



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2015

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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 General Comments

The number of entries overall for both papers at AS level is up from the previous year. The overall quality of scripts is also up. More candidates are able to sustain their effort over the full number of answers required, and there are more responses that earn very good marks, both on GP1 and on GP2.

The main advice for candidates arising from general issues with GP1 and GP2 in this series is:

- Number responses carefully - simply writing (a), (b) or (c) is not enough.
- Handwriting must be legible to be awarded marks. Examiners will not guess what a candidate may be trying to say. There are far more scripts this year where the examiner is struggling to read what has been written.
- Literacy skills – accuracy and organisation - need to be good to access the full range of marks.
- Too many answers are longer than is necessary to earn the marks. This is particularly true of the part (a) and part (b) responses. Inevitably, this has a negative effect on the time candidates have to spend on the higher tariff questions.
- Learn the details accurately. Too many answers attract lower marks because they are generalised or inaccurate.

It is worth making the point that candidates are being *examined*. Whilst politics is a holistic discipline, there is an expectation that the majority of the answer provided to any question under examination conditions will arise from the topic content published in the specification. 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, model answers and a reasonable memory.

Part (a) responses continue to show improvement and 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 continue to improve on the whole. Many candidates are able to identify, then explain and exemplify a range of reasons or factors accurately using both the extract and their own knowledge. Some candidates do not explain clearly. They imply the explanation or they make a series of unexplained assertions. No introduction or conclusion is needed to the part (b) response. Some candidates provide hypothetical examples rather than real ones, and this does not score highly. Some candidates try to argue both sides, and this is not required.

Guidance on the sort of vocabulary that demonstrates explanation can be found in the Teacher Guide.

Part (c). Discipline is the key to writing this discussion essay type response. Candidates should argue a range of views, often this will be ‘for’ and ‘against’ the proposition in the question. Better candidates plan using a device such as a T-grid. Weaker candidates make a series of assertions which are not clearly ‘for’ or ‘against’ the proposition in the question, or narrate the topic content with little reference to the question. Too many candidates are failing to explain their arguments appropriately and are, in effect, producing listed responses which get level 2. Another weakness is the failure to exemplify appropriately. Candidates are advised to consider a ‘PEEL’ approach to paragraph writing. 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’.

There is a need to show understanding of the topic as a whole (range) and of issues and examples in detail (depth). 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. There is a skill in deploying and utilising as much of the topic content they have studied as possible to answer the specific question set in the most relevant way. 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. It is encouraging that so many candidates have fairly detailed and accurate knowledge of the 2015 UK general election.

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 Examiner's Report.**

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2015

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

GP1: PEOPLE, POLITICS AND PARTICIPATION

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton

On GP1 question 1 was the most popular, followed by question 2. Questions 3 and 4 attracted the fewest answers. The mean mark and facility factor were highest for question 1 and lowest for question 3.

Q1a: many candidates scored well here.

Q1b: a good range of reasons was used here and candidates scored well, even when little use was made of the extract. In a significant number of cases, support for reasons was thin.

Q1c: Few candidates were able to distinguish 'issues' from other factors such as leaders' image or other facets of the campaign, and many treated these all as the same thing. There was scant development of how issues have impacted on recent elections, even issues as obvious as the Iraq War. Some candidates were, however, able to give a clear idea of how issues such as immigration, the NHS and the Liberal Democrat U-turn on tuition fees affected the 2015 election. It is encouraging to see more candidates using their knowledge of models.

Q2a: this caused no problems for candidates.

Q2b: good use was made of the prompts in the extract.

Q2c: too many answers to questions on this topic are either narrations of how the systems work, or deal only with First Past the Post. Significant numbers of answers fail to discuss how any systems actually work and very few responses were detailed.

Q3a: candidates were able to provide detailed descriptions.

Q3b: good use was made of the prompts in the extract but some candidates struggled to go beyond these. Some thought that conferences elect leaders. There was little specific detail.

Q3c: this question was answered well, with party involvement in campaigning compared effectively to other roles such as political recruitment or political agenda-setting.

