Advantages and disadvantages of federal, confederate and unitary systems of Government (standard 12.9.3)

Unitary Government – It is often described as a centralized government. It is a government in which all powers held by the government belong to a single, central agency. The central government creates local units of government for its own convenience. Most government in the world are unitary. Great Britain is an illustration of the type. A single central organ – the Parliament- holds all the power of the British government. Local governments do exist but solely to relieve Parliament of burdens it could perform only with difficulty and inconvenience.

ADVANTAGES
1. Uniform policies, laws, political, enforcement, administration throughout the country
2. Less duplication of services and fewer conflicts between national and local governments
3. Greater unity and stability

DISADVANTAGES
1. Central government out of touch with local concerns
2. Slow in meeting local problems
3. If the central government gets too involved in local problems it may not meet the needs of all its citizens

Confederate Government – A confederate government is an alliance of independent states. A central organ – the confederate government – has the power to handle only those matters that the member states have assigned to it. Typically, confederate governments have had limited powers and only in such fields as defense and foreign commerce. In our own history, the United States under the Articles of Confederation (1781 to 1789) and the Confederate States of America (1861-1865) are examples of the form. Confederations are very rare in today’s world. The European Union is the closest approach to a confederation today.

ADVANTAGES
1. Keeps power at local levels preventing the growth of a large central government
2. Makes it possible for the several states to cooperate in matters of common concern and also retain their separate identities
DISADVANTAGES
1. Weakness of central government makes it unable to enforce laws or collect taxes
2. Lack of unity and common laws

Federal Government - A federal government is one in which the powers of government are divided between a central government and several local governments. An authority superior to both the central and local governments makes this division of powers on a geographic basis; and that division cannot be changed by either the local or national level acting alone. Both levels of government act directly on the people through their own sets of laws, officials, and agencies. In the United States, for example the National Government has certain powers and the 50 states have others. This division of powers is set out in the Constitution of the United States.

ADVANTAGES
1. Federal unity but local governments handle local problems
2. Local government/officials have to be responsive to people who elect them
3. Central government can devote more time and energy to national and international problems
4. More opportunities for participation in making decisions – in influencing what is taught in the schools and in deciding where highways and government projects are to be built

DISADVANTAGES
1. Duplication of services
2. Citizens living in different parts of the country will be treated differently, not only in spending programs, such as welfare, but in legal systems that assign in different places different penalties to similar offenses or that differentially enforce civil rights laws
3. Disputes over power/national supremacy versus state’s rights
4. International relations – states may pass laws that counter national policy