



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS AS/Advanced

JANUARY 2013

Statistical Information

The Examiner's Report may refer in general terms to statistical outcomes. Statistical information on candidates' performances in all examination components (whether internally or externally assessed) is provided 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 – GP1 & GP2

General Comments

Whilst many candidates perform well across the whole paper in the January examinations, the demands of an AS level unit taken after effectively one term of study proves difficult for some. In general, most candidates were able to cope with these demands in this series, but there are still some candidates whose subject knowledge is adequate but their skills of selecting, deploying and arguing a case by using that knowledge are less well-developed. In particular, there are significant numbers of candidates who struggle both with part (b) and part (c) where they haven't met that exact question before. The ability to select, deploy and apply what they know is a real test for many candidates at AS level, and especially so after only just over a term of study.

There were more scripts where handwriting proved to be an issue, including a few illegible scripts. Candidates are reminded that their work needs to be legible, and the use of a laptop might help some candidates in making sure that their work can be read, and credited appropriately. Teachers should deal with this matter as a crucial part of preparing their candidates for the external examinations to ensure that appropriate credit is given.

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. There is a demand on candidates' literacy skills for parts (b) and (c). Candidates that score well obviously satisfy the top levels of the mark scheme in terms of the range and depth of their knowledge and arguments, but they also write fluently in an organised and purposeful way that addresses the question directly throughout, using appropriate and accurate vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. There are too many answers where candidates engage in a 'stream of consciousness' response in a conversational tone which is immature in writing style and vocabulary. Candidates are encouraged to adopt a formal, academic style, and to use appropriate and precise language. Additionally, candidates that score well craft their explanations and arguments for parts (b) and (c). They state a point and then develop that point with clear and knowledgeable explanations and well-chosen and relevant examples. Their answers do not drift off the topic; neither do they lapse into a descriptive narrative. In contrast, candidates who merely list factors with little development in depth, or who provide inadequate and generalised development of their points, do not score as well. Some candidates provide examples which are speculative and hypothetical, or try to exemplify by stating the opposite, identifying 'what it isn't'. Neither of these approaches scores as well as actual factual examples drawn from the topic content, and the better candidates exemplify their arguments with consistent, accurate detail and examples, demonstrating an understanding of the topic beyond rote-learned, generalised lists.

Part (a) responses continue to show an improvement. Most candidates score 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). The quality of part (b) answers is slowly improving. The mark scheme rewards range and depth of explanation and more candidates are now attempting to provide this. It is better to develop 2 or 3 reasons or factors than to list 6. 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 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. It is helpful if candidates think, when writing their response to this part, that they need to provide a range of 'reasons why' or 'ways in which', and develop each one. This thinking should help them to avoid a narrative response, or one where the same point or reason is re-hashed in several paragraphs. 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. More candidates than usual ignored the extract, yet it is there to help them.

Part (c). More candidates are now rising to the challenge of the part (c) question, and are structuring their arguments. Some candidates, however, 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. The part (c) response should be in the form of an essay, a clearly two-sided answer with an introduction and a conclusion, and where the paragraphs flow from one to another logically. Some 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. More candidates in this series provided one paragraph for the issue in the question, and one paragraph against, each of these containing a list of all their arguments with little development. Some candidates provided 2 or 3 examples for each side, masquerading as reasons or factors. Other candidates wrote a lot and said very little by following their point with a paragraph of narration that did not illuminate or illustrate their point at all. These strategies will not score well.

To achieve the top levels, candidates need to craft a 2-sided discussion of the issues raised in the question, making it clear how their paragraphs answer the question ('for' and 'against'), 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. Weaker candidates often choose very poor examples. Candidates need to have a range of specific factual evidence at their fingertips when they sit the examination. Answers need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of all or most of the topic material in the specification. Some good candidates are scoring lower marks than they could because they give depth but fail to explore enough range, across the topic, in their answers.

