



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2010

Statistical Information

This booklet contains summary details for each unit: number entered; maximum mark available; mean mark achieved; grade ranges. *N.B. These refer to 'raw marks' used in the initial assessment, rather than to the uniform marks reported when results are issued.*

Annual Statistical Report

The annual *Statistical Report* (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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Government and Politics

General Comments AS

On GP1, question 1 was the most popular, with question 2 proving almost as popular. Very few candidates attempted question 3. All questions proved accessible to candidates, although candidates' knowledge of social movements (question 4) was generally weak.

On GP2, questions 1 and 2 were an attractive combination for candidates. A significant number answered question 3, which produced the highest mean mark. Few candidates answered question 4. All questions proved accessible to candidates.

Most candidates were able to complete the number of questions required in the time allowed. Sustaining the quality of response across 2 questions and all 3 parts each time did, however, prove difficult for many. Candidates should be reminded that time is of the essence in these examinations, and they should therefore answer the specific question set, and should bear in mind the number of marks allocated per question. A few minutes spent planning for part (b) and part (c) questions would certainly improve the focus of many answers and save time.

The legibility of handwriting was more of an issue in this examination series than in previous sessions.

Part (a):

It is pleasing to see a general improvement in the quality of part (a) answers. Many candidates are now earning high marks by defining the term, developing it and giving a valid example or specific fact about it, in a paragraph. These answers were of a higher quality on GP2 than on GP1. A number of candidates produced answers that focused on what the term did not mean, or what it was not, and this did not earn much credit.

Part (b):

Again, in general part (b) answers are improving in quality, with many candidates scoring well. The lower scoring answers tended to describe rather than explain. A descriptive answer could score well for AO1, but is unlikely to do so for AO2, where the marks are for the skill of explanation. Some candidates are spending too long on part (b), to the detriment of their part (c) response. The advice to candidates has always been that about 3 reasons or factors, well-chosen and well-explained and exemplified is enough. Some candidates are producing arguments for part (b). A two-sided analysis is not required here, the focus of the answer should be the issue in the question. On the whole, there is still insufficient use of the extract, where at least one relevant point will be found.

Part (c):

More candidates are aware of the need for a two-sided response to the part (c) questions, i.e. an answer that explores differing viewpoints, and does not simply agree or disagree only with the stance taken in the question. It is noticeable that candidates are trying to use examples from Wales wherever they can, often examples taken from their own locality, and this is pleasing.

Too many candidates, however, are still producing 'topic answers', a regurgitation of class notes on the topic, or a list of factors with little development, rather than an argument crafted to address the specific issues raised in the question set. Such answers struggle to get beyond Level 2. Candidates should be discouraged from the 'model answer' approach, as it almost always restricts the marks they are able to gain. Those candidates that can select and apply their knowledge and understanding to the specific question set in an organised and sustained way will achieve Level 3. This will probably require candidates to invest a few minutes in planning their answer first to ensure focus. It is advised that candidates address the angle taken in the question first, then deal with counter-arguments, although this is not the only way in which these questions can be approached. There should be a balance, more or less, of the two sides or the different viewpoints. A more methodical approach at the planning stage – ensuring that the argument and counter-argument are covered in roughly equal range and depth – would improve the marks of some candidates.

There were more instances than in previous examinations of candidates whose knowledge was very good indeed, but who produced narrative answers that described the issues in the question, rather than explaining, analysing and evaluating them, as the question and the mark scheme demand. The AO2 skill marks for part (c) are awarded for the quality of analysis and evaluation of the issues the question raises primarily, and the question will prompt candidates to do this, by its wording. Many candidates make a range of points but do not show how these answer the specific question set, in other words they state a case by listing their points but do not prove it by explaining those points, exemplifying them and showing how they answer the question. Some candidates only begin to address the question properly in a conclusion. Those that earn high Level 3 marks are the ones who are fully focused on the question in front of them throughout the answer, providing a well-selected and well-explained argument, supported with appropriate examples, and reaching a substantial conclusion on the question set. Most candidates are aware of the need to exemplify their arguments, but they should be encouraged to provide up-to-date and accurate examples. A significant number of scripts contained sloppy inaccuracies.

Candidates and teachers are reminded that marks are awarded for AO3 in part (c) only, and that candidates need to provide a well-structured answer and to use political vocabulary wherever they can to access fully these marks.

More guidance on answering the parts of the questions at AS Level can be found in previous Examiner's Reports, at INSET and in the Teachers' Guide.

General Certificate of Education

2010

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton, B.A. (Hons); P.G.C.E., Croesyceiliog School, Cwmbran.