Q4a: many candidates interpreted the term widely, and this was credited. The examples chosen were often outsider groups, which is not the most appropriate for the term.

Q4b: many candidates were able to use the prompts in the extract well, but a significant number responded by explaining *how* pressure groups lobby the public, rather than *why* as the question demanded. Very few candidates examined outsider status as a reason.

Q4c: the interpretation of undemocratic was restricted by many candidates to the internal workings of pressure groups only. This does not provide range. Better answers examined the numbers and typology of those represented by pressure groups and their funding and methods as well as other factors. Some candidates were knowledgeable about recent trade union reforms which they used to good effect.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2015
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
GP2: GOVERNING MODERN WALES

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton

Questions 1,2 3 were almost equally popular. Only a very small number of candidates attempted question 4. The mean mark and facility factor were highest for question 1 and lowest for question 4.

Q1a: this question was answered well.

Q1b: most answers were good, but some candidates wrote only about codification, which is not the same as entrenchment. Others wrote about the dangers of unentrenchment, which is a sort of negative explanation and not exactly focused on the question set.

Q1c: candidates explored a range of reasons for and against changes to the constitution. Many candidates provided little depth and detail though.

Q2a: this question caused no issues for candidates.

Q2b: significant numbers of candidates responded to this question by alleging that select committees alter legislation, which is inaccurate. Some drifted into why select committees are not important, which is not required by the question. There were very few accurate and detailed examples of select committee work and impact.

Q2c: many candidates focused entirely on how socially representative the UK parliament and National Assembly are. This aspect was done well, but is only a small part of the possible topic content that could have been analysed to provide the requirement of the top level on the markscheme for range. Very few candidates explored how the workings of the UK parliament and National Assembly allow MPs and AMs to represent the views of their constituents, eg. through plenary, public bill committees, in debates etc. A significant number of candidates provided an answer based wholly on the electoral systems in Wales and England. This did not score highly as this is a different topic, on a different paper.

Q3a: most candidates answered this well. A few used the term 'kitchen cabinet' interchangeably with 'inner cabinet' but they are not quite the same thing.

Q3b: there were many good to excellent answers using the extract and own knowledge. However, too many candidates referred to 'the Quad' in the present tense, as though it still exists.

Q3c: answers tended to be competent, but few were very good. Most candidates offered a fairly rote-learned response which did not detail specific examples. Most candidates viewed this as a 'PM vs cabinet' essay when the core executive is, in reality, wider than this.

Q4: answers to question 4 were, as usual, rare and analysis of trends is meaningless.

A2 General Comments

There is an increase this series in the number of candidates who complete the requirements of the examination in the time given. There is an increase in the number of excellent scripts seen.

The candidates that do best are the ones who can manipulate what they know to engage with and answer the specific questions set, paying proper attention to the particular demands of each of the two question types. The skills marks outweigh those for knowledge at A2, so the key to unlocking the higher levels of the markscheme is for candidates to effectively apply their knowledge to answering the specific question on the paper in a consistent fashion, avoiding drift. There is an expectation that candidates will write an 'explanation text' in answer to part (a), and a 'discussion text' in answer to part (b), and the marks for skills are awarded on this basis.

Many candidates are able to provide two complete answers in the time limit, and many part (b) responses are focused and well-structured with introductions and conclusions that address the question set. Many part (b) responses are now clearly addressing an argument and a counter-argument. There appear to be fewer candidates relying on model answers, 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 as is appropriate for this level.

There remain some general issues at A2 that need attention:

- It is worth using recalled scripts with pupils in class as too many waste time in the examination by repeating themselves, or by providing elements that are not required by the question (such as a counter-argument for part (a)). In the examination, everything they write should be scoring marks. This will be clearly seen in recalled, marked scripts where the underlining indicates scoring.
- Some candidates base each paragraph on an example, or narrative, 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 within a specific text type for the part (a) and for the part (b). The need to structure essays, and paragraphs within them, so that the direction flows well and is clear cannot be overstated.
- 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.
- Basic grammar presents a problem for too many candidates at this level. When grammar and expression are clumsy and confused, meaning is lost.
- The route b papers tend to see a greater drift away from the question than the route a papers do. Candidates write theoretically and neglect practical and current examples, or they narrate the history. They also tend to write unacademically, more like a chat in the pub than an examination response.

