

Essay Skills Exercise Bank: Resource Pack

Every exercise print-ready, with model answers, colour-coded models, plus 12-mark and source extensions

Companion to Teaching Essay Writing Skills (A-Level Edexcel Politics)

How to use this pack. It delivers four upgrades to the bank: every exercise made print-ready with answer keys, model answers for the diagnostic tasks, colour-coded models for projecting, and new 12-mark and source content. Each exercise starts on its own page, so you can print and hand them out one at a time.

Section A: Colour-Coded Models

Colour key: **AO1 knowledge** **AO2 analysis** **AO3 judgement**. Project these and build the colour up step by step.

The Seven-Step Paragraph

- 1. POINT** Topic sentence stating the argument and the side this paragraph takes. Start: One area in which [the view] can be seen is...
- 2. EVIDENCE** One precise piece of knowledge supporting the point: a named act, case, statistic, or specific outcome.
- 3. ANALYSIS** Explain what the evidence shows about the question. Start: This shows that...
- 4. COUNTERPOINT** Introduce the strongest opposing argument. Start: However, others argue that...
- 5. EVIDENCE** One precise piece of counter-evidence supporting the counterpoint.
- 6. ANALYSIS** Explain what the counter-evidence shows. Start: This suggests that...
- 7. JUDGEMENT** Decide which side is stronger and why, in the question's language. Start: This leads to the judgement that...

Worked Paragraph, Colour-Coded

Question: 2024 Q3B Evaluate the view that Congress fails to adequately hold the President to account. (30 marks)

POINT One area in which Congress fails to hold the President to account is the appointments process.

EVIDENCE Steve Witkoff, a Trump associate with no diplomatic experience, was appointed to a senior foreign policy role that bypassed Senate confirmation.

ANALYSIS This shows the President can place allies in key positions without Congress scrutinising their competence.

COUNTERPOINT However, Congress retains other tools to hold the President to account.

EVIDENCE It can investigate federal spending, summon witnesses, and legislate to constrain executive action.

ANALYSIS This shows formal checks remain available even where one route has been bypassed.

JUDGEMENT Nevertheless, the stronger argument is that Congress fails to hold the President to account, because informal presidential power consistently outflanks its formal mechanisms.

Section B: Core Exercises, Print-Ready

The core skill-building exercises, with the materials to hand out and a teacher key.

Exercise 1: AO1 Precision Drill

Purpose: trains students to write specific rather than vague knowledge.

Task: upgrade each weak statement using a named act, committee or case, a date or statistic, and a specific outcome.

Student sheet

1. Parliament holds the government to account.
2. The judiciary protects rights in the UK.
3. Prime ministers can dominate their colleagues.
4. Pressure groups influence government policy.
5. The US Supreme Court is politically significant.
6. Devolution has changed UK politics.

Teacher key (model upgrades)

1. The Public Accounts Committee scrutinised HMRC tax collection in 2023 and forced a Treasury response, exposing government failure.
2. In the 2004 Belmarsh case the House of Lords ruled that the indefinite detention of foreign terror suspects breached the right to liberty under the Human Rights Act, leading the government to replace the policy with control orders in 2005.
3. Boris Johnson removed the whip from 21 rebel MPs in 2019 and rebuilt his cabinet around loyalists, showing a PM's power of patronage.
4. Campaigning by animal welfare groups contributed to the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022, which created the Animal Sentience Committee.
5. In Dobbs v Jackson 2022 the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade, removing the federal constitutional right to abortion.
6. The Scotland Act 2016 devolved further income tax powers to Holyrood, deepening policy divergence within the UK.

Exercise 2: Knowledge to Analysis Translation

Purpose: isolates the AO1 to AO2 transition as a standalone skill.

Task: for each AO1 fact, write the AO2 sentence that follows, the This shows that... sentence. Do not evaluate or judge.

