



AP U.S. Government and Politics

Practicing FRQs

Leveled Assessment: ____/4

Name:

Section:

Score: ____/5

Directions: You will be working on writing, and grading an FRQ to help practice for the FRQ on the actual AP Exam. First go over the strategies for answering an FRQ, then practice writing an FRQ of your own, and then practice grading a classmates FRQ and some sample examples.

Tips and Strategies for the FRQ

Read the Questions Carefully

This applies to both multiple-choice and free-response questions. For multiple-choice questions it is important for students to read the question carefully to look for words such as "NOT" and "EXCEPT." For free-response questions it is important that students respond to ALL PARTS of the question being asked. Understanding what is being asked and responding with specific evidence is a very useful skill. Long, involved descriptions full of random facts about a specific concept or political phenomenon are neither encouraged nor rewarded in the grading process; students must be taught to "read for the guidelines" in order to make sure both their information and presentation clearly and completely answer the actual question that is being asked.

Understand the Instructions and Action Verbs

Students may be asked to list, discuss, describe, explain, analyze, etc.; these are not all identical tasks. Also, the question may call for more than one task, such as both to identify and explain. Students should understand that some tasks are more complex than others. For example, composing a list may not even require a complete sentence, but students may need to write several paragraphs for a satisfactory discussion, including well-developed examples as support, in order to adequately explain some phenomenon. Here are some of the most common action words used in past free-response questions:

- **List/Identify:** Listing or identifying is a task that requires no more than a simple enumeration of some factors or characteristics. A list does not require any causal explanations. For example, a student might be asked to list or identify three characteristics Presidents consider when making appointments. Such a list, which could be bulleted or numbered, and might include party, race, gender, etc.
- **Define:** A definition requires a student to provide a meaning for a word or concept. Examples may help to demonstrate understanding of the definition. Students may be instructed to note the term's significance as part of the definition.
- **Describe:** A description involves providing a depiction or portrayal of a phenomenon or its most significant characteristics. Descriptions most often address "what" questions. For example, if students are asked to describe reasons for the decline in voter turnout, in the description they must do more than simply list facts - they must actually describe the reasons. For example, students may explain that the expansion of suffrage led to decline in overall voter turnout because once voting was made available to more individuals, the overall percentage of those voting declined.
- **Discuss:** Discussions generally require that students explore relationships between different concepts or phenomena. Identifying, describing, and explaining could be required tasks involved in writing a satisfactory discussion.
- **Explain:** An explanation involves the exploration of possible causal relationships. When providing explanations, students should identify and discuss logical connections or causal patterns that exist between or among various political phenomena.

- **Compare/Contrast:** This task requires students to make specific links between two or more concepts or phenomena. They should understand that it is important to note similarities AND differences between the concepts or phenomena under consideration.
- **Evaluate/Assess:** An evaluation or assessment involves considering how well something meets a certain standard, and as such generally requires a thesis. It is important to identify the criteria used in the evaluation. If no criteria are explicitly given in the question, students should take care to clearly identify the ones that they choose to employ. Specific examples may be applied to the criteria to support the student's thesis. Evaluation or assessment requires explicit connections between the thesis or argument and the supporting evidence.
- **Analyze:** This task usually requires separating a phenomenon into its component parts or characteristics as a way of understanding the whole. An analysis should yield explicit conclusions that are explained or supported by specific evidence and/or well-reasoned arguments.

Focus on Writing a Clear, Concise, and Well-Supported Response

Students should marshal evidence to document and support their statements and make use of concrete examples to demonstrate the main points of their arguments. They should explicitly define important terms and use the clearest, most direct terms possible. A direct, clear answer is likely to earn more points than a vague, rambling, ambiguous response.

Grade the FRQ

6 points

Part (a): 1 point

One point is earned for a description of an important function of political parties as a linkage institution in elections. Correct descriptions may include:

- Nominating/running/recruiting candidates for elected office
- Providing voter cues/information about policy choices, etc.
- Fundraising
- Providing distinct political choices to voters

Part (b): 2 points

One point is earned for each of two descriptions of the media's influence on the electoral process in each of the following roles:

- Gatekeeping/Agenda setting: media determines which issues are perceived as relevant to voters
- Scorekeeping/Horse race journalism: who's winning rather than focusing on policy issues relevant to the voters

Part (c): 2 points

One point is earned for describing each of two strategies that interest groups use to influence the electoral process. Correct descriptions may include:

- Giving money
- Forming PACs
- Endorsing candidates
- Grassroots canvassing
- Get out the vote (GOTV)
- Independent expenditures (ads)
- Issue advocacy
- Polling
- Lobbying (must be linked to electoral process)

Part (d): 1 point

One point is earned for an explanation of how interest groups may limit representative democracy. Correct explanations may include:

- Overrepresenting elites and their interests
- Favoring narrow interests over broad interests
- Providing biased information/distorting facts
- Hyperpluralism contributing to gridlock

