

GCE

Government and Politics

Advanced GCE **A2 H495**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H095**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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F851 Contemporary Politics of the UK

General Comments

There were excellent answers to all the questions on this year's paper. The best candidates clearly understood the need to write balanced answers containing a range of points, supported by examples and evidence, which directly answered the question and did so in good English. Weaker responses were often short, poorly expressed and lacked focus, range, balance and depth.

Answering the question set is, and remains, the most basic advice that a candidate can be given.

For example, in Q1a, candidates were asked to outline the roles played by political parties in a democracy. Given the nature of Q1a, there was no need for candidates to explain what a party is or to define democracy. Neither was there any need to comment on how well these roles are performed.

For essay questions, candidates need to pay particular attention to the 'command' word which indicates what the candidate has to do. In Q1b, for example, the command was to 'assess', that is, to make an informed judgement. Candidates needed not only to identify a number of criticisms of parties but also to consider their validity, supporting or rebutting them as appropriate. Those who did not attempt such an assessment could not access the higher assessment levels for Assessment Objectives 2 and 3.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1a** Nearly all candidates were able to identify at least some of the roles played by political parties in a democracy and to use the source material intelligently. The very best answers listed a range of roles and then went on to explain and exemplify them. They also used the language of politics - representation, participation, the articulation and aggregation of interest. However, relatively few candidates could provide the number and range of points needed to gain full marks and many weaker candidates relied on simply restating the source material. Candidates who focussed on matters other than the role of parties, for example, internal party democracy, were not rewarded.
- 1b** Good candidates were able to identify, explain and illustrate a range of criticisms made of political parties. Crucially they were also able to assess the validity of these criticisms by providing a rebuttal or suggesting positive contributions that parties could make to political life. Candidates who outlined criticisms, but offered no assessment, did not reach the higher levels. It is worth noting that voting on the *Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act, 2013*, was not whipped and, therefore, not an example of the control exercised by parties over their MPs.
- 2** Most candidates were aware of a number and range of factors associated with pressure group success. They were also able to provide detailed examples. The best candidates used this information to discuss whether financial resources were the most important factor. Candidates who simply listed a number of factors, or who ignored financial resources altogether, were unable to access the higher levels of Assessment Objectives 2 and 3. Some candidates confused the possession of financial resources with economic leverage. The need to start answers on pressure groups with sometime lengthy and unhelpful definitions remains common.

- 3** Candidates with a good knowledge and understanding of both the functions of elections and the outcome of a range of elections held in the UK - EU, parliamentary, regional, local, mayoral, police commissioners - did well. Beginning each paragraph with one such function and then assessing it proved to be an effective way of answering the question. Candidates who restricted themselves to parliamentary elections, or who just considered the role of elections in choosing representatives, found it harder to access the higher levels of the mark scheme because their answers lacked range.
- 4** The best candidates were able to combine their knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of first-past-the-post electoral systems with data and examples from recent elections. Such candidates often wrote convincing and persuasive answers. Candidates who were aware of the former, but lacked knowledge of the latter, could not reach Level 3 for Assessment Objectives 2 and 3.
- 5** Most candidates knew their 'factors' and 'models' (though the dominant ideology model is widely misunderstood). The best candidates were not only able to describe a range of such factors and models but to discuss whether short-term factors were now a better explanation of voting behaviour than long-term ones. They also drew on evidence from recent elections to support their arguments. Weaker candidates tended to describe a range of factors but left it to the examiner to infer an answer. The more an examiner has to infer, the lower the mark is likely to be.

F852 Contemporary Government of the UK

General Comments

There were some very strong candidates who were able to apply their knowledge to make a range of points in answer to each question, and provide some good, up-to-date examples to support those points. These are the key ingredients to a successful answer, and many students clearly understood this. In addition, it is encouraging to see that many candidates and Centres are focused on the 'contemporary' element of the unit, and were able to show-off their knowledge of recent developments across all the questions. It is also satisfying to report that most candidates timed their answers well and produced responses of a consistent quality across the paper.