Unit Statistics

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Unit	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
GP1	111	80	50.5

Grade Ranges

A	57
B	51
C	46
D	41
E	36

N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.

GP1

Q.1 Participation and Voting Behaviour

- (a) This was generally done well, with most candidates able to describe as required. There was some confusion with voting for specific policies and some candidates could not provide an example.
- (b) Most candidates were able to explain a number of reasons, including the media's over-emphasis on leaders. Some answers were descriptive, listing how the leaders cultivate an image, rather than why this is important. There were a number of general answers that did not focus on the 'in elections' part of the question, and some that provided a counter-argument of other factors that are important, which was not required. The prompts in the passage were under-exploited by some candidates.
- (c) Responses to this question showed good topic knowledge overall, but some were disappointing in their focus on the question set. There were some narrative, topic responses to this question, a few of which hardly addressed the role of the campaign at all, and many of which drifted into general descriptions of the role of the media in politics rather than in voting behaviour which the question asked. There was a lot of listing of different factors that affect voting behaviour, in no particular order, with no attempt to weigh up their relative importance. There were very few examples from actual elections.

Q.2 Electoral Systems

- (a) Most answers were good to excellent, with candidates able to define and exemplify this term well. Few alluded to general elections in Wales though.
- (b) Greater use was made of the passage than for Q1, albeit often only the first half. The hint about the politics of the nations of the UK in the second half was under-used. Some candidates did not clearly understand the term 'two-party system', basing their explanation on the equal status given to Nick Clegg in the leadership debates of 2010.
- (c) Those candidates who were able to focus on the exact requirements of the question scored well here. The key words were '*fair*' and '*systems*' (in the plural). Some answers were topic responses on the advantages and disadvantages of First Past the Post, where the fairness or otherwise of other systems hardly got a mention. Many candidates did not discriminate between features of systems that make them fair or unfair, and features that are not to do with fairness (such as ease of understanding what to do). Better candidates analysed the features of a number of systems in the UK, and there was good knowledge of electoral systems in Wales at this level.

Q.3 Political Parties in Wales and the UK

- (a) Very few candidates attempted question 3. There was generalised knowledge of Clause Four, but development of responses to this part was weak.
- (b) Most candidates were able to extract a number of relevant points from the passage and add their own reasons why party conferences are important. There was little discussion however, of their differing importance in the different parties of the UK.
- (c) Answers to this part were on the whole weak, with candidates struggling to construct an argument. Most could argue that mass membership is important for democratic participation, but most answers did not develop a range of reasons, either for or against.

Q.4 Pressure Groups and Protest Movements

- (a) Most answers were good, with candidates able to define the term and give a variety of valid examples, such as marches, sit-ins etc., along with development of why people might pursue this form of protest.
- (b) This question was done poorly, with many candidates unaware of what social movements are, and therefore unable to provide reasons why they would be popular, in particular, as opposed to reasons why pressure group protest as a whole is popular. Candidates and teachers are reminded to give attention to the detail of the specification.
- (c) Candidates' general knowledge of this topic is good, but again many failed to focus on the angle that the question took. Many answers were comprehensive on the differences between insider and outsider groups, but many focused on their methods rather than the degree of success they have had, as the question demanded. There was little discussion of the success or otherwise of protest movements despite the rich material to draw from. There were fewer current examples than might be expected. This is a topic where candidates need to keep fully up-to-date with developments.

Government and Politics
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Unit Statistics

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Unit	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
GP2	134	80	46.3

Grade Ranges

A	57
B	51
C	46
D	41
E	36

N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.

GP2

Q.1 The British Constitution

- (a) Most candidates were easily able to define, develop and exemplify this term, and scored well.
- (b) A lot of answers to this part described conventions and how they work, rather than explaining their importance. Some candidates copied bits from the extract without explaining it, which lost them marks.
- (c) Despite the overall popularity of question 1, many candidates found it difficult. This part was not well done. Many candidates stuck to prepared answers on the benefits and drawbacks of a written constitution, which was not what was asked. Those that could adapt what they knew to address the specific question asked scored well.

