



# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

## **GOVERNMENT & POLITICS AS/Advanced**

**JANUARY 2012**

## **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

Whilst many candidates performed well across the whole paper in the January examinations, the demands of an AS level unit taken after effectively one term of study proved difficult for some. In general, many candidates acquired adequate subject knowledge but their skills of selecting, deploying and arguing a case by using that knowledge were less well-developed.

There were still a few scripts where handwriting proved to be an issue. Candidates are reminded that their work needs to be legible. A significant number of candidates struggled in parts (b) and (c) with paragraphing. Explanations and arguments at this level need to be organised and structured.

### Part (a)

Responses continue to show an improvement. Most candidates scored well on both their part (a) answers. The target Assessment Objective is AO1, so candidates need to demonstrate their specific knowledge of the term in a few sentences, and many are now doing this.

### Part (b)

There were more candidates this time who listed reasons for their part (b) answers. It is better to develop two or three reasons or factors than to list six. The generic mark scheme states that answers at the top level must be detailed. It is difficult to achieve this with a list. The target skill is explanation, and this is unlikely to be demonstrated in a list. Some candidates are still wasting precious time in part (b) by writing an introduction or providing a two-sided argument. Neither is needed in part (b). Candidates should focus on what the question is asking straight away, and should not get side-tracked into the history or tangential issues. For example, where the question asks for an explanation of the disadvantages of something, candidates score no marks for writing about the advantages as well. Candidates need to understand the importance in an examination of focus on the question and good use of time, as well as exactly what the marks are allocated for.

### Part (c)

Some candidates find the demands of organised essay-writing difficult, and teachers are advised to spend time developing these skills, as well as teaching the content of the course. Many candidates have adequate knowledge but struggle to make the best use of it in response to the specific questions under examination conditions. They need practice at selecting and deploying relevant arguments and evidence, from the right topic area, under pressure. It is clear that many candidates begin to write without having adequately thought about exactly what the question is asking them. Consequently, their essays do not focus on the relevant arguments directly enough. They provide a series of descriptive paragraphs rather than a discussion of the issues raised by the question. It is recommended that adequate time is given in class to developing candidates' skills of quickly decoding the question. To achieve the top levels, candidates need to craft a two-sided discussion of the issues raised in the question, making it clear how their paragraphs answer the question, and illustrating their arguments with relevant description, explanation and examples. Some candidates are able to fully explain how their chosen examples provide proof of the point they are making, by doing more than just naming them. This approach is to be encouraged. Candidates need to have a range of specific factual evidence at their fingertips when they sit the examination.

Teachers are reminded about the availability of item-level data for all papers on the WJEC secure website.

**It is recommended that teachers refer to the question paper and read the published markscheme, in conjunction with the comments in the Examiners' Report.**

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**Unit Statistics**

The following statistics include all candidates entered for the unit, whether or not they 'cashed in' for an award. The attention of centres is drawn to the fact that the statistics listed should be viewed strictly within the context of this unit and that differences will undoubtedly occur between one year and the next and also between subjects in the same year.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP1	108	80	50.3

**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.*

## GP1

On GP1 Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular. Less than 20% of candidates attempted Question 3, and just under 50% chose Question 4. Fewer candidates than usual chose Question 4, where a diagram provided the extract rather than a piece of text. However, all four questions were about equal in terms of their accessibility for candidates, and the mean mark for each question was very similar.