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 mark scheme, in conjunction with the comments in the Examiner's Report.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS
General Certificate of Education
January 2013
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

Principal Examiner:

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.

Unit	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
GP1			

Grade Ranges

A
B
C
D
E

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1401 (GP1)

On GP1 questions 1 and 2 were the most popular, with very few candidates attempting question 3. The highest mean mark was for question 4, but the mean for 1.2 and 3 were very similar and there were no accessibility issues.

- Q.1 (a) Many candidates answered this question well, by describing how a voter might gain a life-long loyalty to a party, citing such factors as geographical region, social class or parental influence.
- (b) It is encouraging to see many candidates coping well with a statistical extract. Most were able to utilise the prompts in the figures which suggest that 'leaders' influence voting behaviour more now than previously. Most candidates developed this point, and many added their own knowledge of other recency factors and scored well. Some candidates were not very clear about which models of voting behaviour explain recent changes. A few answers were related to reasons why people do not vote, which is not the focus here.
- (c) The majority of candidates attempted this question well, and provided a focused response dealing with the reasons behind apathy today. Fewer provided evidence of apathy in the form of any statistics. The counter-argument usually revolved around 'hapathy' and the availability of other ways of participating in politics, and these answers were rewarded well as they focused on the question. Few candidates delved a little deeper into whether there is differential apathy in different age groups or regions, or analysed the extent of partisan identification and loyalty.
- Q.2 (a) This question was well done, as you would expect, with many candidates earning 4 or 5 marks.
- (b) The majority of candidates provided a focused and detailed explanation of a range of reasons, and scored well here. A small number provided a defence of referendums as well, and this is not required and did not score.
- (c) Most candidates attempted to focus on the question here, and wrote about party systems in the different parts of the UK with knowledge and accuracy. Many were able to analyse the role of First Past the Post in promoting the two-party system at Westminster, and were able to contrast that with the effects on party systems that other electoral systems have had in the devolved nations, and with an analysis of the result of the 2010 general election. A few candidates wrote descriptive paragraphs on the various electoral systems without linking them to the question.
- Q.3 (a)(b)(c) There were too few responses to identify trends to this question. However, defining the term in part (a) caused no problems. Part (b) produced some answers that did not tackle range, though there was depth in the explanation of one point or reason. Answers to part (c) were focused, although there was not a great deal of depth about the roles that party members play, in campaigning, in candidate selection, in policy-making etc.

- Q.4 (a) This question was addressed well, with definitions being precise and accurate, and development citing a valid example in most cases, although some candidates just went for an example of a pressure group, whether they actually engage in civil disobedience or not.
- (b) The extract provided good prompts which candidates used well. The majority of responses went beyond the extract well, explaining how some pressure groups are so 'inside' that they are almost hostage groups, or the close ties between some pressure groups and a party, such as the trade unions and Labour. This question was done well.
- (c) There were good responses with detailed knowledge of the actions of a variety of groups, those who use direct action as well as those that do not. Candidates struggled, as in previous series, to analyse the extent of success that the various methods give pressure groups, though. The target skill for part (c) is analysis, and a descriptive answer of the different methods that groups use does not address this skill. Those candidates that did focus on the 'how effective' part of the question were rewarded well. Many cited Fathers4Justice, and the student protests over tuition fees in 2010 as examples where direct action has been unsuccessful, and were able to give examples of groups that use direct action and those that use their insider status to gain policy change. The best responses were very knowledgeable and focused.

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Unit	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
GP2			

Grade Ranges

A
B
C
D
E

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1402 (GP2)

There were fewer candidates for GP2 than for GP1. Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular, with slightly fewer candidates attempting question 3. No candidate attempted question 4. The mean mark was very similar for questions 1,2 and 3 and all three questions were equally accessible to candidates, with question 1 being the most accessible. This is encouraging, as candidates in previous series have struggled more with topic area 1.

