



AS-LEVEL POLITICS

7151: The government and politics for the UK
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Students were in general able to access the entirety of the question paper. In contrast to the June 2018 series, students this year generally allocated their time well in the exam. Much of the paper is compulsory. Where students had a choice, they more commonly answered Question 5 than Question 4 and Question 9 rather than Question 10.

Question 1

Most students were able to identify that statute law were Acts of Parliament. There were, however, students who tended to only describe the process of passing legislation. Responses that were at a higher level were able to illustrate their answer with constitutionally significant statutes such as the Human Rights Act or the Constitutional Reform Act. Students who gained the highest marks were often able to focus their answer on the word significance and often explained the impact of parliamentary sovereignty on the constitution.

Question 2

Most students were able to cite the basic concept of departmental responsibility for ministers. At lower levels of response there was often little more than the assertion that ministers would resign. A minority of students also confused collective and individual ministerial responsibility. Answers at higher levels typically explained that responsibility could also extend to personal behaviour falling below standards expected of ministers, or that a convention ministers did not have to resign if they had the support of a Prime minister. Accurate examples of resignations (or cases of where there was no resignation) enhanced explanations considerably.

Question 3

This question elicited a wide range of responses. Many students found the extracts accessible and were able to find the main arguments within it: the expertise and experience of life peers; the Lords' role as a revising chamber; the suggestion that the public does not view reform as a priority; the Lords' lack of legitimacy; and the use of patronage powers by the Prime minister. Less effective responses did little more than identify the relevant element in the passage and describe or restate the point that was made in the extract. At middle-levels of response, there was some explanation of these points. Many students, however, did not fully address the demands of the question and therefore did not access the highest level of marks. A minority of students compared the arguments, for example clearly contrasting the need for legitimacy versus gridlock, and those that did not therefore limited their evaluation of the sources. Similarly, many answers either did not deal with the provenance of the extracts, or did so in a very superficial way. Students who evaluated the provenance of the extracts by considering the authors of the sources scored well, as did those that were able to link the purpose of the extracts to arguments within them; for example, some students explained the Telegraph opinion pages are likely to contain articles designed to persuade people to a conservative political opinion and were able to score very highly.

Question 4

Even though this was the less popular of the two essay questions in this section, it produced many impressive responses. Students who scored lower tended to be descriptive of the role of judges. At higher levels, a wide range of arguments were considered which included the effect of the Human Rights Act and the role of judicial review, as well the impact of the Constitutional Reform Act. Some students also effectively made the argument that although Judges had certainly become more

powerful, this did not necessarily make them “too powerful”. Such answers tended to be highly analytical with clear evaluation and therefore scored very highly.

Question 5

Students who scored lower marks in this question often described the powers of devolved bodies with limited accuracy. Mid-level responses were often able to identify relevant recent reforms, including the Wales and Scotland Acts of the past decade. At the highest level of responses, there was a clear balance in the arguments made, recognising the growth in power of the devolved bodies, balanced against the concept of parliamentary sovereignty and the reserved powers of Westminster. Students who evaluated whether the above could be said to constitute a “break-up of the United Kingdom” often scored very highly.

Question 6

This question had the highest proportion of students who scored zero or achieved the lowest level of marks. The most common error was to suggest that the European Parliament had powers it did not (such as the ability to strike down member states laws). At the lowest level, students often did little more than point out that the parliament had a role in legislation. At higher levels, there was an understanding of co-decision making with the Council and the role of scrutiny over the Commission.

Question 7

There were many excellent answers to this question. Most students explained that traditionally working-class voters tended to support Labour and middle-class voters the Conservatives. At middle levels, students often illustrated this with post-election survey data and explanations of the ideological and rational self-interested reasons for this. At higher levels, students who were able to explain the decline in significance of class as a determinant of voting behaviour often scored very well, sometimes suggesting it had been supplanted by other long-term factors such as level of education. A common error in lower scoring answers was to focus excessively on other factors of voting behaviour rather than focusing on socio-economic class.

Question 8

Students tended to score less well in this question than they did in question 3. At lower levels of responses, students tended to identify some of the arguments in the passage. As with the other extract-based questions, students often did not directly compare arguments, for example not examining the suggestion that there was a need to break the Thatcherite economic consensus alongside the suggestion that many in the Labour party were much more moderate in their ideology. Although students did more frequently discuss provenance, this was often very superficial, rather than examining the purpose of a conference speech to party members or the traditionally moderate centre left (and so relatively centrist views of the Observer.) Students who considered whether the change in ideology of the party was the same as a change in the ideology of the leadership often scored very highly.

Question 9

This question was the more popular of the two optional questions in this section. Students who moved little beyond the significance of turnout in elections tended to be awarded marks at lower levels. Mid-level responses often reflected on other forms of participation, giving many good

examples of pressure groups or direct democracy. Higher level answers were often characterised by a discussion of the relative importance of electoral and non-electoral participation, and the extent to which it had an impact on legitimising political decision making.

Question 10

This question was less popular than question nine. Students who were awarded marks in lower levels tended to make simplistic assertions about the activities of pressure groups; for example, certain student suggested that membership of relatively apolitical organisations, such as the AA or RSPB, meant that members who joined these organisations were all meaningfully engaged in political activity. At higher levels, a wider range of reasons were given such as the representation of minorities and the undue influence of money in pressure group activity. Such responses tended to have a clear understanding of the theoretical basis for considering pressure group activity, citing elitist and pluralist theory, or evaluating the impact that pressure groups had on elected representatives and the quality of their decisions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.