Student sheet (AO1 facts)

1. The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law.
2. The Salisbury Convention stops the House of Lords blocking manifesto commitments.
3. In 2024 the Labour government won a large Commons majority on around a third of the vote.
4. US Supreme Court justices serve for life once confirmed.
5. The Scotland Act 2016 devolved further income tax powers to Holyrood.

Teacher key (model AO2 sentences)

1. This shows that rights gained a formal legal basis, which matters because citizens could challenge legislation in domestic courts rather than only at Strasbourg.
2. This shows that the unelected chamber defers to the elected one, which matters because it preserves the democratic legitimacy of the governing party's programme.
3. This shows that the electoral system can turn a minority of votes into a commanding majority of seats, which matters because it concentrates power in a party most voters did not back.
4. This shows that justices are insulated from electoral pressure, which matters because they can make unpopular rulings without fear of removal.
5. This shows that policy can diverge within the UK, which matters because Scottish taxpayers can now face a different regime from the rest of the UK.

Exercise 3: The So What Test

Purpose: makes the AO2 habit automatic.

Task: paired drill. Partner A reads a fact; partner B answers in one sentence, so what does this show about the question? Swap and repeat.

Student sheet (facts for partner A)

1. The Public Accounts Committee forced a Treasury response over HMRC in 2023.
2. The 2011 AV referendum rejected electoral reform by over two to one.
3. Liz Truss resigned after about 49 days in 2022.
4. Congress can override a presidential veto with a two-thirds majority.
5. The UK Supreme Court ruled the 2019 prorogation of Parliament unlawful.
6. Backbench MPs cost the government its majority in 2019.

Teacher key (model so-what responses)

1. So this shows committees can expose failure, but exposure is not the same as forcing a change of policy.
2. So this shows limited public appetite for reform, which weakens the claim that the system lacks legitimacy.
3. So this shows prime ministerial power depends on party support and collapses quickly once it is lost.
4. So this shows the veto is strong but not absolute, since Congress retains a route to overrule it.
5. So this shows the judiciary can set hard limits on executive action, at least where the government complies.
6. So this shows backbenchers can constrain a government in practice, not only in theory.

Exercise 4: Sentence Completion Drill

Purpose: builds AO2 vocabulary through low-stakes practice.

Task: read the fact below, then complete each stem so it analyses that fact, in the context of the question: Evaluate the view that the UK Supreme Court is too powerful.

The fact to analyse

In 2019, in *R (Miller) v The Prime Minister*, the Supreme Court ruled the government's prorogation (suspension) of Parliament unlawful.

Student sheet (complete each stem about the fact)

1. This is significant because...
2. However this is less important because...
3. This supports the view that...
4. This questions the idea that...
5. By contrast...

Teacher key (model completions)

1. This is significant because it shows the Court can overrule even the Prime Minister, checking executive power directly.
2. However this is less important because the ruling concerned procedure, not policy, and the Court still cannot strike down an Act of Parliament.
3. This supports the view that judicial power has grown, since the Court was willing to enter a highly political dispute.
4. This questions the idea that the Court is too powerful, because Parliament could legislate to reverse the effect of such a ruling.
5. By contrast, before 2009 the senior judges sat in the House of Lords, which shows how creating a separate Supreme Court sharpened the judiciary's independent role.

Exercise 5: Build the Chain

Purpose: trains the full seven-step structure as a visible, explicit process.

Task: start from the point and evidence given. In writing, add the missing steps in order: analysis; a counterpoint; counter-evidence; analysis of it; and a judgement.

Student sheet

Question: Evaluate the view that Parliament effectively holds the executive to account.

Point and evidence to start from: Select committees give Parliament a route to hold the executive to account; the Public Accounts Committee questioned HMRC and forced a Treasury response in 2023.

Teacher key (model chain)

POINT Select committees give Parliament a route to hold the executive to account.

EVIDENCE The Public Accounts Committee questioned HMRC and forced a Treasury response in 2023.

ANALYSIS This shows committees can compel the government to engage with their findings and expose failure between elections.

