



# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

## **GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS AS/Advanced**

**JANUARY 2014**

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**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**General Certificate of Education**

**January 2014**

**Advanced Subsidiary**

**GP1**

*Principal Examiner:* Alison Denton

**General Comments**

It is pleasing to report that more candidates than in previous series were able to cope with the demands of the papers, and complete all their answers in the time given. In particular, there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of answers to the part (b) questions in this series, with many candidates developing at least two aspects to their answer with exemplification. Candidates' answers to the part (a) have been improving steadily and continued to do so in this series. The part (c) remains challenging to some candidates who struggle to answer the specific question set, rather than simply present rote-learned class notes. However, there were examples of excellent part (c) answers that demonstrated a wide-ranging understanding of the topic with specific and relevant knowledge.

The main issues across both the AS papers in general in this series were:

- A lack of correct numbering of candidates' answers.
- A lack of paragraphing.
- Weak literacy, for example the persistent use of 'gotten', and 'would of'.
- Disorganised responses that provide a sentence on one thing, then a sentence on something else with no factors really being developed, or that repeat points already made.
- Generalised responses, lacking depth and detail, and without relevant and up-to-date examples.
- Exemplification by showing what something is *not*, a counterfactual exemplification. On the whole, these earn few marks.
- Responses to parts (b) and (c) that deal with examples as though they are points in answer to the question.
- A lack of understanding that there is a requirement to write in a specific text type for each part – 'information text' for part (a), 'explanation text' for part (b), and 'discussion text' for part (c).
- A higher incidence of practically illegible scripts. Candidates are reminded that examiners can only award marks for text they can read and be certain about, they cannot guess what the candidate may be trying to say.

Teachers are advised to ensure that they and the candidates are familiar with the assessment objectives, their weightings, and the generic markscheme for the AS examination. This will help candidates to ensure that everything they write earns marks under the pressure of the examination. AS level candidates need plenty of practice at producing well-structured and exemplified answers within the time constraints of the examination. Candidates are reminded that success at the top levels in the AS level examination is unlikely if they rely on class notes and a reasonable memory. Candidates that perform well have clearly revised, done some independent work, and do not waste time in the examination struggling to recall the material.

**Part (a)** responses continue to show a pleasing 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)** answers showed a significant improvement this series. The skill being assessed is 'explanation', and the markscheme rewards range, depth, structure and focus of explanations. Teachers are advised to consult the Teachers' Guide for advice on how candidates might achieve these things succinctly under the time pressures of the examination. Candidates are reminded that the extract will help them, but that they need to demonstrate understanding beyond the extract to access the top marks. Candidates need to demonstrate the skill of 'explanation' in this part. They need to firstly identify, and then develop several 'ways in which....' or 'reasons why ....' that answer the question set. As assessment objectives AO1 and AO2 are equally weighted in this question, lists of undeveloped reasons will not score well for AO1, whereas lists of examples will not score well for AO2. There are still responses that provide a discussion to this part – 2 sides on this issue in the question. This is not required for part (b). If the question asks for the disadvantages of something, candidates are simply wasting valuable time by providing the advantages as well. They will not score for this. Candidates do not need to provide an introduction or a conclusion for the part (b) answer.

The **part (c)** response should be in the form of an essay; a clearly two-sided answer (a discussion) with an introduction and a conclusion, and where the paragraphs flow from one to another logically. A suitable approach would be to build a case 'for' the proposition in the question, and then a case 'against' it, and then reach a conclusion in the last paragraph, although this is not the only approach available to candidates. Some candidates begin to write without having adequately thought about exactly what the question is asking them. They are required to demonstrate depth and range of knowledge and arguments to access the top levels of the mark scheme. It follows, therefore, that a narrow range of arguments and generalised development of and support for points made will probably score level two marks at best. Candidates need to show their understanding of the topic as a whole, by selecting and deploying what they know to answer the specific question set. It is likely that some arguments will need to be developed in detail whilst other aspects will need to be 'broad-brushed', but candidates should be wary of leaving out whole chunks of the topic altogether as this is likely to restrict the mark ranges that they can be awarded. Candidates are advised to actually reach a judgement on the question set in their conclusion, and not to sit on the fence and simply repeat, in summary, all that they have already said on both sides.