- Q.1 (a) This question caused no problems for candidates. Most scored very well. Some candidates are still exemplifying the British Constitution by reference to the US Constitution – essentially illustrating what the British Constitution is not, but without saying what it is.
- (B) The prompts in the extract were used well by most candidates here. Explanations beyond the extract included the listing of rights in the Human Rights Act and the doctrine of Parliamentary Sovereignty. Some candidates developed a good explanation but then chose an example that was not particularly valid, e.g. that the British Constitution is too easy to change through convention (valid point) and that an example of this is that the Prime Minister lives at 10, Downing Street (invalid example as it is not to do with conventions that address power).
- (c) Many candidates attempted this question well, and provided structured and focused arguments which they had obviously thought about beforehand. Part (c) questions on the Constitution have, in the past, proved the more difficult option for candidates. Responses were better in this series, and it is obvious that candidates had prepared well by considering how they might organise arguments in defence and criticism of our peculiar constitution. Attention to past questions and proper preparation pays dividends under the pressure of the examination.
- Q.2 (a) Many candidates gave an accurate definition and then developed this with description and specific facts about legislatures, either in the UK or elsewhere.
- (b) The extract provided good prompts here. Most candidates developed the point that bicameral legislatures help to avoid executive dominance, but very few also noticed the point in the extract about more diverse representation for parts of a state such as regions.
- (c) Answers to this question dealt well with arguments of executive dominance through compliant majorities and the whip system mainly. However, candidates struggled to look beyond that at other arguments for executive dominance, such as the lack of power of the House of Lords, or devices for dominating the agenda in the House of Commons. Counter-arguments were thin, with very few candidates exploring the effectiveness of methods of holding the executive to account.

- Q.3 (a) The term caused no problems for candidates, and many scored 5 here and gave appropriate examples, with one or two citing Welsh cabinet ministers.
- (b) Many candidates used the extract well, and developed their explanation of how collective responsibility enables a government to present a united front. The benefits for ensuring 'joined-up' thinking and policy-making were under-explored, but most candidates were able to go beyond the extract with slightly different points about government discipline. There were few specific, factual examples though.
- (c) Most responses to this question were fairly generalised with candidates providing generalised lists of arguments on each side. The core executive is a topic in constant change and flux, and few candidates appreciate the differences in power and constraints between individual Prime Ministers, or even over the period of office of a single Prime Minister. Some candidates explored the changes to the core executive brought about by a coalition government.
- Q.4 There were no responses to this question.

A2 Level – GP3 & GP4

General Comment

Answers to both units in this series showed signs of general improvement on previous series, which is very encouraging. Nevertheless, whilst some candidates perform well across the whole paper in the January examinations, the demands of an A2 level unit taken after effectively one term of study proves difficult for some. In general, most candidates acquire 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 are often no more developed than at AS level. The skills are rewarded more highly in the part (b) question at A2 level than knowledge for its own sake is. In both parts of their answer, candidates need to engage with the question straight away, and not waste time describing the historical context at length. In particular, the quality of introductions for part (b) is generally poor as they are either too long or too descriptive, or narrate some historical context rather than engaging with arguments that the rest of the essay will address in more detail. For both parts (a) and (b), the explanation and analysis provided should develop a point that has been made. Some candidates offer support that is unrelated to the point they are making, or even which contradicts it. Examples need to be provided and explained. Lists of unsupported assertions will not gain the top levels of the mark scheme. Many candidates have a competent generalised understanding of the topics on the paper, but only answers that display consistent, specific understanding will access the top levels. Some candidates seem unfamiliar with the topic content, offering neither range nor depth in their answers. There were some significant handwriting issues in this series, with some scripts being nearly illegible. Candidates are reminded that examiners cannot credit what they cannot read and they will not guess at what might be said. Teachers and centres should ensure that the matter is dealt with as part of the examination preparation.

In this series there were no candidates for paper GP4b.