Q.2 Parliamentary Structures in Wales and the UK

- (a) Again, this term was well understood by candidates and many scored 4 or 5 marks here.
- (b) This question was well done. Many candidates produced a range of well explained reasons why PMQs is important and/or why it is not, and used the passage well.
- (c) Unfortunately, answers to this part were disappointing, both because of a lack of range of ways in which the executive is scrutinised, and because of a lack of explanation of how effective (or not) those ways are. Many answers were descriptive lists at best, or a trot through the role of Public Bill Committees, or the legislative process at worst. Debates and Question Time were mentioned, but the role of the Opposition was generally ignored. Understanding of the role of Select Committees and how effective they are was generally weak, as was the concept of scrutiny in order to hold to account, as opposed to the scrutiny of legislative details in bills, which is at best tangential to this question. Few candidates used their knowledge of scrutiny procedures in Wales – teachers and candidates are reminded that the topic title places Wales firmly in the centre of this topic. It was pleasing to see better candidates questioning the effectiveness of any scrutiny procedures due to executive dominance and the rise of the career MP.

Q.3 The Core Executives in Wales and Westminster

- (a) A significant number of candidates answered on the Cabinet here, as opposed to Cabinet Committees. Answers were on the whole weak on the term set.
- (b) This was well done, with many candidates able to give pertinent, recent examples of the operation of the doctrine in practice, where Cabinet members have felt unable to agree with the PM essentially. The aspect of the doctrine that governments take collective responsibility for their programme and resign together when they lose the confidence of the House of Commons was under-explored, but there were many high scoring answers nevertheless.
- (c) This was generally well done, except that some candidates turned it into a question on the powers of the Prime Minister. Whilst this is obviously relevant, the thrust of the question is a debate about the role of the Cabinet. Most candidates were able to argue both sides here, that the Cabinet has declined in importance and that it still has an important role. Candidates' knowledge of the wider core executive and power relationships within it, especially under Blair and Brown, is still a bit weak.

Q.4 Multi-level Governance in Wales and the UK

Only a very small number of candidates answered this question and the quality of responses was weaker than for the other questions.

- (a) Descriptions of this term were very generalised, with candidates having only a vague idea of these bodies, and examples were thin.
- (b) The extract provided a wealth of prompts here, which most candidates were able to access to some degree, citing the amounts of money they spend and the ways in which appointments have been made in the recent past.
- (c) This question proved a challenge for some candidates, who struggled with the concept of 'democratic deficit'. Better planning would also have resulted in better organised answers that addressed a range of ways in which the fragmentation of multi-level governance has resulted in democratic deficit (eg the involvement of private companies and quangos in the delivery of public services at national and local levels), and a range of ways in which accountability is still there or has been improved (eg the direct election of local mayors). This was a good example of a question where a more methodical approach by candidates would have reaped rewards, because there is a lot of material ranging from local government to the EU to be sorted and selected.

General Comments A2

On paper GP3a, questions 1 and 3 were a popular combination and were well done. Questions 2 and 4 were less popular and proved more of a challenge for candidates that chose them.

On paper GP3b, question 1 was attempted by nearly all candidates and they found it very accessible. Question 2 was the next most popular, but candidates found it more difficult than Question 4, which was attempted by some candidates. No candidate attempted Question 3.

On paper GP4a, the combination of Questions 1 and 4 was very popular and answers to Question 4 were very good. However, Question 1, although very popular, proved the most difficult for candidates. Significant numbers answered Questions 2 and 3.

The quality of answers at A2 Level continues to impress overall. Many candidates are knowledgeable and show signs of individual research and preparation for the examination, as well as engagement with the specific questions set. Where candidates do not score as highly as they would wish, it is often because of poor focus on the precise question set, or poor demonstration of skills. Teachers and candidates are reminded that the marks for skills (AO2 especially) are higher on the A2 papers than for the AS Level, reflecting the nature of A2 with its greater expectation, stretch and challenge for candidates. Crafting an effective, convincing argument and counter-argument to a specific question, selecting and deploying relevant evidence in support, analysing and evaluating are all high order skills which need to be developed systematically at A2.

Part (a): the majority of candidates at A2 level produce part (a) answers of suitable length and score well for AO1, as their knowledge has range and detail. However, not enough attention is paid to the wording of the question and issues of 'significance' or 'importance' are often not addressed by candidates. Instead, they produce descriptive answers that list a lot of knowledge. This was particularly an issue with GP4a Q1a and Q4a, and GP3a Q1a, 2a and 4a. Where candidates do identify explanations and reasons correctly, they often fail to develop them properly into a coherent explanation and do not score all the marks for AO2. Candidates should be encouraged to utilise explanatory vocabulary, 'this is important because...', 'this leads to...', 'as a result...' etc. Some candidates are treating this question as an essay and providing lengthy introductions, which wastes valuable time. Candidates are reminded to focus straight away on the question set in this part and advice to candidates remains that they should seek to develop 3-4 points of explanation.

