



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. Nearly all responses were well structured, with three clear paragraphs and supporting evidence.

Question 4 provided a wide 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.

Question 1

Most students were able to identify ways in which Labour Party policy had changed; particularly under the leaderships of Blair and Corbyn. Students were able to draw on a variety of examples from the changes to Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution under Blair, to the 1983 Foot election manifesto and the first Labour majority government under Attlee. The strongest responses developed on the reasons for these leaders shifting policy and the extent to which these reflected Labour's position as a socialist party.

Weaker responses tended to describe Labour leaders as moving left or right but lacked examples to support this or analysis of the implications of such shifts. A significant minority of students struggled to correctly identify Labour leaders.

Question 2

Most students had some understanding of the legislative process. A majority of students were also able to explain how MPs can influence policy by introducing their own legislation, giving examples of successful Private Members' bills, and analysing the probability of such a measure being effective. The strongest answers also identified how MPs can use other routes to introduce legislation (Ten Minute Rule bills, Presentation bills) or considered the committee stage, the influence of rebellions from backbenchers or the role of debates in the commons.

Weaker responses failed to focus on the legislative process, instead drawing on the scrutiny role of the commons (Prime Minister's Questions, select committees). The strongest responses had a good understanding of the difficulties facing back benchers in passing their own legislation or in the face of a large government majority or in challenging party whips.

Question 3

The best answers considered three clear elements of democracy that pressure groups enhance such as representation, participation and education. A significant number of responses focused on pressure group methods and gave examples to support their answer without analysing the ways in which these promote democracy. Students had prepared well for this topic and most provided a range of examples considering pressure groups with large memberships (such as the National Trust), those which encourage participation (such as the use of e-petitions or demonstrations) or the representation of groups excluded from the democratic process (such as the Gurkhas). The most successful responses analysed the democratic value of large memberships, protests or the expertise that pressure groups might use to help inform government policy.

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 both being written at a time when the Brexit process was still unclear). Most also considered the authority of Grayling as an academic (some identifying him as a supporter of ‘remain’ as a result) and the House of Lords Library Briefing.

Most students were able to use the extract as the basis for arguments on the merits of referendums. There was some good knowledge included in a majority of answers such as that of the turnouts for the 2016 Brexit, 2014 Scottish Independence, 2011 Alternative Vote and 1998 Good Friday Agreement referendums. The strongest responses were able to explain how the representative democracy of the Commons struggled to legislate in the light of the 2016 direct democracy or that the regional results of the Brexit referendum contributed to calls for a second Scottish referendum. There were some excellent responses which were able to compare the extracts in the light of the question

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. Weaker answers had a narrow focus on the Brexit referendum and mistakenly referred to the Conservative Party running the Leave Campaign.

Question 5

Most students agreed with the assertion in the question and drew on knowledge such as the ‘Cash for Honours’ and ‘Cash for Cameron’ scandals. There were some excellent responses which considered more up-to-date issues with party donors such as the distribution of PPE contracts and Frank Hester’s comments on Diane Abbott. Many students were able to consider the impact that different distribution of party finance might have on the party system, though equally acknowledged that it was likely that any new system would benefit those designing it. The best students considered the systems of state funding already in operation such as Short and Cranborne money as well as the Policy Development Grant. There were some excellent responses which covered a wide range of evidence from the regulation of party finance including PPERA and the Trade Union Act (2016).

Weaker responses tended to mention large donations to the Conservative Party as a criticism of the current arrangements. Most responses mentioned the reluctance of taxpayers to fund political parties.

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 voting behaviour. The most commonly discussed in addition to class were those of age and gender. There was some good analysis of how recency factors can intersect with these, for example the Conservative success with female and young voters under Thatcher compared to Johnson. Weaker responses tended to focus on a narrow range of factors or failed to address the issue of whether class is still the main determinant of voting behaviour. Stronger answers considered how issues such as Brexit and Scottish Nationalism meant that voters did not vote along class lines. These responses were evidenced with the fall of the 'Red Wall' in 2019 and increased voter volatility since 1979.

Lots of students had clearly prepared well for this question and were able to provide accurate statistics and supporting evidence from three different elections. Less effective responses tended to be very descriptive of voting behaviour and failed to account for reasons for its changing.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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