Whilst more candidates are managing to provide at least one part (c) response that meets the criteria for the top levels of the mark scheme, the main issues with the part (c) responses in this series, not already referred to above are:

- Too many responses lapse easily into narrative description of processes and institutions without applying this (often accurate and detailed) knowledge to the question set.
- Quite a number of part (c) answers are essentially two long paragraphs – one ‘for’ and one ‘against’.
- It is not always clear to the examiner what point is being made that answers the question set, nor whether that candidate is providing an argument ‘for’ or ‘against’ the question. Candidates are advised to consider a ‘PEEL’ approach to paragraph writing which would make this clear to the reader, instead of leaving it to be inferred. Candidates are taking a risk if they simply leave their arguments as implied or hinted at. Examiners cannot, and should not, try to ‘read minds’.
- Some candidates do not score well because they make sweeping generalisations that are unsustainable, or because they make assertions which they fail to back up with any evidence.
- Weaker candidates do not show an awareness of the practical application of the theory and description they may have learned from class notes to the political situation today.

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.**

## 1401 (GP1)

On GP1, question 1 was the most popular, with questions 2 and 4 being almost equally popular after that. Fewer candidates attempted question 3. The mean mark for questions 1, 2 and 4 were very similar whereas question 3 had a lower mean mark and proved less accessible to candidates. The other three questions were all equally accessible for candidates.

**Q1a:** most candidates developed and exemplified this term well, although definitions overlapped with swing seats and floating voters.

**Q1b:** the extract was used well here. Some candidates went beyond the extract to explain the influence of the media in the televised debates in 2010. Few candidates explored the influence of new media.

**Q1c:** most candidates were able to argue the case 'for' quite well, citing links between region, class and ethnicity and partisanship. However, the counter-argument was argued less well with few candidates using the whole topic content to argue that other factors are more important. Genuine two-sided debate that focused only on partisan identification was credited.

**Q2a:** this question was well done on the whole, with only a few candidates focusing on 'coalition' which was not the term required in the question.

**Q2b:** the majority of candidates scored well on this question, using the prompts in the extract and moving beyond it with good exemplification of the 2010 UK coalition and the 2007 coalition in Wales. Some candidates wasted their time writing about coalition strengths.

**Q2c:** a significant number of candidates confined their answer to just FPTP, or simply trawled through descriptions of a number of UK electoral systems. On the whole the quality of answers was, therefore, disappointing.

**Q3a:** the term was well-defined and developed, with candidates understanding specific Green Party policy or naming Caroline Lucas.

**Q3b:** some candidates struggled to explain reasons beyond the extract here. UKIP was used as an example of a minor party with a strong policy platform. Some candidates cited the Liberal Democrats as a minor party.

**Q3c:** this question caused problems for candidates. Few could sustain a debate on the internal structures and processes of parties in the UK, although party structure and candidate selection are mentioned in the specification. Some candidates wrote about electoral systems and these responses did not score.

**Q4a:** this caused the most problems of the part (a)'s for candidates, with many equating 'special interests' with cause groups who use direct action.

**Q4b:** the extract prompts were well used and many candidates were able to go beyond the extract to explore use of direct action or insider status as well. Some provided a two-sided response which is not required and wastes time in the examination.

**Q4c:** most responses argued how the use of the media helps pressure groups quite well, citing examples such as the Gurkha campaign and Fathers 4 Justice. However, counter-arguments based on 'other factors' were quite thin, and overall candidates made little use of examples, even though examples are always plentiful for this topic. Few candidates addressed the 'more significant' aspect to the question.

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**General Certificate of Education**  
**January 2014**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

**GP2**

*Principal Examiner:* Alison Denton

**General Comments**

Question 1 was the most popular, with questions 2 and 3 being almost equally popular after that. A very small number of candidates attempted question 4. The mean mark for questions 2 and 3 was practically identical, with the mean for question 1 only slightly lower. As in most previous series, candidates found question 1 slightly less accessible than questions 2 and 3, although there was little real difference.