Part (b): at A2 level, focus on the specific question set is at a premium. Answers that drift, are partial and/or are not clear will not score well. Whilst there are significant numbers of top level answers, the majority score level 2 marks in some if not all the AOs. The main reasons for this are:

- (i) A lack of breadth and range on each side of the argument. The average is 1-2 points only. Candidates should aim for 3-4 well-developed points on each side. There is a tendency to make a couple of points and then fizzle out; the argument is not sustained.
- (ii) Answers that lack direction, in other words, they lack an argument or discussion. These are 'stream of consciousness' responses, which fail to focus on the question set and appear as a list of random items strung together.
- (iii) Answers where candidates struggle to distinguish between lines of argument, and examples of those arguments. These answers generally score well for AO1 as knowledge is detailed, but score poorly on the other AOs because they are essentially a list of examples on both sides, not an argument or discussion of the issues in the question.

Those candidates that earn high Level 3 marks are the ones who adopt an analytical and evaluative approach throughout their response, are fully focused on the question in front of them, providing a well-selected and well-explained argument, supported with appropriate examples and reaching a substantial conclusion on the question set. The best candidates genuinely debate and discuss the issues in the question, using evaluative language and making judgements. Weaker candidates tend to produce lists, 'another reason is...' etc.

In general, most candidates realise the need to exemplify their assertions, and most do so well. There was a general lack of statistics used as evidence in this examination, though, and surprisingly fewer examples from the 2008 USA presidential election than might have been expected.

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GP3	75	80	50.5

Grade Ranges

A	57
B	51
C	45
D	40
E	35

N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.

GP3 (a)

Q.1 The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy

Part (a) This was generally well done, with a range of reasons identified. One or two candidates confused the invisible primary with primaries and caucuses and concentrated on front-loading, Super Tuesday, Iowa etc, which is off-focus. Many candidates were able to utilise good information from 2007-8.

Part (b) Many answers were very good on the importance of TV, citing issue ads, candidate debates etc. and some good examples were used. Some candidates concentrated only on TV though, and produced as a counter-argument that TV does not affect voting behaviour that much. Whilst valid, this is only a partial response. Better answers evaluated the impact of other factors, such as the candidates themselves, issues and money on election outcomes, although the impact of money was under-developed on the whole.

Q.2 Political Parties

Part (a) Many answers were fairly descriptive histories of the emergence of the New Right. Few candidates were able to explain the impact on the Republican party, such as a narrowing of policies, the strategies being used to target certain voter groups, schism and faction.

Part (b) This was well done, with candidates able to argue both for and against this premise and using arguments such as the domination of the two main parties at elections, or the incidence of split-ticket voting. Issues of party identification and the changing role of parties in raising campaign funds were explored by better candidates.

Q.3 Voting Behaviour

Part (a) This question was well done, with candidates able to provide a wide range of well-explained reasons, including democratic overload, registration difficulties etc. Detailed knowledge of the actual requirements in named states was deployed by some candidates. Some challenged the assumption in the question by pointing out that measures of turnout can be unreliable and misleading.

Part (b) The majority of candidates were well aware of the present and past context of the black vote in the USA. Many candidates made use of statistical evidence from 2008 (although a surprising number of candidates used examples from 2000 or 2004 and none from 2008), and many understood that the homogeneity of the black vote alone makes it significant, although few challenged this on the grounds of its small percentage of overall voters. Fewer candidates were able to discuss voting behaviour amongst other racial and ethnic groupings. Disappointingly, counter-arguments tended to dissolve into a list of other factors affecting voting behaviour. Few candidates mentioned partisanship and party identification as a factor influencing voting.

Q.4 Pressure Groups

Part (a) Most candidates were able to name a range of pressure groups, but found it more difficult to explain why they are so numerous in the USA. Better candidates focused on what was required and developed explanations such as the weakness of political parties, the guarantee of freedom of expression in the Bill of Rights and the multiple access points in a federal system. Weaker candidates suggested it is because of the number of issues that need to be solved, in a very general way.

Part (b) This question elicited a number of responses that simply agreed with the quote and failed to develop a counter-argument. These are one-sided responses and unfortunately score only level 1 marks. Some candidates were able to assess methodically the ways in which pressure groups can buy influence and votes, through campaign financing, lobbying Congress, iron triangles etc. However, many candidates appeared to panic and their answers drifted away from the question. Counter-arguments tended to be that pressure groups are significant for other reasons (such as pluralism, participation) rather than challenging the view that they can buy influence and votes in any meaningful way.

GP3 (b)

Q.1 Power in Modern Society

Part (a) Most candidates could define legitimacy and could give examples of legitimate and illegitimate governments. Some candidates were able to explain a range of reasons why it is an important concept, citing reasons such as government by consent, the avoidance of revolution, the authority it confers to impose sets of rules or ideas. Some candidates mentioned Weberian theories but did not go on to develop this much.