Part (a) answers continue to improve in general, as has been noted in previous series. Most candidates are engaging with the question and explaining a range of relevant reasons or factors in detail, typically around three. More candidates are attempting to provide a developed explanation of the issue in the question, rather than a description, and this will earn better marks. The best candidates are giving answers of around a side of writing which is firmly focused on the question and supported with relevant, explained examples. There are a few candidates who provide answers that are essay-length. This wastes their valuable time in the examination.

Part (b) continues to present a challenge for many candidates. There is a premium on relevance and focus as time is short. Candidates should make sure that every paragraph and sentence count. 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 of processes score low marks. The main issue for candidates seems to be at paragraph level. It is often not at all clear to the examiner whether a paragraph is an argument for or an argument against the statement in the question. Candidates often start their paragraphs with description or a statement, and leave their 'point' until the end. That is not the most effective way to ensure that the focus of the response is clear to the examiner. In addition, many candidates do not give adequate thought to how each paragraph relates to the one before and after it, making their answers disjointed. Where the candidate chooses to alternate between supporting and opposing arguments in their response, it makes sense if they first support, then oppose the same argument, but it does not make sense if they are writing random paragraphs about different arguments. Candidates also need to answer the question fairly succinctly. There was a rise in the number of 5-6 page part (b) responses. This seems a waste of valuable time in the examination and candidates should practice getting their arguments across more concisely and effectively. These are high-order literacy skills which need to be taught explicitly.

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, and they explain their arguments convincingly, they don't just state them. 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. They tend to offer description as if it is explanation and analysis. For example, a weaker candidate might assert that one factor that hinders or limits the US government is federalism. They often then describe the types of federalism that they know, and round the paragraph off with another assertion that federalism hinders US government. However, in such a paragraph the argument has not been made and sustained. Frequently, too, weaker candidates write separate paragraphs about different aspects of the same argument, rather than widening their scope to a number of different arguments. Some candidates reproduce their class notes. 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. Some historical material is relevant and needs to be there, but primarily this course is about politics today. In this series it was encouraging to see some detailed and accurate knowledge of the 2012 presidential election. 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	Entry	Max Mark	Mean Mark
GP3a			
GP3b			

Grade Ranges

A
B
C
D
E

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GP3

1403/01 The Politics of the USA

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, 3 and 4 were almost equally popular whilst few candidates attempted question 1. All questions proved accessible to candidates, although question 3 had the lower mean mark.

- Q.1 (a) This question was well done, with candidates identifying reasons for the importance of swing states such as that they can determine the nature of the campaign and even the outcome of an election. Good, accurate examples using specific factual support were given.
- (B) Many candidates provided an adequate two-sided response to this question. However, as noted in previous series, candidates' specific knowledge of specific elections tends to be poor. In addition, in answer to this question, there was little discussion of the importance of money in primaries, or of the specifics of match-funding.
- Q.2 (a) There were generally very good answers to this question, addressing a range of reasons such as the impact of federalism on parties, reasons for and the impact of factions, and the nature of US pressure group politics.
- (b) Many candidates were able to explain and analyse a range of arguments in a fairly formulaic way in answer to this question. Relatively few candidates were able to talk in detail about any independent and third party candidates beyond Perot and Nader, and many candidates even missed Nader out, despite his impact on the 2000 presidential election.
- Q.3 (a) There were many answers to this question which noted the importance of some voting groups to the parties, e.g. the importance of the black vote for the Democrats or the votes of older people for the Republicans. However, relatively few candidates appreciated the importance of voting *coalitions* as stated in the question.
- (b) The importance of the black vote was analysed well by most candidates, and the growing importance of the Hispanic vote was appreciated by many as well. Hardly any candidates addressed other racial and ethnic groupings such as the Jewish vote or the Asian-American vote. The extent of party loyalty or voter independence was under-developed as a factor. Some candidates brought in money and the media as counter-arguments. These are part of the topic content for topic 1, not for topic 3.
- Q.4 (a) Answers to this question were good, with candidates having specific knowledge of named PACs and appreciation of the importance of 'super-PACs' since 2010.
- (b) Most candidates were able to offer a good response to this question, with foreign policy and environmental pressure groups being well-known, as well as the potential influence that groups can have through offering opinion to the Supreme Court. Surprisingly, the gun lobby was hardly mentioned, and the existence of so many access points at state and local levels was overlooked.