**1402 (GP2)**

**Q1a:** this was very accessible to candidates and definitions, development and examples were good in many cases.

**Q1b:** most candidates used the prompts in the extract well about the ease of amendment through statute. Many were able to go beyond the extract and comment on the unentrenched nature of the constitution and the flexibility of conventions.

**Q1c:** there were some reasonable responses for and against the constitutional role of judges. Fewer candidates were able to weigh up the significance of judicial decisions in the development of the constitution against other sources. Some candidates were unclear about what was meant by sources of the constitution. Surprisingly, little mention was made of the Supreme Court. Some candidates still write about the role of judges in the criminal law, which is not what is being tested here.

**Q2a:** this term posed no problems for candidates, the majority of whom described the role and named the current Presiding Officer with accuracy.

**Q2b:** most candidates used the prompts in the extract well, and are aware that there are committees that scrutinise the Welsh government. However, many used the same names as in the UK parliament and few candidates could name any of the committees in Wales. Some candidates knew about the committee that questions the First Minister. There was some usage of legislation committees as a method of scrutiny (even though they are really to do with the function of legislation).

**Q2c:** this question was generally answered well, with many candidates being aware of the main functions of the UK Parliament and able to analyse the effectiveness of a range of methods used to carry those functions out. Some candidates wrote at length about Wales which was not required in answer to this question.

**Q3a:** there was some reference to collective responsibility here, but many candidates defined the cabinet only, as opposed to cabinet *system*. Most candidates scored reasonably well, nevertheless.

**Q3b:** most candidates were able to explain a reasonable range of the powers of the Prime Minister from the extract and beyond it. There was little appreciation that taking the country to war is part of the Prime Minister's prerogative powers.

**Q3c:** responses to this question were disappointing because many candidates either turned it into a question on Prime Ministerial power, or asserted that the role of the Cabinet is to make decisions and run the country. Few candidates really tackled the nature of the modern core executive, with its diverse personnel and institutions and the shifting and symbiotic power relationships within it.

**Q4:** the responses to this question were so few that trends are meaningless. On the whole, responses to parts (a) and (b) were reasonably good, but responses to part (c) were poor. Most part (c) answers became lists of the advantages and disadvantages of the UK's membership of the EU, which missed the point of the questions set. In a few cases the answers deteriorated into political diatribe with little relevance to the question set.

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**General Certificate of Education**

**January 2014**

**Advanced**

**GP3a/b**

*Principal Examiner:* Alison Denton

**General Comments**

This was the last of the January modules, and the changes to A-level regulations meant that there were fewer candidates than in previous series for all papers. Generalisations about performance are therefore difficult to make. Nevertheless, it is clear that candidates' answers have become more structured and organised with each examination series. Teachers and pupils are obviously paying attention to the requirements of the assessment objectives, to the feedback on each series contained in these reports, and to advice on the website.

Many candidates were able to provide two complete answers in the time limit, and many part (b) responses were focused and well-structured with introductions and conclusions that addressed the question set. Most part (b) responses are now clearly addressing an argument and a counter-argument. There appeared to be fewer candidates relying on model answers, as noted in the previous series, and this is a welcome development, showing that candidates are being well-prepared by their teachers and are engaging with the topics and doing some individual study. Most candidates are providing a response to part (a) that is succinct and gets straight to the matter in hand without the need for an introduction or a conclusion, and this is helping them in timing their responses to the part (b) questions as well. As with AS level, candidates need to understand that there is an expectation that they will write an 'explanation text' in answer to part (a), and a 'discussion text' in answer to part (b). There is evidence that more and more candidates are grasping this, but some do not score as well as they might because they are not familiar with the conventions of these text types (e.g. that a discussion text needs two sides) which means they do not access all the marks on the mark scheme.

There remain some general issues at A2 that need attention:

- Level 3 answers need to show a level of sophistication in their consistent focus on discussing arguments on the question set. A lot of candidates describe processes and institutions in detail, but this is not level 3 work on its own and when unapplied.
- Some candidates base each paragraph on an example, instead of a point of argument. This restricts their marks for AO2 especially. Candidates need to be reminded of the balance of skill marks (AO2 and AO3) to marks for knowledge (AO1) on the A2 paper, and the requirement for range and depth.
- Handwriting continues to be a real problem. Candidates are reminded that examiners can only award marks for text they can read and be certain about, they cannot guess what the candidate may be trying to say.
- Candidates are not always careful in numbering their responses.