COUNTERPOINT However, committees cannot force the government to act on what they find.

EVIDENCE A government with a Commons majority can accept a report's findings while ignoring its recommendations, as happens with most committee reports.

ANALYSIS This shows their influence stops at exposure and does not extend to enforcement.

JUDGEMENT This leads to the judgement that committees make Parliament a strong investigator but a weak enforcer, so accountability is real in form yet limited in substance.

Exercise 6: Judgement Sentence Drill

Purpose: isolates AO3 as a standalone writing skill.

Task: rewrite each weak interim conclusion as a proper AO3 judgement that recycles the question's language and makes a comparative claim.

Student sheet

1. Question: Parliament effectively scrutinises the executive. Therefore Parliament is quite important.
2. Question: The Supreme Court is the most important check on government. So the Supreme Court matters a lot.
3. Question: The PM dominates the political system. This shows prime ministers are powerful.
4. Question: Pressure groups have significant influence. Overall pressure groups have some influence.
5. Question: Congress effectively limits the President. In conclusion Congress is significant.

Teacher key (model rewrites)

1. The stronger argument is that Parliament's scrutiny is real but limited, because select committees expose failure yet cannot compel a majority government to change course.
2. On balance the Court is a significant but conditional check, because rulings such as Miller (2019) constrain the executive only where the government chooses to comply.
3. The more convincing view is that prime ministerial power is contingent rather than fixed, because it collapses once a PM loses their majority or party support, as Truss showed in 2022.
4. The stronger argument is that influence is unevenly distributed, because insider groups shape legislation while outsider groups rarely move policy.
5. The weight of evidence suggests Congress limits the President mainly when partisan control aligns against him, because unified government neutralises most formal checks.

Exercise 7: Forced Judgement

Purpose: breaks the habit of presenting both sides without deciding.

Task: choose one side and write a single sentence justifying it. No hedging, no it depends.

Student sheet

1. Is the UK Supreme Court too powerful?
A: it can rule executive action unlawful (Miller).
B: it cannot strike down Acts of Parliament.
2. Are referendums good for UK democracy?
A: they settle major constitutional questions directly.
B: they reduce complex issues to a binary choice.
3. Is the US Electoral College democratic?
A: it protects the role of smaller states.
B: it can elect a president who loses the popular vote (2016).
4. Is cabinet government dead?
A: PMs rely on advisers and sofa government.
B: ministerial resignations still removed Johnson in 2022.
5. Do the main parties still differ ideologically?
A: clear divides on tax, welfare and the state.
B: convergence on the centre ground to win elections.
6. Should FPTP be replaced?
A: it produces disproportional results.
B: it usually delivers stable single-party government.

Teacher key (one model justification each)

1. Not too powerful, because parliamentary sovereignty means Parliament can legislate to reverse any ruling it dislikes.
2. Good for democracy, because direct consent on constitutional change carries a legitimacy that representative votes cannot.
3. Not fully democratic, because a system that can override the popular vote breaks the link between votes cast and the result.
4. Not dead, because the collective ability of ministers to resign and topple a PM shows cabinet still holds ultimate sanction.
5. They still differ, because the gap on the size and role of the state remains wider than short-term electoral positioning suggests.
6. Replace it, because legitimacy rests on votes translating into seats, and disproportionality undermines that more than instability would.

Exercise 8: AO3 Ranking Task

Purpose: develops the comparative evaluation that characterises Level 4 and Level 5.

Question: Evaluate the view that the UK Supreme Court is an effective check on government. Rank these arguments for effectiveness, strongest to weakest, and justify each.

Student sheet (arguments to rank)

1. Declarations of incompatibility under the Human Rights Act 1998 flag rights breaches.
2. Judicial review lets the Court rule executive action unlawful, as in Miller (2019).
3. The Court's independence is protected by security of tenure and the Constitutional Reform Act 2005.