Part (b) There were some good answers to this part in terms of range, especially of ways in which elites have power. Candidates viewed this in a broad sense, and some debated the difference between power and influence of elites. There was less concentration on ways in which ordinary citizens can have power, beyond the ballot box (eg protest, through new media etc.). There was a tendency to list ways in which both have power, rather than to evaluate whether citizens have more power, as the question asked.

Q.2 Executive Power

Part (a) Answers to this mainly described aspects or examples of executive news management without explaining why it is important to them. Those candidates that wrote explanatory answers tended to fix on one reason (eg for the cultivation of image) and did it to death – their answers had depth but lacked range.

Part (b) Candidates found it hard to focus on the thrust of this question, and many wrote two-sided answers listing strengths and weaknesses of executives, which was not precisely what was asked. The tensions amongst the main players and institutions within executives, the tendency to competition and secrecy despite a need for solidarity and the tendency for long-term executive failure were under-explored. Some candidates seemed to struggle to write theoretically about executives, tending instead to list examples exclusively from the USA and the UK.

Q.3 Political Culture

There were no responses to this question.

Q.4 Britain in Europe

Part (a) Nearly all candidates identified a valid range of reasons here. Some candidates developed their reasons with support, but others just listed. Some wasted valuable time in describing the history of Britain's EU journey from the 1940s onwards, rather than focusing straight away on the question.

Part (b) Most candidates were able to focus on the opportunities offered by enlargement here and cited trade, Europe's world status and influence etc. as positives. Some answers were very good on this, but one or two were just lists of the positive and negative points of the EU, unconnected in a meaningful way with the question set. Few candidates evaluated properly whether opportunities outweigh drawbacks.

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GP4	54	80	49.4

Grade Ranges

A	56
B	51
C	46
D	41
E	36

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GP4 (a)

Q.1 The Constitutional Framework of the USA

Part (a) Most candidates were able to describe a range of the amendments of the Bill of Rights and chose ones that they asserted were very important. Fewer were able to explain convincingly why the ones they chose were so important though.

Part (b) This was another question that elicited some one-sided responses from candidates who just agreed with the question and argued that the Constitution does limit government. Many candidates produced good answers to this side of the argument, saying that the Constitution limits government by granting citizens and the states unenumerated rights as well as those enumerated in the Bill of Rights. The actual Articles of the Constitution are less well-known by some candidates, although there were good responses on the checks and balances, as well as some answers that dealt only with these and ended up as a long description. Good points of counter-argument used by candidates included the development of federalism over the years, the growth of the federal bureaucracy and Congressional interpretation of the commerce clause.

Q.2 The Legislative Branch: Congress

Part (a) There were good responses here, although the focus tended very much to be on the constituency role of congressmen. Little was said about the Senate, or about why the executive cannot command majorities in Congress through party affiliations.

Part (b) Answers were very good to this question, on the whole, with range and balance. If anything, there was over-concentration on the powers of Congress other than legislating. The checks and balances by the other branches were fully explored as were Congressional powers of impeachment and the purse. These were all relevant to the question and scored well. However, little was said about the strengths and weaknesses of the legislative process in Congress. Where this did feature, it tended to be as a description of the processes rather than an evaluation.

Q.3 The Executive Branch

Part (a) This question was well done, with many candidates having detailed knowledge of different types of veto and their uses. Many candidates stated that its threat is a weapon and that it must be used sparingly and thereby questioned its importance. This was well-rewarded. Examples were pertinent and recent.

Part (b) The candidates who chose this question were knowledgeable about the Cabinet and EXOP, showing detailed understanding of the roles and importance of both. Those candidates that weighed up the relative importance of them against each other scored well. Those that explained the strengths and weaknesses of each separately did less well.

Q.4 The Judicial Branch: the Supreme Court

Part (a) Answers here were generally good on knowledge and scored well for AO1. However, many candidates got 'bogged down' in listing examples of judicial review in practice rather than using these to exemplify the importance of this power of the Supreme Court, or in describing the judicial activism or restraint of past courts.

Part (b) This question was very well done by most candidates. Even weaker candidates were able to produce good surveys of the powers and limitations of the Supreme Court. More able candidates addressed the issue in the question of whether the unelected nature of the Supreme Court is a cause for concern or not. There was excellent knowledge and deployment of very relevant individual cases, as well as discussions about the limitations placed on the Court by the fact of its legal role and its adherence to precedent.



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