



# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

**GOVERNMENT & POLITICS  
AS/Advanced**

**JANUARY 2011**

## **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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## AS Level

### General Comments

On GP1, Questions 1 and 2 were almost equally popular, followed by Question 4. Less than 20% of candidates attempted Question 3. All four questions were about equal in terms of their accessibility for candidates and the mean mark for each question was very similar.

More candidates than in previous series were able to sustain their efforts across the three parts of their chosen two questions. Candidates are using their time in the examination more effectively. As noted in previous Examiners' Reports, a few minutes spent planning for Part (b) and Part (c) responses would improve the focus and clarity of many answers.

### Part (a) Responses

The general improvement in the quality of Part (a) answers noted in the last Examiners' Report has continued. 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. Many candidates consistently earned 4 or 5 marks in both questions. These answers were, again, of a slightly higher quality on GP2 than on GP1, as noted in June 2010.

### Part (b) Responses

As noted in previous Examiners' Reports, Part (b) answers are improving in quality.

However, the lower scoring answers in this series tended to do one of the following:

- seize on just one reason or point, and 'do that one to death', without supplying range;
- write an argumentative essay with introduction and conclusion. Candidates are reminded that this approach is required only for Part (c);
- write a descriptive account of the topic with little attempt to explain.

The advice to candidates has always been that about three reasons or factors, well-chosen and well-explained and exemplified, is enough to gain 10 marks. The focus of the answer should be explaining 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) Responses

As noted in previous Examiners' Reports, 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. This is very pleasing. In general, candidates' knowledge and understanding of Welsh government and politics is improving every series.

More candidates than in previous series are trying hard to explain, exemplify and link their points to the question set. However, the issues associated with the techniques for this part of the question, and noted in previous series, still remain for many candidates. Too many candidates learn class notes on a topic and then produce these in answer to any question set. Candidates and teachers are reminded that the generic mark scheme awards more than half the communication, relative to the specific question on the paper. It remains the case that those candidates that can select and apply their knowledge and understanding to an analysis of the specific question set, in an organised and sustained way, will achieve Level 3. Some candidates with very good knowledge of a topic are scoring Level 2 marks in Part (c) for AO2 and AO3 because they fail to select and deploy their knowledge appropriately for the question in front of them.

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**General Certificate of Education**  
**January 2011**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

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**Unit Statistics**

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP1	65	80	49.5

**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: People, Politics and Participation

### General Comments

Candidates will need to practice (in coursework, homework and in test conditions) the skills associated with building and sustaining a focused argument and counter-argument(s) to a specific question. It is advised that candidates address the angle taken in the question first, then analyse counter-arguments, although this is not the only way in which these questions can be approached. The responses to GP1 questions 1c and 2c suffered from candidates addressing issues other than the one in the question first. This approach can lead to 'drift' and, therefore, a lack of focus. 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, and that there is sufficient discussion of the factor in the question– would improve the marks of some candidates for AO2.

Candidates need to present up-to-date examples consistently in support of points made to access Level 3 marks for AO1. AO3 marks are awarded in part (c) only. Candidates need to provide a well-structured answer that is properly paragraphed and includes a conclusion on the question, and they need to use political vocabulary wherever they can, to access fully all marks available.

A significant number of part (c) responses lacked any paragraphing at all, and had no conclusion at all.

### Q.1 Participation and Voting Behaviour

- (a) Most candidates knew the term, could develop it sufficiently, and gave an example such as the socio-economic and educational background of MPs or the coalition government at Westminster, or examples of military or religious elites in power elsewhere.
- (b) Most candidates used the extract well to explain features such as limited government, and representation through elections. Points from beyond the extract were fewer in number, although some candidates referred to choice of candidates at elections and universal suffrage.
- (c) Answers to this question were disappointing on the whole in their range, focus on the question, and in the use of up-to-date evidence. Most candidates were able to explain the role of class, although many began with this and spent over-long on it, not really addressing the 'rational and issue-based' core of the question sufficiently quickly. Candidates are well-prepared in the various determinants of voting behaviour, but many answers gave no indication of **the extent to which** voting behaviour is determined by any one, or combination of, these determinants. Few candidates were able to refer to models of voting behaviour such as the Valence model.

## Q.2 Electoral Systems

- (a) Most answers were good to excellent with candidates able to define and exemplify this term well. Many candidates used percentage turnout and voting statistics accurately.
- (b) This question was done well, with candidates able to exploit the extract, as well as add their own ideas such as when a party is split on an issue; when there is a manifesto promise to hold a referendum etc. Most candidates scored well.
- (c) This question produced some excellent answers from candidates who planned and thought about it. However, many answers were disappointing. They tended to drift into general discussions of the pros and cons of FPTP and AMS with marginal relevance to the question. The better responses noted the effects in producing coalition governments at Westminster, as well as in the nations of the UK, and the effects on the Labour Party. Very few candidates noted the effects of different electoral systems around the UK on the nationalist parties, surprisingly, and some candidates did not mention Wales at all. This was a shame as there was a good opportunity here to do so.