Teacher key (model ranking)

1. **Strongest:** judicial review, because it can directly halt unlawful executive action rather than merely commenting on it.
2. **Middle:** declarations of incompatibility, because they carry weight but are not binding and the government can decline to act.
3. **Weakest:** independence, because it is a precondition for the Court working at all rather than a check it actively exercises.

Exercise 9: Counterpoint Speed Round

Purpose: builds evaluative speed and the weaker-versus-stronger habit.

Task: for each argument, 60 seconds to write the strongest possible counterargument. Then judge in one sentence whether the counter is stronger, weaker, or equal.

Student sheet (arguments to counter)

1. FPTP should be kept because it delivers stable majority government.
2. Referendums improve democracy because they give direct consent.
3. The PM dominates the system because of the power of patronage.
4. Pressure groups strengthen democracy by widening participation.
5. The US President is constrained by Congress's power of the purse.
6. The Lords should be abolished because it is unelected.

Teacher key (model counterarguments)

1. But stable government can mean elective dictatorship, where a majority on a minority of votes faces few checks.
2. But referendums can entrench division and reduce complex questions to a binary, as Brexit showed.
3. But patronage depends on authority that evaporates once a PM loses their majority, as with Truss in 2022.
4. But unequal group resources can distort democracy in favour of wealthy insiders.
5. But presidents can bypass Congress through executive orders and informal power.
6. But the Lords adds expertise and revising capacity that a wholly elected chamber might lack.

Exercise 10: Weigh the Arguments

Purpose: separates evaluating arguments from writing them.

Question: Evaluate the view that first-past-the-post should be replaced for UK general elections. In groups, rank all six cards strongest to weakest and justify the order.

Student sheet (cut into six cards)

1. Card A (replace): It disadvantages smaller parties with dispersed support, such as the Greens and Reform.
2. Card B (replace): It wastes millions of votes in safe seats, depressing turnout and engagement.
3. Card C (replace): FPTP produces disproportional results. In 2024 Labour won a large majority on around a third of the vote.
4. Card D (keep): The 2011 AV referendum rejected electoral reform by over two to one.
5. Card E (keep): It usually produces single-party majorities and strong, accountable government.
6. Card F (keep): The constituency link gives every voter one identifiable local MP.

Teacher key (model judgement)

Strongest case to replace is Card C, because disproportionality strikes at the legitimacy of the result itself. Strongest case to keep is Card E, because stable majority government is the clearest practical benefit. The decisive comparison is whether legitimacy or stability matters more, which is the judgement students must name.

Exercise 11: The Question Decoder

Purpose: prevents arguing something adjacent to the actual question.

Task: before planning, answer the four decoder questions in writing. Apply them to the sample questions below.

Student sheet (the decoder)

1. What is the question actually asking?
2. What is the view in the question?
3. What would it mean to argue for it?
4. What would it mean to argue against it?

Sample questions: A) Evaluate the view that the Prime Minister has become too powerful.
B) Evaluate the view that pressure groups undermine democracy.

Teacher key (model decode of question A)

1. It asks whether prime ministerial power has grown beyond healthy limits, not simply whether the PM is powerful.
2. The view is that the PM is now too dominant within the system.
3. For: patronage, control of the agenda, and a Commons majority let a PM act with few checks.
4. Against: power is contingent on party support and collapses without it, as Truss showed in 2022.

Exercise 12: The Five-Minute Plan Sprint

Purpose: makes planning a fast, habitual reflex rather than an optional extra.

Task: timed strictly to five minutes. Use the grid for the question below, 30 seconds per box.

Student sheet

Question: Evaluate the view that the UK Supreme Court is an effective check on government.

1. Line of argument (one sentence).
2. Theme 1: one identifying word plus the strongest evidence.
3. Theme 2: one identifying word plus the strongest evidence.
4. Theme 3: one identifying word plus the strongest evidence.
5. Interim judgement direction for each paragraph.
6. Conclusion direction.