- Q.1
- (a) Most candidates were able to define this term and develop a description. Many gave a valid example and scored highly.
  - (b) There were some excellent answers that explained changes from deeply ingrained patterns of voting in the past to more unpredictable patterns now. Many candidates wrote well about the reasons why party leaders are now more important, for instance. Very few candidates mentioned the different electoral systems and differential voting in different elections as a reason. Some candidates confused volatility with apathy.
  - (c) Most candidates accessed this question well and were aware of a range of relevant factors on both sides. Many candidates, however, described the factors without weighing up which are more important, as the question asks. There was an over-concentration on issues as a short-term factor and little development of the roles of leaders or a good campaign. As noted in previous series, candidates need to show the effects of factors they describe in some specific elections.
- Q.2
- (a) Many candidates were able to describe the term and gain high marks. Most confined their development of the term to the workings of coalition governments, developing the points in the passage with understanding.
  - (b) Many candidates answered this question well, using the prompts in the passage as well as their own knowledge and illustrating their explanation with relevant examples from the UK and/or Wales. A few candidates drifted into the history of coalitions in the UK, or into the disadvantages of them, neither of which focus on the question asked, and so did not score marks for this.
  - (c) This question was well done by the majority of candidates who were able to present a range of valid arguments on both sides. In some answers, evidence was a bit thin, especially from more recent referendums.
- Q.3
- (a) Of those candidates that chose this question, most were able to describe this term very well, with examples.
  - (b) The passage provided some useful prompts here, and most candidates took advantage of this. The point made in the passage that the major parties have developed policies in the areas that minor parties have often made their name in was under-developed. Many candidates were able to extend their answer by adding points from their own knowledge such as the effects of electoral systems.
  - (c) Most candidates found it easier to develop the argument that political parties do not have any useful role by explaining levels of distrust of politicians and the growing popularity of pressure groups. The counter-argument was under-developed by comparison – that they provide information and choice for voters, a route to political leadership, they can be fundamental in establishing governments that work such as coalitions etc.

- Q.4 (a) Many candidates did well on this question, broadening their description out from the diagram to the wider context of lobbying in politics and providing examples of pressure group lobbying.
- (b) This question was done well. Most candidates focused on the importance to pressure groups of links with government and did not just describe what those are. Good use was made of the prompts in the diagram about access at different stages and potential influence over a bill, as well as points from candidates' own knowledge, such as the chance to give expert advice, or the greater chance of influence compared to 'outsider' methods.
- (c) In general, answers to this question were a bit disappointing. There was a mechanical listing and description of the factors that generally affect pressure group influence, but little evidence or analysis of that influence specifically. Social movements received scant attention again. Some candidates confused media attention with political influence and did not make the link to catching the popular imagination and possibly affecting voting. Some candidates were able to address membership and resources specifically, and referred to high-profile celebrity endorsement, vast numbers of individual members or economic importance of members as important factors, with examples.

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP2	70	80	44.9

**Grade Ranges**

A	56
B	50
C	44
D	39
E	34

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

## GP2

On GP2, Questions 1 and 2 were very popular. Question 3 was attempted by just over a third of candidates, but there was only one attempt at Question 4. Question 3 proved less accessible than other questions, but by a small margin, and the mean marks were similar for all questions.

- Q.1 (a) As expected, the majority of candidates dealt well with this term. Some developed a good description showing their understanding of the context of devolution (e.g. the West Lothian Question) as well as the current workings of it. Most candidates scored well.
- (b) This question elicited some good responses with knowledge of examples of the impact of the Human Rights Act. A few candidates drifted into the history of it or a list of what it protects and this wastes time in an examination.
- (c) Essay questions on the British Constitution prove difficult for candidates at this level in most series. There tends, as this year, to be a high proportion of 'model answer' type responses, regardless of what the question asks, that deal primarily with the theory of the written vs. unwritten constitution debate, rather than the reality of how the British Constitution works today. Few candidates were really able to engage with the extent to which the British Constitution is codified already, and debate whether this is sufficient.
- Q.2 (a) Fewer answers to this question scored top marks compared to other part (a) questions. Most candidates knew what the term meant but a significant number illustrated their response with examples of devolved matters.
- (b) The petition system in Wales is becoming more well-known by candidates and this was reflected in the generally high standard of response. Some candidates made good use of valid local examples of petitions, and the Welsh charge for carrier bags resulting from a petition was well-used as an example. Most candidates tried to focus their answer on how the system enhances democracy and representation, a few stuck to describing the process.
- (c) Many of the responses to this question lacked discipline. Candidates struggled to provide a two-sided answer that stayed within the topic area. Many strayed into either GP1 participation and democracy material, or into the GP2 Core Executive topic. This is not a question about Prime Ministers. Candidates and teachers are reminded that this topic is about how effectively Parliament in the UK and the Assembly in Wales perform their three core functions of legislation, scrutiny and representation. The focus is on Parliament/ Executive relationships, not on dominant Prime Ministers or alleged government tyranny over the people. Some candidates seemed unaware of the concept of 'elective dictatorship', although it is listed in the specification.