Teachers are advised to ensure that they and the candidates are familiar with the assessment objectives, their weightings, and the generic markscheme 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. Further advice can be found in the Teacher Guide.

Part (a): candidates should not waste time with an introduction and conclusion for this part as they are not required. Many candidates are showing that they can identify a range of 'reasons why', or 'ways in which' (typically 2-3) which they then explain. There is a need to pay more attention to detailed and accurate exemplification as there are more marks for this than for the explanation skill in the part (a). A significant number of candidates are writing too much in this part. The guidance has always been the same, and candidates should appreciate the Assessment Objectives being rewarded here – clear explanations, supported by factual evidence. There are no marks for narrative description on its own, and an essay response is not expected.

Part (b) is a discussion or debate around a proposition or an issue. Weaker than expected performance in this part is very often a result of some the factors listed here:

- Techniques issues – so many candidates struggle to sustain a focus on the question set. They ramble, list and narrate a story, but fail to apply what they say to the specific question set.
- Literacy skills - too many candidates struggle to express themselves effectively and their meaning is unclear.
- Mixing arguments 'for' and 'against' the proposition in the same paragraph in an unstructured, 'stream of consciousness'.
- Putting the substantive argument at the end of the paragraph instead of at the beginning so that the direction and flow are not clear to the examiner.
- Developing only generalised arguments.
- Developing a narrow range of arguments compared to the topic content on the published specification.
- Developing examples as substantive arguments. Candidates often struggle to identify what the 'big points' could be.
- Unconvincing and/ or unsustained explanation of the arguments chosen.
- Poorly chosen examples which are just stated and not explained.

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. Candidates will struggle to score level 3 marks unless they know the topics in depth and detail, and are up-to-date.

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 markscheme, in conjunction with the comments in the Examiner's Report.**

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2015
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
GP3A: THE POLITICS OF THE USA

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton

Questions 1 and 3 were a popular combination, as usual. The mean marks for questions 1, 2 and 3 were very similar. The facility factor for all four questions was similar.

Q1a: most candidates did this question well, but there was more focus on presidential incumbency than on incumbency in Congress, which was surprising given the significance of it in Congress.

Q1b: 'Issues' was covered quite well, with many candidates citing the economy as the major issue with examples. 'Candidates' was debated less well with focus almost entirely on their personality and actions during campaigns as covered by the media. Very little was made of other aspects of candidates that can have significance, such as a war record, personal political experience or coat-tailing and recognition. There was virtually no mention of Congressional elections, or of primaries.

Q2a: most answers explained a range of reasons but exemplification was thin, in general, and lacking detail.

Q2b: most candidates argued both sides of this debate but struggled more with arguing that parties in the USA are not weak. Some candidates focused entirely on arguing the strengths of candidates and issues as evidence of party weakness, but this is tangential to the topic in question here.

Q3a: this question was done quite well in terms of identifying some reasons for it, but many candidates struggled to exemplify.

Q3b: this question was not answered as well as in some previous series. Many answers were very generalised and superficial with little evidence of deeper understanding. Most responses dealt only with the black and Hispanic vote. There were a lot of generalisations such as, 'the young vote democrat'. There was little appreciation of recent changes in voting behaviour such as the effect of cities, or the importance of Asian or Pacific voters.

Q4a: there were some good answers to this question which elaborated on the importance of persuasion in the federal system in the USA, the impact of iron triangles etc. However, weaker answers tended to describe multiple access points rather than explain their impact, and there was an over-concentration on access to policy-makers in Washington DC.