## Q.3 Political Parties in Wales and the UK

Very few candidates attempted question 3.

- (a) Most candidates could define and develop the term, but strangely, few could provide a valid example, such as socialism.
- (b) The extract was exploited well to explain the aims of Plaid Cymru that it hinted at and stated. Candidates struggled to go beyond it, and to explain Plaid Cymru's aims with regard to the Welsh language, or the party's aims for the future of Wales within the union, or the future of the National Assembly.
- (c) This question is a good example of where better planning would have benefited candidates. There is an expectation that candidates will have studied the principal policies of the main parties, and have some awareness of differential policies between the parties in Wales and on a UK-wide scale. However, few candidates managed a response that demonstrated much depth or range, despite the opportunity again to show knowledge and understanding of the politics of Wales.

## Q.4 Pressure Groups and Protest Movements

- (a) This question produced many good answers with candidates clearly appreciating the term and demonstrating sound contextual knowledge
- (b) This question was well done. Many candidates were able to explain the clear difference from the extract ( that of access and publicity strategies) whilst developing their answer further to include other differences such as levels of funding, commitment and number of members, levels of influence over policy etc.
- (c) This question was done well on the whole. Most responses demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of the media to groups such as Fathers 4 Justice, and the relative lack of importance to groups such as the BMA. Candidates were also able to identify other factors that have an impact such as access to policy-makers. There were some valid and interesting local examples from Wales. There was relatively little discussion of the changing nature of pressure groups with the recent upsurge in popular protest and its use of the new media. Some candidates spent time on examples of non-political pressure groups which did not score highly. Nevertheless, many candidates scored well here.

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**Unit Statistics**

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP2	51	80	46.5

**Grade Ranges**

A	59
B	53
C	47
D	42
E	37

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

## GP2: Governing Modern Wales

### General Comments

On GP2 questions 1 and 2 were an attractive combination to candidates. A significant number answered question 3, but there were no candidates for question 4. Question 3 proved the more accessible of the three questions for candidates, and also had the higher mean mark.

#### Q.1 The British Constitution

- (a) Many candidates scored well on this question, they knew about conventions and were able to develop their answer and give a valid example
- (b) A high proportion of candidates ignored the instruction in the question which is to use the extract as well as their own knowledge. Many wrote entirely about devolution which was in the extract, and developed no further points. This restricted the mark they were able to obtain. There were also some very sound responses that identified a variety of ways, including the increasing role of the judiciary, and membership of the EU.
- (c) This question was answered generally well, with many candidates making a real effort to focus their arguments. There was good range to many answers, but less depth on the whole. Some responses presented a series of paragraphs on a range of factors in a list-like way without really explaining how these protect citizens from the excessive powers of government (or not).

#### Q.2 Parliamentary Structures in Wales and the UK

- (a) Candidates scored well on this question. They were well aware of how constituency AMs are elected and the difference with a regional AM. Most cited their local constituency AM as their example. A very few answers dealt only with MPs at Westminster which was not what the extract or question were about.
- (b) Relatively few answers moved much beyond the extract here. Many candidates focused almost exclusively on the role of representation, which was in the extract. Few developed much about the role of AMs in legislation or scrutiny, or any perceived differences in the roles of constituency and regional AMs.
- (c) Candidates did quite well on this question. Most were able to develop different viewpoints, and showed good contextual knowledge of circumstances that make executive domination difficult, such as low majorities or coalition government. One or two answers became responses on the powers of the Prime Minister, which is not in the scope of this topic. This particular question also saw a number of generalised responses with next to no examples.

### Q.3 The Core Executives in Wales and Westminster

- (a) Most candidates answered this well, with clear understanding that Welsh Ministers have responsibilities within a portfolio and make up the government of Wales. Most candidates could name a current Welsh government minister. One or two candidates confused Welsh ministers with AMs in general.
- (b) This question was done very well. The prompts in the question were developed and candidates added a variety of other reasons from their own knowledge which were almost always well-exemplified with pertinent choices such as the resignations of Clare Short and Robin Cook, or that of Estelle Morris. Some candidates showed good up-to-date knowledge of the resignation of David Laws.
- (c) Most answers to this question were sound, with the differing viewpoints being well-exemplified from examples of recent Prime Ministers. There was a concentration on the Thatcher, Major and Blair premierships. No candidate showed much awareness of Brown as Prime Minister. Candidates' knowledge about the core executive as a whole – beyond just the Prime Minister – is still weak, and is an area that teachers are advised to develop further.