Teacher key (model plan)

1. Line: effective at the margins but limited by parliamentary sovereignty.
2. Theme 1 (Review): Miller 2019, prorogation ruled unlawful.
3. Theme 2 (Rights): HRA declarations of incompatibility, not binding.
4. Theme 3 (Limits): cannot strike down Acts of Parliament.
5. Interim directions: paragraph 1 effective, paragraph 2 partly effective, paragraph 3 limited.
6. Conclusion: a real but conditional check, weaker than its US counterpart.

Exercise 13: Introduction Factory

Purpose: gives students a repeatable, timed routine for introductions.

Task: write only the introduction for the question in five minutes, using the four parts in order, then peer-assess against them.

Student sheet

Question: Evaluate the view that the Prime Minister dominates the UK political system.

The four parts, in writing order: (1) define the key term, (2) give brief context, (3) signpost the three areas the essay will cover, (4) state a clear line of argument.

Order of importance: the line of argument matters most, then the definition, then the context, then the three areas.

Teacher key (model introduction)

Define: Prime ministerial dominance means the capacity to direct policy and personnel with few effective checks. Context: in a system that has recently swung from a commanding Johnson majority to the rapid fall of Truss, the question is timely. Three areas: this essay will examine the power of patronage, the Prime Minister's control of the cabinet, and their dependence on party support. Line of argument: it will argue that prime ministerial dominance is real but conditional, because it rests on party support that can be withdrawn at any time.

Exercise 14: The Conclusion Rebuild

Purpose: teaches that conclusions follow from the body rather than repeating it.

Task: the three body paragraphs argued the points below. Write the conclusion from scratch using only what they argue.

Student sheet

Question: Evaluate the view that Parliament effectively holds the executive to account.

1. Paragraph 1: select committees expose failure but cannot compel change.
2. Paragraph 2: debates and questions create scrutiny but rarely alter policy.
3. Paragraph 3: a government majority neutralises most formal checks.

Teacher key (model conclusion)

While select committees give Parliament genuine investigative reach, the stronger argument is that a government commanding a Commons majority can absorb scrutiny without changing course. The evidence from committees, debates, and the whipping system consistently shows that Parliament holds the executive to account in form more than in substance.

Exercise 15: Weak versus Strong Identification

Purpose: makes the level descriptors feel real.

Task: the same point on Parliament and select committees is written three ways. Students label each level and name the single addition that lifts it to the next.

Student sheet (which level is each?)

1. **Version 1.** Select committees such as the Public Accounts Committee, which forced a Treasury response over HMRC in 2023, give Parliament real investigative reach. However, the stronger argument is that this reach stops at exposure: a government with a Commons majority can absorb criticism without changing course. Parliament therefore holds the executive to account in form more than in substance.
2. **Version 2.** Parliament holds the executive to account through select committees, such as the Public Accounts Committee, which question ministers and civil servants. On the other hand, the government usually has a majority and can resist their recommendations. There are arguments on both sides.
3. **Version 3.** Parliament holds the government to account in different ways. There are select committees that look at what the government does. This is one way Parliament checks the government.

Teacher key

1. **Version 1 is Level 5.** It judges, names a principle (form versus substance), and substantiates it.
2. **Version 2 is Level 3.** It balances two sides but reaches no judgement.
3. **Version 3 is Level 2.** It describes with no example and no analysis.

The single additions: Level 2 to 3 needs a named example plus a counter-side. Level 3 to 5 needs a decisive comparative judgement.

Exercise 16: Reverse Engineering a Mark Scheme

Purpose: turns the mark scheme from a mysterious verdict into a concrete writing target.

Task: give students the AO3 Level 5 descriptor below and ask them to write the paragraph that earns it.

AO3 Level 5: constructs fully relevant evaluation, constructing fully effective arguments and judgements, which are consistently substantiated and lead to fully focused and justified conclusions.