Responses that were less successful tended to exhibit one or more of three distinct features. The first was a lack of focus on the specific question asked. Some candidates seemed to employ a 'prepared' answer, or started by answering the question but lost focus quickly. Candidates may pick up AO1 marks here, but few for AO2. It is certainly good advice for candidates to use the terms of the question at the start of paragraphs, both to let examiner know they are focused on the question, and to keep the candidate themselves focused. Secondly, some candidates stuck to the question but produced what was effectively just a 'list' of points, with little development or exemplification. The best answers always explained the points made and supported them with relevant examples. Thirdly, AO3 marks were often lost because of poor spelling. There were many references to 'priministers', 'parliment' and 'bare' arms. In addition, good answers should be organised into a number of paragraphs, but there was a tendency for some candidates to write one big 'for' paragraph and one big 'against' paragraph.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Q1 (a) (i)

Most candidates used the source effectively, and had a good basic sense of the Speaker's role. However, many candidates did not have a thorough 'textbook' knowledge and were only able to make generalised references to 'keeping order'.

Q1 (a) (ii)

Candidates had a better knowledge of the whips, and many were able to describe their role thoroughly. In addition to outlining the whips' role in managing backbenchers, the best answers also noted the role of the whips in communicating between the backbenches and the executive, noting that the question referred to 'government' whips and not just party whips in general.

Q1 (b)

There were some excellent answers that presented two or three arguments for the abolition of the House of Lords, and two or three against, supported with relevant examples. There was some impressive knowledge of the ways in which the Lords scrutinised bills, held the government to account or provided expertise (Lord Sugar was incredibly popular here, but only the very best candidates could name other 'experts'). Many candidates were aware of the (failed) Clegg reforms. Some answers did not focus on the 'abolition' part of the question, however, and therefore were unable to access the higher levels for AO2. Some candidates did not know much about the actual work of the House of Lords beyond the help given by the source, and did not score highly for AO1.

Q2

It was encouraging to see many candidates employing good contemporary knowledge, and confidently applying it to the question. Most candidates argued that the Cameron premiership did not demonstrate that the prime minister has too much power because of the constraints of the coalition. Good answers were armed with a wealth of examples from the composition of the cabinet, specific policy compromises in the coalition agreement and evidence of backbench rebellions. Good use was made of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act and the Syria vote, although many candidates made the mistake of using the latter example as an opportunity to compare Cameron to Blair, and erroneously argued that Blair went to war in Iraq without the approval of the House of Commons. Where candidates failed to reach the higher levels it was usually because they did not address the question asked, and instead wrote at length about the Blair and Thatcher premierships. Comparing Cameron to past prime ministers was of course valid, but less so if commentary on his predecessors was used in isolation.

Q3

Most candidates had a good grasp of the arguments for and against the UK adopting a written constitution, and very few veered from the question set. The best answers were able to illustrate their points with examples, making good use of the assortment of constitutional reforms since 1997. Less successful answers tended to 'list' the arguments and lacked sufficient depth to secure high AO1 marks. A good number of candidates had a limited understanding of what is really meant by a constitution, and assumed that, for example, a written constitution would stop criminals getting away with crimes because judges would know what the law was, or that having a written constitution would make it harder to pass laws. Comparisons with the US rarely helped, and more often than not illustrated that the candidate did not fully understand what a constitution is.

Q4

There were some very good responses that outlined the ways in which judicial review is, and is not, important, illustrated with examples of judicial review. The best answers then compared this role of the judiciary to two or three other roles. However, a good number of candidates did not have a clear understanding of judicial review itself and therefore fell at the first hurdle.

Q5

Strong answers either considered ways in which the EU has or has not had a big impact on the democratic process in the UK, or considered the positive and negative effects of EU membership. Either approach was valid, and worked well when candidates had a good knowledge of EU institutions, how decisions are made and some of the EU treaties and their effect on the UK. Only a minority had this knowledge, however. The confusion between the ECHR and the ECJ continues to hamper many candidates' responses.

F853 Contemporary US Government and Politics

The paper did not seem to present any particular difficulties to candidates. Pleasingly, the compulsory question was well covered by almost all candidates which has not always been the case. The key to success on this paper is to focus on the actual question set and to provide a range of arguments supported by a range of examples, preferably of a contemporary nature. Throughout the paper, the best candidates had a feel for the dynamics of US government and politics in the present day through references to the Obama administration and issues such as the polarisation of the parties and the government shutdown. Centres are advised to pay specific attention to the content of the specification as this provides the basis for exam questions.