Teachers are advised to ensure that they and the candidates are familiar with the assessment objectives, their weightings, and the generic mark scheme for the A2 examination, especially as there is a higher weighting towards skills at A2 compared to the AS examination. Candidates are advised to ensure that they are well-informed about recent developments, and that they have a depth of knowledge and understanding that they can call on easily under pressure in the examination.

**Part (a)** responses showed a general improvement again in this series. Most candidates are not wasting time with introductions and conclusions for this part. They are not required here and simply take up valuable time. Many candidates are showing that they can identify a range of 'reasons why', or 'ways in which' (typically 2-3). Weaker candidates struggle with explaining these, having identified them. Candidates and teachers are reminded of the need for candidates to use the language appropriate to an explanation in this part. The Teacher Guide has some useful suggestions.

**Part (b)** is a discussion or debate around a proposition or an issue. Advice to candidates:

- Candidates need to focus their paragraphs adequately on the question set. Many candidates write descriptive paragraphs and add a sentence at the end along the lines of, 'This proves that the Constitution is too flexible' and yet they have not given proof of this analysis in the paragraph, they have just described how processes work. This leaves far too much to be assumed and inferred by the examiner.
- Candidates could avoid this error by paying more attention to the opening sentence of every paragraph which should directly focus on the question, stating the argument the paragraph will develop.
- In the body of each paragraph, candidates need to develop the argument with detailed explanation and analysis, and support this with evidence which should clearly illustrate a point of analysis that has been explained. Listing and describing evidence alone will earn few marks for AO2. Examples are not points of argument.
- Candidates need to assess the validity of their arguments before they come into the examination. Some are making assertions that simply cannot be sustained, such as that the US Constitution is too flexible because it has been formally amended 27 times. There are always answers that are contradictory, for this reason, as well.
- It is often impossible for the examiner to really tell whether the description in the paragraph is supposed to be on a point 'for' or a point 'against' the proposition in the question. Candidates need to understand and demonstrate the conventions of a discussion text type.
- Nearly all part (b) questions are set so as to enable candidates to select and analyse a wide range of the material they have studied on the topic. Candidates need to show this breadth of understanding across the whole topic content.

The examination places high demands on candidates' literacy skills. Teachers are advised to explore ways in which information gathering can be done by pupils outside lessons, freeing lesson time for the acquisition and practice of skills. Candidates need to be well-informed about current developments as well. Too few illustrate their answers with current examples, instead relying too much on textbook examples, several years out of date. Candidates are reminded of the necessity of personal research at this level, and the dangers of over-reliance on textbooks and class notes. Responses need to be specific and sophisticated to access level 3 marks.

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.

**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.**

### **1403**

1403/01 GP3a: questions 1 and 3 were a popular combination, as usual. The mean marks, and facility factors, for questions 2, 3 and 4 were very similar. Question 1 had a slightly higher mean mark and was slightly more accessible to candidates.

1403/02 GP3b: there were only a small number of candidates for this paper, and all candidates attempted questions 1 and 3. The mean mark and accessibility of question 1 were higher than for question 3.

### **1403/01 The Politics of the USA**

**Q1a:** many candidates responded well to this question and explained a range of sensible reasons including the rapidly evolving situation with super PACs and the role of Supreme Court judgements.

**Q1b:** most candidates understood the question well and responded accurately, assessing the relative importance of the invisible primary, the primary season proper and the national conventions against the inter-party campaign period. Some very good answers analysed the importance of the different stages in specific elections. Weaker candidates described the stages of the process.

**Q2a:** most answers identified and explained a range of functions well.

**Q2b:** most answers to this question were fairly superficial. Most candidates were able to describe and explain factions in general terms but lacked depth of knowledge on this. Most were able to relate the factionalised nature of US parties to the question and to democracy.

**Q3a:** there were generally good explanations here which included reasons such as candidate-centred campaigns and the increasing overlap of the two main parties. Few candidates really questioned this latter assumption, though, explaining party loyalty in a more sophisticated way, or exploring the depth of loyalty in some areas/ states/ regions, some elections etc.