Grading Sample FRQs (1)

- A) One important function of political parties as linkage institutions is that they basically have the set ideology of the person running for election. The people know and understand the party, so when someone is ~~running~~ a candidate in that specific party, people will be able to relate and connect to them because they are familiar with the party's ideology.
- B) The media is able to influence the electoral process in different ways. They can target candidates and make them seem like bad people. The media tends to keep track of who is winning in the election. They announce who is in first, who is in last, who is better, and who is the worst. They could change the agenda by posting advertisements on issues that they want people to see. By doing this, it could shape the way candidates act and say. The media could pick who wins the elections. They are the entrance to winning. If the media likes you, then you have a better chance in winning.
- C) 2 strategies that interest groups use to influence the electoral process are PAC's and voting promises in exchange for policy in their

ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 1

1B (2 of 2)

- favor. Interest groups use PAC's and Super PAC's as a way to collect funds for a specific candidate or party. The funds that they donate are given to the candidates. When and if the candidate wins, the interest groups expect them to do a favor for them by voting their way. Interest groups promise to vote for the candidates and in return, they expect them to help them by voting and making policy specifically designed to help the interest group thrive.
- D) Interest groups may limit representative democracy because interest groups are specific with what they are fighting for. They are not as open minded, so it limits the variety of representation.

Grading Sample FRQs (2)

One important function that political parties provide as a linkage institution is that they provide candidates for citizens to vote for and ultimately elect into office. The goal of political parties is to elect candidates into government and use elections as a way to communicate who citizens want to represent them.

Media's gatekeeping/agenda setting role influences the electoral process because this role allows the media to emphasize certain issues and hide others. This selective role may favor a candidate if the media is talking about one of his/her positions on an issue positively.

Media's scorekeeping role influences the electoral process because this role communicates to the people polls and the standings in an election. The reporting of such results can make a candidate seem more popular and favorable and influence citizens to vote for a candidate ahead in the polls.

Two strategies that interest groups use to influence the electoral process include sharing information through media/protests and by supporting/subsidizing a particular candidate. Interest groups may use media and rallies to disperse information about issues relevant to candidates and may hurt/help such candidates depending on their position and the purpose of the interest group's message. Interest groups may also fund a candidate's campaign to show support and help influence his election.

Interest groups have been criticized to limit a representative democracy because since their goal is to influence public policy according to the group's interest, policy may be adjusted due to their wants instead of due to the popular's wants. Elected representatives may be influenced to satisfy interest groups because of certain incentives, such as money and votes, instead of satisfying the popular opinion.

Scoring Explanations

Sample 1 –

Sample: 1B

Score: 3

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for describing one important function of political parties as a linkage institution in elections by stating, “One important function of political parties as linkage institutions is that they basically have the set ideology of the person running for election.”

In part (b) the response did not earn a point for describing the influence of the media on the electoral process in the role of gatekeeping/agenda setting. “The media ... could change the agenda by posting advertisements on issues that they want people to see” is an insufficient description of gatekeeping.

In part (b) the response did not earn a point for describing the influence of the media on the electoral process in the role of scorekeeping/horse race journalism. “The media could pick who wins the election” is an insufficient description of scorekeeping.

In part (c) the response earned 2 points for describing two strategies interest groups use to influence the electoral process by stating that “2 strategies that interest groups use to influence the electoral process are PAC’s [sic] and voting promises.”

In part (d) the response did not earn a point for explaining how, according to critics, interest groups may limit representative democracy. “Interest groups may limit representative democracy because interest groups are specific with what they are fighting for. They are not as open minded, so it limits the variety [sic] of representation” is an insufficient criticism of interest groups’ limitation on representative democracy.

Scoring Explanations

Sample 1 –

Sample: 1A

Score: 6

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for describing one important function of political parties as a linkage institution in elections by stating, “One important function that political parties provide as a linkage institution is that they provide candidates.”

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for describing the influence of the media on the electoral process in the role of gatekeeping/agenda setting by stating, “Media’s gatekeeping/agenda setting role influences the electoral process because this role allows the media to emphasize certain issues and hide others.”

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for describing the influence of the media on the electoral process in the role of scorekeeping/horse race journalism by stating, “Media’s scorekeeping role influences the electoral process because this role communicates to the people polls and the standings in an election.”

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for describing a strategy interest groups use to influence the electoral process by stating that “strategies that interest groups use to influence the electoral process include sharing information through media/protests.”

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for describing a strategy interest groups use to influence the electoral process by stating that “strategies that interest groups use to influence the electoral process include ... supporting/subsidizing a particular candidate.”

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining how, according to critics, interest groups may limit representative democracy by stating, “Elected representatives may be influenced to satisfy interest groups because of certain incentives, such as money and votes, instead of satisfying the popular opinion.”