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

No candidates answered this question.

## A2 Level

### General Comments

The quality of answers at A2 Level in this series was a bit disappointing overall. This is a 50% module, taken by the majority of candidates after only a few months of study, and many find the extra demands of the A2 standard difficult. The standard of response expected at A2 is higher than at AS Level. Nevertheless, there were also some extremely good answers from candidates who had obviously done some independent work.

As in previous series, where candidates did not score as highly as they might have wished, it was 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 (b) part of the A2 papers than on 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) Responses

The majority of candidates at A2 level produced part (a) answers of a suitable length. The marks are weighted in favour of AO1, so the expectation is of a response with depth and detail of factual support, where specific facts are marshalled in support of the explanation, rather than generalised descriptions. Some, but not all, candidates were able to do this consistently.

Candidates should be encouraged to utilise explanatory vocabulary, 'this is important because...', 'this leads to...', 'as a result...' etc. in order to access the higher marks available for AO2.

Some candidates are providing lengthy, descriptive introductions. This wastes time in this part. Candidates are reminded to focus straightaway on the question set in this part, and advice to candidates remains that they should seek to develop 3-4 points of explanation. A paragraphed structure is advised.

### Part (b) Responses

Most candidates are able to structure their response using paragraphing, and including an introduction and a conclusion. However, it remains the case that many candidates fail to get to grips with the issue(s) in the questions set in a direct and highly focused manner.

Candidates are urged to:

- ask themselves what the question is really getting at, mull it over before committing pen to paper, even put the question in their own words in a plan so that they are very clear about what the issues and differing viewpoints are
- plan their response before they write it fully. There is very little evidence that candidates plan, even for a minute or two, and yet this would improve the focus, range and sophistication of many essays
- engage with the question directly at all times: use the wording of the question, or a variation on it, to show that the answer is focused. Do not answer a question that is not on the paper
- avoid 'telling the story', e.g. describing in detail the process of legislating in Congress, or the history of the Founding Fathers. This lapsing into tangential narrative wastes time when every sentence must earn marks in relation to the question set because of time constraints
- avoid sprinkling or listing examples without explaining why these are the best examples to choose and how they illustrate the point being made.

Significant numbers of candidates in this series had generalised and partial understanding of the topics. Thus they did not demonstrate the depth and range of understanding of recent American government and politics, appropriate to higher levels of marks at A2. This needs to be shown in their selection and development of points, choice and explanation of examples, and construction of a relatively sophisticated discussion around the issues as opposed to a generalised conversation with the examiner. There are many ways to approach answering the part (b) questions at A2, but the majority of candidates would do well to remember that the issue or view in the question needs to be dealt with early on in the response, so that the clarity and direction of the response are obvious.

It remains the case that those candidates that earn high Level 3 marks are the ones who adopt an analytical and evaluative approach throughout their response, and are fully focused on the question in front of them, providing well-selected and well-explained arguments and counter-arguments, 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. Their answers have range and depth. Candidates are strongly encouraged to research for themselves, as this is really how they will develop the greater understanding required at this level. Weaker candidates tend to produce lists, 'another reason is...' etc.

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP3	1	80	58

**Grade Ranges**

A	57
B	51
C	45
D	40
E	35

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### **GP3a: The Politics of the USA**

There was only one candidate for this paper in this series.

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GP4	57	80	46.4

**Grade Ranges**

A	57
B	52
C	47
D	42
E	37

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## GP4a: The Government of the USA

On paper GP4a the combination of questions 1 and 4 was very popular as usual. There were more responses to question 2 on Congress than usual, but question 3 on the Executive attracted few candidates. Question 2 proved the most accessible to candidates, and the mean mark was the highest, with questions 1 and 4 being equally accessible, and question 3 the least accessible.

There were more occasions than in the past of candidates answering a question on one topic using mainly material from another, e.g. answering GP4a question 1 part (b) on whether the constitution limits government too much by listing the powers of the president. Whilst there are obviously overlaps between topics, candidates need to ensure that they clearly focus their responses on the topic.