**Q3b:** socio-economic status was well understood by candidates and the majority produced good arguments in favour of its importance, with range and depth. Many candidates wrote the counter-argument in this topic as a list of 'other factors' and neglected to evaluate their relative importance.

**Q4a:** this question was answered well, with candidates explaining a variety of reasons with some examples.

**Q4b:** most candidates were able to offer a fairly generalised analysis on this question. As has been noted before, the main weakness with essays on this topic is lack of knowledge of specific US pressure groups, in detail.

## 1403/02 Ideologies

There were a small number of candidates for this paper, which makes it difficult to generalise about responses. However, some features emerge:

Part (a) responses can drift into 2 or 3 paragraphs describing historical landmarks. This is not A2 standard and does not really meet the demands of the question.

Part (b) essays were better structured than in previous series. Nevertheless, there is more of a tendency on this paper for candidates to get carried away, drifting into lengthy paragraphs of narration, often off the point of the question, than on the other A2 papers. Candidates struggle to apply the knowledge they have and rely too much on telling the history, or analysing parties and policies rather than ideas. This was particularly so on question 3, and explains its lower mean mark.

**Q1a:** most candidates were able to explain this with accuracy. Some trawled through the history.

**Q1b:** arguments that liberalism is still relevant were better made than arguments that it is not. Most candidates were able to analyse the impact of liberalism on the main UK political parties today, for instance. Weaker answers focused too much on the relevance of the Liberal Democratic party in the UK today, rather than the relevance of the ideology of liberalism.

**Q2:** no responses.

**Q3a:** some candidates responded with a historical survey of how authoritarian various Conservative party leaders have been. This was not very well focused on the question set.

**Q3b:** many responses relied on asserting that one-nation Tories under Disraeli unified the country whereas Mrs Thatcher's governments were divisive. There was little in the way of examples of these positions. Many candidates answered about whether the Conservative *party* is unifying or divisive, rather than whether the *ideology* of conservatism is – see general comment about part (b)s above. Some candidates read 'divisive' as 'diverse' and struggled accordingly.

**Q4:** no responses.

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**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**GP4**

*Principal Examiner:* Alison Denton

**General Comments**

1404/01 GP4a: question 1 was the most popular and was accessible to candidates. Questions 2 and 4 were almost equally next popular, question 4 having the greatest accessibility of all 4 questions and the higher mean mark, question 2 was less accessible, and had the lowest mean mark of the 4 questions. Question 3 was the least popular. There were no candidates for paper 1404/02 in this series

**1404/01 the Government of the USA**

**Q1a:** this question was well done, with candidates explaining a range of reasons including that it makes the US a federal state, that it enshrines the system of checks and balances, and that it entrenches basic rights.

**Q1b:** this question was generally quite well done. However, some candidates asserted that the constitution was too flexible because it can be easily amended and gave examples of formal amendments. This seems difficult to sustain (27 amendments in 200+ years) especially as these candidates then argued that the formal amendment process makes the constitution too rigid.

**Q2a:** many candidates explained the different types of committee and what they do well. Most candidates were able to explain why their work is important.

**Q2b:** many candidates discussed the theoretical arguments well but fewer were able to exemplify with up-to-date illustration. In particular, there was little discussion of the influence of party on relations between the Obama administration and Congress.

**Q3a:** this question was done well, with most candidates able to explain the restrictions placed on the president such as the strict separation of powers and personnel. Some candidates also mentioned the power of the purse.

**Q3b:** this question was done well overall, with candidates mainly agreeing with the question within a two-sided debate. Some candidates explored the impact that 9/11 had on the power of the president domestically. There was little reference to debates on the imperial/imperilled presidency.

**Q4a:** most candidates listed and described some iconic landmark judgements, but fewer were able to adequately explain why landmark judgements, either individually or as a whole, have impact.

**Q4b:** most candidates answered well on this question, with clear 2-sided debates. Most were able to analyse the political impact of the Supreme Court, as well as the political nature of it and appointments to it. Some candidates made use of detailed knowledge of individual justices in their responses.

## **1404/02 Challenges in Contemporary Politics**

There were no candidates for this paper in this series.



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