Teacher key (model paragraph that earns it)

The most significant argument is that Parliament's effectiveness depends on the size of the government's majority. Where a majority is large, as after 2024, scrutiny weakens because the executive can absorb committee criticism and win every division regardless of its merits. Select committees still expose failure, as the Public Accounts Committee did over HMRC in 2023, but exposure is not control. This leads to the justified conclusion that Parliament retains the form of accountability while a majority government keeps the substance of power.

Section C: 12-Mark and Source Extensions

The bank covers the 30-mark essay thoroughly. This section adds the comparison and source skills that carry a large share of Paper 1 and Paper 2 marks.

Worked 12-Mark Comparison Paragraph

Question: Examine the differences between the UK and US Supreme Courts. (12 marks). No line of argument is required and both sides carry equal weight.

DIFFERENCE One difference is the basis of each court's power over legislation.

EXAMPLE (US) The US Supreme Court can strike down primary legislation as unconstitutional, as in *Dobbs v Jackson (2022)*.

EXAMPLE (UK) The UK Supreme Court cannot strike down Acts of Parliament because of parliamentary sovereignty, and is limited to declarations of incompatibility under the Human Rights Act 1998.

COMPARISON By contrast, this shows the US Court exercises a hard constitutional check while the UK Court exercises a softer, advisory one, a difference rooted in whether the system has a codified constitution.

Worked Source Paragraph

The rhythm of a source paragraph: one sentence using the source, one of own knowledge, one analytical link.

SOURCE The source argues that backbench MPs have become more willing to defy the party whip.

OWN KNOWLEDGE This is supported by the 2019 removal of the whip from 21 Conservative MPs who voted against the government over Brexit.

LINK The link is that the source's claim about rising backbench independence is borne out by a rebellion large enough to cost the government its working majority, which strengthens the source's case.

Exercise 17: 12-Mark Comparison Builder

Purpose: builds the comparison paragraph as a distinct skill from the 30-mark essay.

Task: for each pair, write a paragraph: name the similarity or difference, give one AO1 point from each side, connect with a comparative connective, then add one analytical point. Do not reach a verdict.

Student sheet (pairs)

1. UK and US legislatures' control over the executive.
2. UK and US methods of changing the constitution.
3. Insider and outsider pressure groups' methods.

Teacher key (model for pair 2)

One difference is the difficulty of constitutional change. In the US, amendment requires two-thirds of both houses of Congress and three-quarters of the states, which is why there have been only 27 amendments. In the UK, the constitution can be changed by an ordinary Act of Parliament, as with the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. By contrast, this shows the US constitution is entrenched while the UK constitution is flexible, which affects how easily each can be reformed or protected.

Exercise 18: Source Triple-Play Drill

Purpose: teaches the specific rhythm of source-question paragraphs.

Task: using the mock source below, write three rounds of: one sentence using the source, one of own knowledge, one analytical link.

Student sheet (mock source)

Some commentators argue that the UK's uncodified constitution leaves rights dangerously dependent on the goodwill of the government of the day. Others insist that statute and common law together provide ample protection without the rigidity of a codified document.

Teacher key (one model round)

The source claims rights depend on the goodwill of the government of the day. This is supported by the ease with which Parliament can amend or repeal rights legislation, since the Human Rights Act 1998 could be replaced by a simple majority. The link is that the source's worry about fragility is well founded, because protection that rests on ordinary statute can be removed by the same ordinary process that created it.

Exercise 19: Comparative Connective Sprint

Purpose: drills the AO2 comparative link that 12-mark answers depend on.

Task: for each pair of facts, write one sentence linking them with Similarly, Whereas, or By contrast, then add what the comparison reveals.

Student sheet (paired facts)

1. UK: the PM is the leader of the largest party in the Commons. US: the President is elected separately from Congress.
2. UK: the Lords is unelected. US: the Senate is elected.
3. UK: no codified constitution. US: a codified, entrenched constitution.