Candidates need to be reminded of the manner in which marks are awarded. AO1 marks are given for detail, factual evidence, quotes and statistics. AO2 marks are awarded for analysis and evaluation. Occasionally, candidates were able to argue well but failed to provide supporting evidence from US government and politics. Centres are advised to make use of the support material provided by OCR.

1a.) Stages of a bill. Most candidates were able to achieve marks in the higher levels of the mark scheme by identifying the key stages of a congressional bill. They did not stray into question 1b, by discussing reasons for failure, and provided a detailed account of the role played, in order, by readings, committees and the president.

1b.) Failure of bills to pass. A range of factors needed to be identified. Reference to the polarisation of the parties and issues relating to leadership provided scope for discussion when applied to the constitutional arrangements in the Congress. There were some issues of time management as some candidates did spend too long on this question.

2.) Parties provision of ideological choice. Candidates needed to be aware of the most recent developments with regard to the polarisation of the parties and needed to avoid the temptation to provide responses to past questions. Specific reference needed to be made to ideology as opposed to policy in order to access AO2 marks.

3.) Pressure groups and the pluralist/elitist debate. This was a popular question although focused answers on elitism and pluralism were not always to the fore. Candidates were allowed to use the democratic arguments in favour of pressure groups to justify a pluralist assessment, however, rather like the previous question; more attention to the precise wording in the question would have paid dividends.

4.) Presidential failure. The best responses focused on the nature of presidential power, relations with the Congress and Obama administration. References to developments since the 2010 mid-terms with the rise of the Tea Party Movement, Obama's political skills and past presidencies provided scope for discussion of a wide range of factors and an assessment of the meaning of success and failure.

5.) Federalism. The wording in the question allowed candidates to take a broad historical view which many did successfully. The best responses not only identified phases in federal state relations but were able to explain why the relationship changed. The relevance of foreign policy developments post 9/11 to federal state relations is questionable.

6.) Ideological direction of the Roberts Court. Appointments, voting blocs and rulings from the Court allowed candidates to discuss the ideological direction of the Court. Knowledge of relevant cases from the Court was needed in order to access the higher mark levels for the Assessment Objectives. Comparisons with other courts and reference to other cases were

accepted provided they were placed in context. Recognition of liberal rulings and discussion of the constraints upon the Court provided for a balanced answer.

7.) Presidential candidate nomination system reform. Reference to the Electoral College was not required and some candidates failed to distinguish between the selection of candidates and the election of a president. Answers needed to reference developments in 2012 and 2008 (and planned developments for 2016) and apply these to the question. The best responses were able to prioritise the relevance of salient arguments. For example, it was surprising that the unrepresentative nature and priority given to Iowa and New Hampshire and the role of money was not given more emphasis by many candidates.

8.) The Protection of Rights. Given the range of rights in the Bill of Rights and others such as social rights via “Obamacare” and “The Race to the Top”, there was a wide range of issues to be discussed. A forensic examination of rulings from the Roberts Court and developments, such as the Snowden revelations and failure to close GITMO, enabled the best candidates to provide a balanced assessment of the protection of rights. Candidates needed to avoid too narrow a focus on a limited range of rights such as abortion, racial discrimination and equality.

F854 Political Ideas and Concepts

General Comments

It is pleasing that a large majority of candidates are now familiar with the demands of this unit. The important feature to note about the successful answering of questions for this unit comes from its title, Political Ideas and Concepts. It is expected that responses focus upon the relevant theoretical debate and illustrate analysis and evaluation with reference to the ideas of specific political thinkers. Many weaker answers still tend to be too generalised in their coverage of political theory, often focusing their answers upon modern politics. These references to modern politics are not relevant for this unit and should be reserved for use in unit F856. Candidates are also reminded to make sure they understand what the specific question is asking. A 'discuss the view' question requires a balanced assessment of both sides of an argument, whereas an 'assess' question requires an evaluation of the relevant issues relating to the question.