- Q.3 (a) This term presented no problems for candidates and many answers were comprehensive, with a relevant example in a few sentences. They scored well.
- (b) Most candidates made good use of the prompts in the extract, although few referred to concepts such as individual or collective responsibility. Most answers were focused around issues of ministerial resignation and reshuffle by necessity. A few candidates explained how this is part of a Prime Minister's power – to get a like-minded Cabinet to push through radical change.
- (c) Most answers to this question were good two-sided surveys of power at the top of the executives in Wales and Westminster. Some candidates were able to address the 'presidential' part of the question well by debating whether this is even possible in a parliamentary system, and with coalition governments, and the extent to which the media now make all leaders into quasi-presidential figures. Most candidates were more adept at developing the argument that political leadership is becoming more presidential, than in developing the constraints upon it.
- Q.4 Teachers are advised to consult the published mark scheme for suggestions of creditworthy answers to each part of Question 4.

## A2 LEVEL

### General Comments

Whilst some candidates performed well across the whole paper in the January examinations, the demands of an A2 level unit taken after effectively one term of study proved difficult for some. In general, most candidates acquired adequate subject knowledge but do not really have the depth of understanding required at the A2 level. Their skills of selecting, deploying and analysing their material were often no more developed than at AS level. In this series there were no candidates for papers GP3b or GP4b.

### Part (a)

Answers are improving in general, as has been noted in previous series. Most candidates are engaged with the question and explained a range of relevant reasons or factors, typically around three. Candidates that did well offered a concise and highly relevant answer, firmly focused on explaining the issue in the question. Candidates that did less well tended to offer description, and material that was almost, but not quite, relevant. They tended to offer weaker factors or points and displayed a less secure understanding of the topic, with few examples.

### Part (b)

Presented a challenge for most candidates. They need to display depth and range of knowledge, appropriate to A2 level, as well as clarity and organisation of arguments and conclusions to be awarded the top levels. It is unlikely that this can be consistently achieved across two questions at this level without practice and the candidates' own research and effort. There were more answers in this series in part (b) that wasted time writing several paragraphs arguing the terms of the question before focusing on the debate. There is a premium on relevance and focus in both parts, as time is short. Candidates should make sure that every paragraph and sentence counts. Part (b) is primarily a discussion and analysis of issues. There are fewer marks for facts than at AS level, and candidates and teachers are reminded that skills need to be practised and displayed to earn the AO2 and AO3 marks. Large chunks of description and processes score low marks. Candidates will need guidance about how to structure and craft a two-sided analytical discussion with detailed factual knowledge as the support and proof of the points they are making. Many candidates have difficulty applying their knowledge to answering the question set at the appropriate level, and time needs to be allocated in class to the skills required. It needs to be clear to the examiner how every paragraph answers the question set directly. Candidates that score the top marks usually show a high degree of independent thinking, a secure command of the topic material and evidence of their own research in their answers. They understand the issues and can manipulate the material they know to focus directly on the question. Their answers are driven by argument and discussion and are fairly balanced, two-sided and confident. They rarely lose focus. Candidates that score low marks tend to offer descriptive answers or lists of assertions. Their answers often lack direction and are, in reality, lists of some examples and processes they know. Model answers are inadvisable at this level and may even restrict the attainment of most candidates.

Candidates' knowledge in this subject needs to be very up-to-date. It was surprising in this series that for the USA papers there were few answers that showed much knowledge of the Tea Party, or even of Obama's presidency. Some historical material is relevant and needs to be there, but primarily this course is about the government and politics of the USA today. Recommended websites and other materials can be found in the Teacher Guide.

Teachers are reminded of the value of marked scripts from previous series as a tool to help candidates evaluate the features of good responses. Item-level data for all papers is available on the WJEC secure website. The Teacher Guide provides useful advice on preparing for the examinations and the skills required.

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**Unit Statistics**

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP3	7	80	44.9

**Grade Ranges**

A	57
B	52
C	47
D	42
E	37

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

### GP3

The number of entries for this paper in this series was very small, and it is therefore unwise to make deductions about trends. However, questions 2 and 3 were equally popular whilst no candidates answered question 1. Question 3 proved the more difficult for candidates to access.

Q.1 No candidates attempted this question.

Q.2 (a) Most candidates answered this question quite well, showing good knowledge of the main factions. They were less certain about the reasons for this, as required in the question. In particular, few candidates were able to explain how factions have arisen as the party has struggled to respond to external events, such as the loss of the 2000 presidential election and the divisive presidency of Clinton, or the presidency of George W Bush.

