 220 seats in the House of Representatives in 2024, but they won more seats in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2022. Synthesis – 1 mark In three measures the Republican Party did not have their most successful year ever in 2024. However, they did have the most successful year in the Electoral College vote. Evaluation of the validity of the component – 1 mark The Republicans did not have their most successful year ever in 2024 in all four measures as they did better in the Senate, House of Representatives and the popular vote in previous years. They did have their most successful year with regards to Electoral College vote but overall, as they only had most success in one of the four measures, the statement is not accurate. Component 3 – ‘The number of women and non-white people elected to Congress has seen continuous improvements and the most recent election saw the highest numbers ever elected.’ Award 1 mark if a candidate only addresses one aspect of the data, award 2 marks if they address both aspects of data. Aspect 1 (women) – Source C Source C shows that the number of women in Congress increased steadily from 110 in 2016 to 151 in 2022, until it dropped by one in 2024.

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Aspect 2 (non-white) – Source C There has been a continual increase in non-white people elected to Congress, going from 106 in 2016 to 146 in 2024, the highest on record. Synthesis – 1 mark Non-white people have seen a continuous increase in numbers elected to congress, but women have not. Evaluation of the validity of the component – 1 mark Overall, the statement is not accurate as whilst women have seen growth this dipped between 2022 and 2024, meaning that the most recent election was not the highest for the number of women elected. However, this is not true for non-white people elected to Congress as they have seen a continuous improvement and in 2024 the highest number ever, 146, were elected. Component 4 – ‘In each election year since 2014, both parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives have seen a constant increase in the number of women elected.’ Award 1 mark if a candidate only addresses one aspect of the data, award 2 marks if they address both aspects of data. Aspect 1 (Democrats) – Source D In the Senate, the Democrats have seen their female representation fluctuate. It went from 14 in 2014 to 17 in 2016, then dropping to 16 in 2020 and 15 in 2022, before increasing again in 2024. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats have seen a steady increase each year going from 63 in 2014 then increasing by at least one female member each year to 94 in 2024. Aspect 2 (Republicans) – Source D In the Senate, the Republicans have seen an overall increase from 6 in 2014 to 9 in 2024, but there were no increases between 2014 and 2016, 2018 and 2022, and 2022 and 2024. In the House of Representatives, they have seen a mixture of increases and decreases with the number of female representatives dropping by 10 between 2016 and 2018 before increasing again in 2020. Synthesis – 1 mark Both parties have seen an overall increase in female representation since 2014, but this increase is different for each party in each house of Congress.

Question			General marking instructions	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Evaluation of the validity of the component – 1 mark The statement is not correct as whilst both parties have seen an overall increase in female representation since 2014, they have not seen similar trends each year and it has not been constant. The Democrats are the only party to have had continuous increase in female representatives, but only in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, both parties have seen numbers either decrease or remain the same in at least two elections. This means that neither party has seen a constant increase in female representation in both houses since 2014. Component 5 – ‘The USA does significantly better than other American nations in terms of political representation of women.’ Award 1 mark if a candidate only addresses one aspect of the data, award 2 marks if they address all three aspects of data. Aspect 1 (cabinet level) – Source E Female representation at cabinet level in the USA is 40% but there are three American nations which do better than the USA. Aspect 2 (national legislature) – Source E In the national legislature, the USA is second from last with female representation at 28%, only Honduras is lower with all other nations being higher. Aspect 3 (heads of state) – Source E The USA has never had a female head of state whilst all other nations have had at least one, with Argentina and Nicaragua having two. Synthesis – 1 mark The USA is last for heads of state, second last for national legislature and there are three nations with more female cabinet members. Evaluation of the validity of the component – 1 mark The statement is not accurate as the USA does not do significantly better than many other American nations. It is last in terms of Head of State, second last in National Legislatures and fourth out of seven in regard to Cabinet. Therefore, the opposite of the statement is true as the USA does much worse than other American nations when looking at political representation of women.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]