Specific issues to note with the Assessment Objectives and marking are highlighted below:

AO1 marks – these are awarded for knowledge and understanding of the relevant ideas and concepts. It is expected that answers should display knowledge of the views of relevant political thinkers and where this is not done; answers will not be able to be credited beyond the very bottom of L2. For access to L3 and L4 marks there is an expectation of good understanding of the relevant concepts (definitions help in this) as well as the use of a wide range of the views of political thinkers. This should be specific and avoid listing or 'name dropping'. The latter case can be seen in phrases such as, 'socialists such as Tawney support nationalisation'.

AO2 marks – these are awarded for analysing and evaluating relevant theory based arguments. Descriptive answers that fail to address the question set will only be credited at best at low L2. For L3 and L4 a good range of relevant arguments with balance should be used. As a general rule 5 or 6 relevant and well-constructed and developed arguments are required for L4 marks. One-sided answers fail to fully address the question set and thus will only access top L2 marks at best.

AO3 marks – these are awarded based on the quality of written communication and the relevance of the answer. Where answers have no relevance to the question set then it is not possible to credit marks for AO3, or indeed for AO1 or AO2. Most answers will be awarded at L3 in terms of AO3 marks, with L4 answers displaying very good use of QWC and a sharp focus upon the question, including effective introductions and conclusions. Very short answers tend to be rewarded at L1 or the bottom of L2.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No.1a

Answers in general had a good understanding of the key values of liberalism, although many failed to fully attempt to define what liberalism actually is. Some answers only listed its different forms thus its meaning could only be inferred. Candidates are also reminded that there is an expectation that answers should be illustrated with the views of political thinkers, thus credit was given to where candidates did this. Also it is worth noting that only AO1 and AO3 marks are available for this question and thus there is no need to become side-tracked into debating the relative merits of liberalism or other analytical issues. A good approach to think about when answering 1a style questions is to define the key term, explain four different features and illustrate these with the views of relevant political thinkers.

Question No.1b

Answers tended to be able to explain the core values of liberalism, including freedom. The better answers focused upon the topic of importance and considered the relative importance of freedom alongside the relative importance of at least two other values. The very best answers appreciated that freedom underpinned the other values and thus considered the inter-relationship between each value.

Question No.2

Answers, on the whole, were able to highlight how accountability was important to democracy, especially in its representative form. Good answers also looked at why accountability was not so important in direct forms of democracy and considered the relative importance of other factors such as popular sovereignty, equality of citizenship and electoral consent. The very best answers did not just explain the importance of each feature but looked at why each was less important in some aspects. There was some very good use of specific democratic theorists to illustrate the arguments, although the use of Hobbes and Plato as pro- democratic thinkers is not really accurate

Question No.3

Good answers to this question produced a balanced argument for and against the idea of a world government. The very best highlighted the ideas also of undesirable and unachievable, differentiating between the two criticisms. One-sided answers only criticising the concept of world government tended to be awarded at L2 for AO2. The best answers used an impressive range of political thinkers to illustrate their arguments.

Question No.4

Better answers had a good understanding of the concept of legitimacy, being able to distinguish it from power and authority. Some very good answers used specific criteria for their assessment, often making use of Beetham's three sources of legitimacy. Some answers failed to focus upon the democratic aspect of the question, thus were not credited for references to legitimisation under dictatorships. Also better answers assessed the sources through looking at their relative importance, rather than just describing each source of legitimacy. Once again good answers were able to illustrate with a wide range of political thinkers.

Question No.5

Good answers had an effective understanding of formal equality, often linking it to classical liberal views. Good answers also were able to assess other forms of equality, most notably opportunity and outcome. Some answers did tend to confuse aspects of equality of opportunity a modern liberal and social democratic concept, with aspects of outcome, a socialist and Marxist value. As with Q4, assess questions do require balance and thus arguments should be made as to whether each type of equality can be considered real equality. The very best answers did attempt to explain how real equality can be interpreted from different ideological perspectives.

Question No.6

Good answers attempted to write a balanced approach to the question, often taking the view that from an authoritarian, conservative and liberal perspective, order was deemed necessary for society to function. The opposite view comes particularly from a Marxist and anarchist perspective, arguing that order in its present imposed form was damaging to society and could only be deemed necessary if it was harmonious and based on mutual cooperation. Credit was also given to those that argued that civil disobedience questioned the value of order when it undermined the operation of higher natural law. Once again there was plenty of opportunity for a range of relevant theory to be used in an illustrative manner.