Teacher key (model for pair 1)

Whereas the UK Prime Minister depends on commanding a Commons majority, the US President is elected separately and can face a hostile Congress. This reveals that the UK fuses the executive and legislature while the US separates them, which shapes how easily each leader can pass a programme.

Section D: Consolidation and Exam Practice

Diagnosis, source technique, a weekly current-affairs habit, and timed exam practice to finish on.

Exercise 20: The Upgrade Challenge

Purpose: teaches students to identify and fix missing AO3 without rewriting.

Task: the paragraph below is Level 3. Add exactly two sentences to push it to Level 4 or 5 without changing the rest.

Student sheet (Level 3 paragraph)

The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, allowing courts to issue declarations of incompatibility. This shows that the judiciary can highlight where legislation breaches rights. However, Parliament remains sovereign and can ignore a declaration, as it is not legally binding.

Teacher key (model two-sentence upgrade)

The stronger argument is that this makes rights protection persuasive rather than guaranteed, because the final decision still rests with the body that passed the offending law. Judicial declarations therefore shape the political pressure around rights without securing them as an entrenched bill of rights would.

Exercise 21: Source Integration Drill

Purpose: teaches the rhythm of source-question paragraphs.

Task: one sentence using the source, one of own knowledge, one analytical link. Repeat three or four times before a full source paragraph.

Student sheet (mock source)

Supporters of the current arrangements argue that the Prime Minister's authority over the cabinet gives government clear direction. Critics counter that this same dominance hollows out collective decision-making and concentrates power in a small circle of advisers.

Topic: Evaluate the view that the cabinet still constrains the Prime Minister.

Teacher key (one model round)

SOURCE The source claims that prime ministerial authority hollows out collective decision-making.

OWN KNOWLEDGE This reflects the rise of sofa government and reliance on special advisers under recent prime ministers.

LINK The link is that the source's concern about a small circle of advisers is supported by the marginal role cabinet has often played in major decisions, which strengthens the critics' case.

Exercise 22: Current Affairs Audit

Purpose: builds the habit of reading current events as exam evidence.

Task: a ten-minute weekly routine. Pick a topic; each student finds one recent, relevant development; add the best to a running class list.

Student sheet (rotate the topic, log the find)

Topics: Parliament, rights, parties, the constitution, the PM and cabinet, pressure groups, the presidency, the US Supreme Court.

Log four columns: Date | Topic | What happened | Which exam question it could support.

Teacher key (how to run it)

1. Seed the first few entries yourself so students see the standard expected.
2. Insist each entry names a specific event and the exam question it strengthens, not a vague headline.
3. Keep the list visible all term; by exams students have a bank of current examples that lift AO1 towards Level 5.

Exercise 23: Timed Paragraph Under Exam Conditions

Purpose: closes the gap between practised structure and exam performance.

Task: pick a question. 12 minutes, no notes, one paragraph on the seven-step structure. Then self-check against the model.

Student sheet (choose a question)

1. Evaluate the view that the UK Supreme Court is too powerful.
2. Evaluate the view that the Prime Minister dominates the political system.
3. Evaluate the view that referendums have improved UK democracy.
4. Evaluate the view that Congress fails to hold the President to account.

Self-check: does the paragraph have all seven steps: point, evidence, analysis, counterpoint, evidence, analysis, judgement?

Teacher key (model timed paragraph, question 2)

POINT One area in which the Prime Minister dominates the system is the power of patronage.

EVIDENCE Boris Johnson removed the whip from 21 rebels in 2019 and rebuilt his cabinet around loyalists.

ANALYSIS This shows a PM can shape the parliamentary party to suit their agenda, discouraging dissent.

COUNTERPOINT However, this dominance depends on the continued support of the party.

EVIDENCE Truss was forced out in 2022 after just 49 days once her own MPs withdrew their support.

ANALYSIS This shows patronage rests on an authority that can vanish quickly.

JUDGEMENT This leads to the judgement that prime ministerial dominance is real but conditional, lasting only as long as the party consents.