### Q.1 The Constitutional Framework of the US Government

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain a number of aspects of the role of the Supreme Court in relation to the Constitution, such as its position as the guardian of rights, or the body that gives the Constitution a modern interpretation. Some poorer answers lapsed into narrative of the early development of the Supreme Court which was not relevant.
- (b) Most candidates were able to focus on the issue in the question and demonstrate at least how the Constitution does limit government. There were many answers that dealt almost entirely with the system of checks and balances, and failed to provide a range of ways in which the Constitution limits government, such as federalism or the entrenched protection of rights. Other viewpoints were less well-developed, such as the ability of the Constitution to offer flexibility in the exercise of power to both the president and Congress, or the development of power within American government beyond the confines of the Constitution such as in the operation of the federal bureaucracy. Many candidates had a fairly narrow view of the Constitution, with sound specific knowledge of small parts of it, but failed to see the broader picture of how the Constitution actually works in practice today. One or two candidates sustained a discussion of the viability of the Constitution, with its emphasis on limited government, in relation to the global position of the USA today and the need for federal solutions e.g. in healthcare. Answers that tended towards sophistication and pertinence were rewarded. There were a number of historical examples given, such as Woodrow Wilson's dealings with Congress over the League of Nations, which struggled to earn marks, and a significant number of one-sided responses which scored low marks, or answers to questions that were not on the paper.

Q.2 The Legislative Branch of Government: US Congress

- (a) Many candidates were able to describe what filibuster and cloture are, but fewer were able to explain their importance, especially in relation to the increase in their use in the last 20 years, or the experience a president can face in trying to manage his legislative programme and muster supermajorities when control of the Senate is in the balance.
- (b) Discussions tended to revolve around the roles of Congressmen in answer to this question. There was much discussion of their responsiveness to constituency pressure through frequent election, 'bringing home the bacon' etc. Comparatively, there was little discussion of the representative function of Senators, and especially regarding their function of representing states' interests as opposed to electors specifically. Some candidates had relevant, detailed knowledge of specific Congressmen and women, and Senators. This was credited. There was little discussion of who, or what else, Senators and Congressmen could be said to represent, or how **well** they actually represent their electors. Again, as with Question 1, candidates need to be encouraged to see the wider picture and to look beyond the basic description of processes.

Q.3 The Executive Branch of Government

- (a) Few candidates answered this question, and their knowledge and understanding of the specifics of the role of the federal bureaucracy were sketchy.
- (b) The main emphasis of responses to this question was the foreign policy role of the president, with most answers discussing very little else. There is a need for range as well as depth to access top marks. Some candidates discussed the checks and balances as they impact on the President. The main conclusion reached was that presidents experience massive constraints at home and are therefore bound to fail. There was little development of any circumstances that allow a president to succeed in the domestic policy sphere, and a real lack of discussion of specific examples of success/ failure amongst a range of presidents.

Q.4 The Judicial Branch of Government: the Supreme Court

- (a) This was the best-answered part (a). Many candidates were able to give sensible reasons why some Supreme Courts interpret the Constitution more strictly than others, which included quite detailed explanations of strict construction and judicial restraint. Some candidates displayed detailed, relevant and accurate knowledge of previous Supreme Courts and the influence of Chief Justices. The aspects of the Court's relationship with the society within which it operates, and the view of the Court as a legal rather than a political body, were less well-explored.

- (b) This question produced a large number of competent responses but a disappointingly small number of really good responses. Most candidates were able to illustrate how the Supreme Court protects some civil liberties by referring to some of the amendments of the Bill of Rights and/ or some landmark cases. However, relatively few candidates showed knowledge of any recent Supreme Court cases, many preferring to base their answers on 'old' cases such as Brown vs the Board of Education, or even Marbury vs Madison and the Dred Scott case, and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War Two. Candidates should be encouraged to widen their knowledge of the Supreme Court's decisions, and especially more recent landmark cases such as Lawrence vs Texas, Citizens United vs F.E.C. or MacDonald vs Chicago, to name just a few. Many answers considered only a narrow range of rights, either to racial equality or abortion mainly, with a somewhat surprising lack of attention to first amendment rights. Most candidates struggled to analyse **how effectively** the Supreme Court protects the rights of citizens, with few candidates going beyond the fact that the Supreme Court cannot enforce its decisions, for example Little Rock 1957. No candidates explored how Roe vs Wade has been undermined bit by bit, or how decisions to protect the rights of some groups have the effect of undermining the rights of others. As with Question 1, there were some answers that were one-sided, simply agreeing that the Supreme Court does not protect citizens' rights well enough, without giving differing viewpoints. This unfortunately restricts the marks that can be awarded.

## **Overall Recommendations on How to Improve for Both AS and A2**

### **Students**

1. Time management skills; answer only the question asked to that time is not wasted.
2. Understanding of command terms.
3. Specific requirements of the skills required by the questions.
4. Examination practice so that the specific question is answered and not just a generic response produced.
5. Write legibly and with clarity.

### **Teachers**

1. INSET (now called CPD) – see details online.
2. Use the Teacher Guidance booklet (online).
3. Use this Examiners' Report and previous ones.
4. Use the Mark Schemes (online) from this series and previous ones.
5. Learn how to use the item level data – ask your Examinations Officer for the password to the secure website.
6. If in doubt, ask.

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