Question No.7

Good answers tended to have an effective understanding of the meaning of ideology and were able to analyse the ideological merits of conservatism by using the definition as criterion. Answers once again needed to be balanced to access the higher mark bands and most did at least seek to do this. Some answers did tend to only focus upon the core values of conservatism and thus failed to fully appreciate what an ideology is. Credit was given for AO1 for the use of relevant conservative thinkers but less credit was given where other thinkers from different ideologies were deployed, although some reference to post-modernist thinkers were deemed relevant.

Question No.8

There was much good use of a range of liberal, radical, socialist and difference feminists deployed in answering this question. Better answers did consider the relative importance of gender equality in the context of other values such as patriarchy and otherness, with many candidates effectively arguing that equality underpinned many of the other values. As with the other importance questions the best answers tended to look at ways in which the values were important and less important depending upon the different ideological perspective. Those answers that only described each value of feminism were not credited as highly for AO2.

F855 US Government and Politics

The questions on the paper were all attempted although it is fair to say that there were some that were more favoured than others. This follows the traditional pattern with pressure groups and parties being more popular than executives. Given the rubric of the paper and the availability of question choice, it would seem candidates are adopting the perfectly legitimate strategy of developing specialist areas for this final paper.

It should be reiterated that candidates can access the highest mark levels by reference to the USA and the UK alone. Credit is given for references to other countries' political systems but it is not expected or necessary. Certain topics like electoral systems lend themselves more to this comparative analysis than others such as pressure groups.

Candidates need to be reminded of the manner in which marks are awarded. AO1 marks are given for detail, factual evidence, quotes and statistics. AO2 marks are awarded for analysis and evaluation. Occasionally, candidates were able to argue well but failed to provide supporting evidence from US government and politics. Centres are advised to avail themselves of the support material from OCR.

- 1) **Electoral Systems.** This was a popular question and the best candidates recognised the need to go beyond a US: UK comparison. They utilised their knowledge of alternative systems from the AS course to discuss the different principles behind systems – plurality, majoritarianism, proportional and hybrid – and referred to the countries in which they were used with a focus on their relative merits and demerits.
- 2) **Parties and ideological principle.** References to ideologies such as socialism, liberalism, environmentalism, nationalism etc. were the basis for most of the best essays. Issues relating to convergence and polarisation and contrasts between the UK and the US allowed candidates to reach the highest mark levels. It was pleasing to see reference to UKIP and the EP elections and the role played by the Tea Party Movement in the USA. Developments in voting behaviour were also successfully applied to these answers.
- 3) **Pressure group success.** Candidates would do well to remember that questions need a specific answer and not a generic one that has been pre-prepared. The importance of insider status and the factors which lead to this, needed to be emphasised rather than just a roll out of all the factors which can determine the success of a pressure group. As always, it was pleasing to see some candidates attempt to evaluate the meaning of success.
- 4) **Written v. unwritten constitutions.** Candidates were able to write a lot in answer to this question. They were able to draw on a range of countries and provide balanced focused answers to the question. Reference to the aborted EU Constitution and proposals in Scotland post-independence provided the basis for sophisticated and perceptive answers. Surprisingly, the present governmental paralysis in the USA did not feature prominently.