(b) Many answers to this question were comprehensive in their treatment of the range of issues about which there is disagreement between the two main parties. Some were very detailed and knowledgeable about the issue of the economy. Candidates neglected disagreements within the main parties as a possible aspect of the question and there was little discussion of the views of the Tea Party.

Q.3 (a) Most candidates explained the importance of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths as factors in voting behaviour and this was quite well done. Some candidates were able to relate these trends to regions of the USA. Few candidates explored the trend of church attendance as opposed to non-church attendance, or related this factor to the supposedly secular nature of the context of US politics.

(b) Most answers to this question dealt mainly with the 'short term factors' aspect and did this well, citing issues, candidate-centred elections and in some cases the decline of party identification. Fewer candidates were confident when addressing the 'core voting coalitions' part of the question, and there were few detailed discussions of what these are and how they are changing.

Q.4 (a) A range of reasons was offered in answer to this question, including the 'revolving door' syndrome, and the numerous access points that a federal system affords, amongst others. Most candidates could provide a range, although the quality of the examples and detail was less secure.

(b) This question was well done on the whole. Most candidates had good detailed knowledge of some influential corporate groups and their methods, and could discuss the success of various issue groups such as those associated with Civil Rights. The counter-arguments in each case were less well-argued, however.

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
GP4	81	80	47.1

**Grade Ranges**

A	56
B	50
C	44
D	39
E	34

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

## GP4

The entry for this paper in this series was healthy. Question 1 was the more popular, with two thirds of candidates attempting it. Questions 2 and 4 were then equally popular, with few candidates attempting question 3. Questions 1, 3 and 4 proved equally accessible to candidates whilst Question 2 proved more difficult for them to access.

- Q.1 (a) There was an over-concentration on describing the history of the different types of federalism in answer to this question. The skill focus is explanation, and this is a sub-question on the Constitution. Candidates should try to tie their answers more closely to this.
- (b) This question was generally well done, with most candidates able to present a two-sided debate. As noted elsewhere, there was a lack of up-to-date examples of how the Constitution has been relevant or not to government today. For instance, surprisingly few candidates cited the final version of Obama's healthcare measures as an example of how the Constitution ensures that legislation is not dominated by one individual, or how this illustrates the irrelevance of the Constitution to the necessity of twenty-first century 'big government'.
- Q.2 (a) This question has appeared on this paper before and was still poorly done this time. Candidates seem unaware of the details of Congressional oversight – what it is and how important it is. Consequently, many answers over-concentrated on the legislative process again. Some candidates were able to cite impeachment and this was credited, but the work of Congressional Committees in overseeing the Executive branch was not well-understood.
- (b) Most candidates were able to pinpoint stages of the legislative process where legislation can fail or be changed, and some cited the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act following 9/11 as an example of radical legislation passing quickly. In general, most answers were lacking in range of material, and in their focus on how the legislative process (with its frequent elections, need to log-roll, possible gridlock, etc.) makes legislating difficult. Few candidates speculated on why this might have been built into the system, or on the conditions needed to be able to pass radical legislation quickly.
- Q.3 (a) A range of reasons was explained by most candidates in answer to this question, in particular the size and geographic spread of the Federal Bureaucracy, and the problems of clientilism and 'going native'. Examples were a bit thin on the ground.
- (b) Again, this question was generally well done with many candidates providing a reasoned two-sided response with a range of factors on both sides. There was a high proportion of fairly generalised answers that listed the factors with some explanation, and did not really show an understanding of how the ideas related to specific presidencies.

- Q.4 (a) Responses to this question were good. Many candidates could explain a range of ways in which the Supreme Court protects rights and many chose to explain how the Supreme Court protects the rights of citizens, the states, minorities as their organising framework. There was discussion of Due Process, enumerated and un-enumerated rights, the Bill of Rights etc. Some candidates said that the Supreme Court protects rights when it is judicially active – a valid argument.
- (b) Responses to this question were mixed. Some candidates chose to dispute the term ‘guardian’ in the question and failed to focus straight away on what is the main issue – whether or not the Supreme Court acts impartially. Those that did well asserted that the Supreme Court is a legal body and gave examples of this in action, they were able to explain the concept of judicial restraint and in their counter-argument, judicial activism, and were able to analyse whether the Court leads or follows public opinion in the USA.



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