
A-LEVEL POLITICS

7152/1 Government and Politics of the UK
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Overall, most students were able to access the entirety of the question paper. Section A questions were generally well answered by the majority. Many answers were well structured, with three clear paragraphs and supporting evidence.

Question 4 provided the widest range of responses with most students aware of the assessment criteria in terms of using the extract and provenance.

Questions 5 and 6 provided a range of responses and many students were comfortable with their subject knowledge, regardless of which option they selected. Students had clearly been very well taught on these two particular topics. Question 6 was the more popular option. Overall, those who scored well across the paper managed their time effectively and were well aware of the assessment objectives. There was clear evidence of some excellent teaching and learning across all topics. However, it is important for students to recognise that all three sections are almost equal in worth and that we suggest spending 40 minutes on each section.

Question 1

Most students were able to identify ways in which election results impact the formation of government; particularly the formation of strong majority governments, minority governments and coalitions. Students were able to draw on a variety of examples from the 1983, 1997, 2017 and 2010 elections. The strongest responses developed on the mandate that these governments had to fulfil their election manifestos and how these were (or were not) fulfilled.

Weaker responses tended to lack understanding of the implications of a hung parliament and confused 'confidence and supply' with 'supply and demand'. A small minority of students were able to identify that internal party elections may change the formation of government, and explained how Truss's weak mandate and cabinet of supporters contributed to her short tenure.

Question 2

Most students had strong understanding of the protection of rights provided by statute law and were able to identify the Human Rights Act (1998) as an example. A majority of students were also able to explain how the UK Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights also protect rights, giving examples of rulings of where rights had been protected and also explaining the limitation that parliamentary sovereignty places on the powers of courts. The strongest answers also identified how pressure groups or institutions such as the Equalities and Human Rights Commission also protect rights.

Weaker responses gave three different statutes, or were unclear as to the status of UK membership of the European Court of Human Rights with relation to EU membership, or were unable to support their responses with clear evidence of the protection of rights. The strongest responses had a good understanding of the vulnerability of statute law and court rulings to changes in the law and were able to identify examples such as the proposed British Bill of Rights and the Reilly rulings to illustrate this.

Question 3

Students demonstrated a good depth and breadth of knowledge of the methods used by pressure groups. The best answers considered three clear methods such as lobbying, direct action or the use of celebrity endorsement with the use of examples of the methods and the aims achieved by the groups identified. Students had prepared well for this topic and most provided up-to-date examples of direct action from Just Stop Oil and Insulate Britain in their answers. They were also able to analyse which methods were more likely to achieve aims for pressure groups and why.

Some students confused the status of pressure groups, such as identifying Fathers 4 Justice as an insider group or were vague about the mechanisms of lobbying. There were strong responses which analysed lobbying in relation to recent scandals such as David Cameron and Greensill or Owen Paterson and Randox.

Question 4

Students had been well prepared in the exam technique required for this question and the best responses contained effective understanding of the significance of the dates of the extracts (such as them being during the tenure of different prime ministers but both under minority governments). Students were often able to evaluate the status of the individuals cited in each extract, particularly their party affiliation. Most responses referenced the BBC as an impartial source, accepting that the BBC has a duty to inform and educate. There were responses that commented on alleged bias of the BBC, ranging from favouring the Conservative Party to a supposed liberal bias.

Most students were able to use the extract as the basis for arguments for the roles and influence of select committees which they developed with their own knowledge. There was some good knowledge included in a majority of answers such as that of the Health Select Committee and its influence over policy such as the 'sugar tax' or 'smoking ban'. The strongest responses were able to explain how the Wright Reforms had strengthened committees, particularly in the election of committee chairs. There were some excellent responses which were able to discuss the election of Julian Lewis as Intelligence Committee chair or the work of the Privileges Committee in highlighting the independence of committees from government.

Less well prepared students were unable to expand upon the extracts, such responses were descriptive, with some merely copying parts of the extract without much further development. There was some confusion over the role of select committees in the passage of legislation. Those that scored highly were able to conclude by taking a stance on which side of the debate they were most convinced by, based upon the arguments that they had chosen to develop.

Question 5

Students were able to draw on a range of examples when responding to this question, and most agreed with the assertion in the question. Students generally considered the status of the cabinet under Thatcher, Blair and the Cameron-Clegg coalition. Precise knowledge of the level of decision making was well demonstrated in consideration of tensions between Blair and Brown or the Quad. The strongest responses considered factors such as the popularity of individuals, the size of government majority and the personalities involved in dictating the circumstances in which cabinet was able to make decisions. There were some excellent responses which covered a wide range of evidence from the cohesion of the Callaghan cabinet, the role of cabinet in the resignation of Thatcher and consideration of 'big beasts' in modern cabinets.

Responses in the higher levels challenged the ‘no longer’ part of the question, often by comparing the status of Special Advisors under Thatcher, Blair and Johnson in usurping the cabinet. There was also good evaluation of the relationship between May and ministers such as Johnson, Davis and Raab in her cabinet, or Truss and Kwarteng. Weaker responses tended to focus more on the powers of the prime minister and failed to mention a single cabinet minister.

Question 6

This essay question was very well answered by many students and most responses were able to identify and develop a range of arguments relating to political participation. The most commonly discussed were variations in turnout in general elections and referendums. There was good analysis of why turnout varies, though weaker responses tended to focus their answer solely on declines in turnout. The best responses considered fluctuations in first and second order elections, national and regional referendums, party membership, pressure group membership and activism and the significance of Parliamentary e-petitions.

The most effective responses analysed the decline in trade unionism as a measure of participation and demonstrated sophisticated awareness of differential levels of participation relating to class, age and region. Stronger responses engaged with the concept of crisis rather than just a description of methods of participation. Lots of students had clearly prepared well for this question and were able to provide accurate statistics and supporting evidence for different methods of participation

Less effective responses tended to be very descriptive of methods of participation, agreeing with the assertion in the question rather than exploring where participation has varied.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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