- 5) **Executive formulation and implementation of policy.** This was the least popular question on the paper. It has featured in a similar format on previous papers and the issue of Prime Ministerial power and cabinet government is of course a compulsory topic at AS. Perhaps it is the use of the word “executives” which serves to confuse but discussion of presidential power and the locus of decision making in the UK offers great scope for discussion. The impact of coalition government, for example, adds a new dimension to this debate with regard to formulation and the government shutdown and “elective dictatorship” provides similar opportunities when discussing implementation.
- 6) **The protection of rights.** One of the purposes of synoptic papers is to challenge students and this question invited a comparison between systems and the different nature of the protection of rights in both countries. Rather like the question of rights on the American paper, candidates needed to be able to argue for and against the notion that rights are protected. Given this is a stand-alone topic on both specifications, it is reasonable to expect a discussion of a wide range of rights and developments such as the “snoopers’ charter”, secret trials etc. and detailed reference to the impact of the Human Rights Act and Constitutional Reform Acts in the UK and the latest rulings from the Supreme Court such as *US v Windsor*.
- 7) **Judiciaries as political institutions.** The best answers attempted to define the meaning of political. This was contrasted with the meaning of judicial on occasion. Reference to rulings, appointments and the composition of courts was used to establish the nature of judicial politics. Rather like the question on the executive, the wording of the question may have persuaded others to attempt another question, as one would have normally anticipated more essays on this popular topic.
- 8) **The functions of legislatures.** Good responses showed detailed knowledge of parliamentary and congressional procedures and linked these to the relationship between their respective executives to provide an effective answer to this question. Candidates identified the relative impotence of Parliament and the dysfunctional nature of the Congress to argue the legislative function was not performed well. This incorporated reference to public bill committees in the UK and standing committees in the USA. The scrutiny function and oversight allowed reference to departmental select committees, PMQs and congressional checks on the presidency. Representation allowed reference to the electoral system and social composition of the chambers.

F856 Political Ideas and Concepts in Practice

General Comments

It is pleasing that a large number of candidates are now familiar with the demands of this unit. The important feature to note about the successful answering of questions in this unit comes from its title, Political ideas and Concepts in Practice. Unless there is evidence of the use of political ideas and concepts and also the application of them in practice, answers will not be able to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. The key word is synopticity. By this it is meant that the question is answered through a debate centring on the relevant theory aspects (including illustration through the use of relevant political thinkers) and then this debate should be evaluated by the application to modern politics (once again specific examples drawn from modern UK and EU Politics are expected). The idea of this unit is to take the political ideas and concepts studied in F854 and apply them to modern politics, as largely studied at AS Politics.

Specific issues to note with the Assessment Objectives and marking are highlighted below:

AO1 marks – these are awarded for the knowledge and understanding of the theory and also modern politics. As such L1 answers tended to have only a generalised understanding of the relevant issues, often having no specific reference to relevant political thinkers and/ or very few practical examples drawn from modern politics. L2 answers tended to have a degree of understanding of the relevant issues but once again, had only a few examples of the ideas of relevant political thinkers and some specific examples drawn from modern politics. Also at this level were responses that contained no references to specific political thinkers but had a wider range of examples drawn from modern politics. L3 answers made use of a good range of examples, both in terms of relevant political thinkers and specific modern examples. For L4 there needed to be a relatively balanced wide range of examples of the ideas of specific thinkers and specific modern examples. Answers that had a very wide range of modern examples but much fewer examples of the ideas of political thinkers were awarded at L3. It is important to note that the ideas of political thinkers must be explained to some degree and not just listed. Examples where the use of political thinkers was not credited fully included comments such as – ‘Liberals such as Mill believed in the importance of freedom’. This example is far too generalised and specific detail on what Mill believed about freedom would be required for full credit to be given. Another example that was not fully credited was the listing of a range of thinkers without any specific reference to their ideas, such as – ‘Marxists, including Marx Engels, Gramsci and Lenin all oppose capitalism.’ It would be far better to deal with each separately and explain their specific ideas.

AO2 marks – these are awarded for the ability to evaluate the theory based debate through the application to modern politics. Here credit is given for appropriate synoptic links. An example of this is when the arguments of a specific thinker have been discussed and then they are evaluated by applying their relevance or validity to modern politics. Thus a good synoptic link would have an argument debated in theory using the views of specific thinkers and then evaluated in practice applying it to specific aspects of modern politics. L1 answers tended to lack any evidence of synoptic links and often were heavily based around AS style modern politics. Bottom L2 answers also tended to lack use of synoptic links but at least had relevant arguments. Towards the top of L2 there tended to be some attempt at making synoptic links, albeit these were often weaker or inferred. L3 marks were awarded for the use of a range of synoptic links, and L4 answers had a wide range of these as well as good balance and sophistication in the arguments. One-sided answers tended to be credited as a maximum at the top of L2. Ideally 5 or 6 relevant arguments with good synoptic links should ensure access to L4 for AO2