1403/02 Ideologies

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 1 and 3 were almost equally popular whilst no candidates attempted Questions 2 and 4. Both attempted questions proved accessible to candidates.

- Q.1 (a) Many candidates showed detailed knowledge of liberalism in this answer. However, many provided a narrative of classical liberalism, and then of modern liberalism, without really pinpointing the main differences on issues.
- (b) Most answers to this question described the thinking of different sorts of liberals on this issue. Few candidates critiqued liberal thinking, and few addressed the fundamental ideological conundrum for liberals about what, if anything, the state should do.
- Q.2 (a)&(b) No candidates attempted this question.
- Q.3 (a) Candidates were able to respond well to this question, identifying and explaining a range of differences, mainly to do with the nature of society and the role of the state.
- (b) Most candidates had a good go at this question, and mainly contrasted the New Right with more traditional conservatism. Some candidates ignored the elitist part of the question altogether and instead questioned whether conservatism can be called an ideology at all, which was credited as far as possible but missed the point of the question somewhat.
- Q.4 (a)&(b) No candidates attempted this question.

1404/01 The Government of the USA

The number of entries for this paper in January has shown a healthy increase every year. This series, as usual, questions 1 and 4 were the more popular and questions 2 and 3 the least popular. The mean mark for all 4 questions was very similar, and there were no issues with accessibility.

- Q.1 (a) Candidates were able to explain a range of ways in which the US Congress is limited by the Constitution, such as federalism and the system of checks and balances.
- (b) This question was well done by most candidates, who cited the process of amendment and the existence of the Bill of Rights as hindrances. The extent to which federalism hinders or promotes effective government was under-developed. The system of checks and balances was generally seen as a hindrance. Its impact on 'good governance' was not much explored. Some candidates alleged that government is hindered by factors that are not, in fact, contained in the Constitution, such as the procedures for passing bills.
- Q.2 (a) Many candidates responded well to this question, and their answers demonstrated understanding of the impact of the power of the purse on presidential programmes and policy initiatives and on their foreign policy role, as well as its importance for the role and status of the House in Congress.
- (b) Most responses to this question were better on the 'co-operation' aspect of the work of Congress – for its relationship with the executive branch as well as for relations between the chambers – than on the 'conflict' aspect. Few candidates explored the nature of conflict within Congress.
- Q.3 (a) There is room to improve on the answers to this question. Many were not sufficiently focused on the specific role of commander-in-chief, and instead dealt with the more general and broad presidential role of chief executive. There is a need to come more up-to-date with examples of the president as commander-in-chief; beyond Pearl Harbour and the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.
- (b) Again, this question was not done as well as it might have been. Many candidates appear to know the powers of, and constraints on, presidents in a theoretical sense, but lack actual specific knowledge of the experiences of specific presidents in practice.
- Q.4 (a) Most candidates tackled this question well, explaining the Senate's use of this as a check on the president, or their concern about some candidates' qualifications for the post. However, some candidates produced paragraphs describing specific rejections rather than exploring the different reasons why the Senate might fail to confirm nominations.
- (b) Whilst the majority of candidates tackled this question well, a significant number addressed the question of whether the Supreme Court is too political, which is a different question. Only a few candidates were able to address the view of the Court as a 'legal' body as effectively as their argument about it being a political body.

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GP4			

Grade Ranges

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C
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E

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GP4

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