AO3 marks – these were awarded based on the quality of written communication and the relevance of the answer. Where answers had no relevance to the question set then it was not possible to credit marks for AO3, or indeed for AO1 or AO2. Most answers were awarded at L3 in terms of AO3 marks, with L4 answers displaying very good use of QWC and a sharp focus upon the question, including effective introductions and conclusions. Very short answers tended to be rewarded at L1 or the bottom of L2.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No.1

Candidates who debated the case for and against the greater use of direct democracy and made appropriate synoptic links were able to access the higher mark band levels. There was impressive use of a range of political thinkers ranging from liberals, radical democrats and elitists. Very good use was made of reference to specific deficiencies within the application of modern representative democracy and also how more direct forms of democracy have been utilised. In the latter case specific examples of referendums, initiatives, 'e' democracy, citizens' juries, town hall democracy, recall votes and online petitions were given credit. These included examples drawn from the UK and also internationally, with Switzerland and the US being the most popular source of international examples.

Question No.2

The best answers were able to draw upon internal and external threats to the UK as a nation state. These included devolution and potential Scottish independence, the impact of political and also economic globalisation. The very best answers had an impressive range of evidence drawn from a range of political thinkers, often including modern theorists such as Klein, Hirst and Thompson and Ohmae, as well as specific examples drawn from the UK's relationship with international organisations and multi-national corporations. There were a number of answers that tended to take a very one-sided approach to the question and / or limited their arguments to the UK's relationship with the EU. This style of answer was not able to access the higher mark band levels.

Question No.3

The best answers had a good understanding of Weber's three ideal types of charismatic authority and were able to look at the relative importance of charismatic authority alongside the relative importance of the other two types. Less effective answers tended to almost exclusively focus upon examples of charismatic leadership without looking at the alternative forms of authority. Also answers that confused power with authority tended to receive little credit. Very good answers used a wide range of theoretical and practical examples in their debate of the relative importance of Weber's three types of authority and tended to argue that traditional authority was declining whereas charismatic supplements legal-rational forms of authority in modern western democracies.

Question No.4

The better answers adopted a balanced approach, often focusing their arguments upon ideas centred on equality of opportunity and outcome. There was some good use of modern liberal and socialist arguments in favour of positive discrimination and classical liberal and conservative criticisms. The better answers had balance in their argument as well as a good range of the use of the ideas of specific thinkers and practical evidence of positive discrimination methods.

Question No.5

Better answers understood the meaning of judicial activism and tended to focus upon issues relating to interpretations of natural and positive law. There was some good use of thinkers relating to the above concepts and evaluation through application of issues such as the use of judicial review. Here candidates were credited for examples drawn from case law based in the UK and international bodies such as the ECHR. Also, where case law was brought in from the US, this was credited, although was not essential to get higher marks.

Question No.6

The best answers to this question focused upon where nationalism could be seen in both its left and right wing forms. This often focused upon either core values of nationalism or its different ideological strands (making effective use of a range of nationalist thinkers). Credit was given for those that grouped liberal forms of nationalism as a progressive left-wing concept; this was especially the case when evaluating the role of the SNP and Plaid Cymru. Answers that only focused upon UKIP and the BNP only effectively covered one side to the question thus were not able to access the higher mark band levels. Some very good answers also looked at the impact of nationalism on the mainstream parties, in particular centring on issues of immigration and EU membership.

Question No.7

Very good answers appreciated the many different strands of socialism and were able to ascertain their relevance to modern politics. A good approach taken by many answers was to examine in turn the core values of socialism and consider their relevance to modern UK politics. In doing so, synoptic links had to be made to access the higher levels of the mark scheme for AO2. Where answers adopted an historical approach looking at the history of the Labour Party, or a one-sided approach, either arguing exclusively socialism is dead or still alive, these answers tended to fail to get much above L2 for AO2.

Question No.8

Better answers were able to integrate feminist theory into their argument concerning patriarchy in modern politics. There was good use of liberal, radical and socialist feminism in outlining the cases for and against patriarchy with good application to the role women now perform in politics in the UK and beyond. Less effective answers tended to only produce a list of women in politics, accompanied by a generalised understanding of the meaning of patriarchy.

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