Q4b: this question was well done. Many candidates were able to craft a good two-sided response covering major ideas and arguments. There were some well-exemplified responses, but many lacked depth of exemplification.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
General Certificate of Education
Summer 2015
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
GP3B: POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton

Virtually equal numbers of candidates attempted questions 1 and 3 with smaller numbers attempting 2 and 4. The mean mark and facility factor was highest for question 2.

Part (a) responses tend to be over-long, sometimes 2-3 sides. This wastes time and is rarely worth it to the candidate. It should be emphasised that an essay response is not expected to part (a). Candidates should identify, explain and exemplify a range of explanations, typically in a paragraph each, amounting to (on average) a side or so of writing. There is no need for an introduction or conclusion.

Part (b): 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, and often purely historical, than on the other A2 papers. Candidates struggle to apply the knowledge they have to answer the specific question set, and rely too much on narration of the position of different groups of thinkers. Many answers are list-like and fail to address the evaluation demanded in the question by command words, eg. '*most* important idea...' or '*always* promotes inequality...'. Candidates are reminded that they are being examined on the topic content in the published specification, and that the markscheme sets out a demand for range and depth at the top levels. The part (b) response needs to provide a discussion, not a list of narrative points.

Q1a: many candidates were able to provide differing liberal viewpoints on the role of the state and the individual, but many struggled to tie this in with the question about welfare or the dispute about this. Very few candidates used specific terminology such as the enabling state.

Q1b: many answers focused on arguments about the role of the state and individualism set against economic liberalism, without addressing any of the key central concepts of the ideology such as tolerance or justice.

Q2a: this question was done well, with explanations developed around the changing view of some socialists about class, wealth and capitalism.

Q2b: arguments were well explained on both sides of the question. However, contemporary exemplification was thin. Answers tended to remain theoretical.

Q3a: some candidates were able to explain the extent of influence of conservative ideas such as paternalism, property or pragmatism on today's UK conservative party from the Thatcher era onwards. Some candidates explained the impact of Thatcherism on today's party, which was not really what was required by the question.

Q3b: most candidates provided two sides mainly revolving around privilege and a minimal role for the state versus one-nation conservatism and self-help. Whilst debates were two-sided, they tended to lack range and, in particular, much discussion of the ideology underpinning conservatism such as support for tradition and property and a belief in hierarchy and natural inequality.

Q4a: there were some very good responses to this question that compared the two terms effectively.

Q4b: the ideology underpinning nationalism was well understood and argued by most candidates who tended to argue around national self-determination and ideas of citizenship versus racialism and colonialism. Few candidates set the debate in a more global context with arguments of internationalism or supranationalism.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
General Certificate of Education
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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
GP4A: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE USA

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton

Question 1 was the most popular. The facility factor for all four questions was virtually the same.

Q1a: many answers were good, explaining various reasons such as the fact that it entrenches the most fundamental rights of US citizens, and explaining the importance of some of those rights.

Q1b: too many responses to essays on the constitution focus only on amending it and/ or amendments, specifically the Bill of Rights. There is too little attention given to the actual constitution itself, the Articles and clauses that precede the amendments (as noted in previous series).

Q2a: some candidates struggled to focus on why the two chambers have different roles, and instead wrote about how their roles are different. Better answers dealt with explanations such as separation of powers and checks and balances within a federal system.

Q2b: whilst many candidates provided a two-sided discussion, answers tended to lack range across the topic content and dealt mainly with pork-barrelling and party weakness in Congress. Very little was made of the work of Congressional committees or the influence of individuals on the legislative process.

Q3a: this question was done well, with many candidates appreciating the variety of constraints operated over the president by the Supreme Court.

Q3b: many answers dealt well with a two-sided discussion of the limitations on presidential power, but too few mentioned many presidents specifically, and hardly any answers dealt with the federal bureaucracy in any detail, if at all.

Q4a: there were many good answers to this question, explaining effectively how life tenure maintains judicial independence and builds experience and expertise within the court.

Q4b: this question was generally well done, with two-sided debate about the political impact of the court through judicial review and the role of the other branches in appointments. Surprisingly, there was little discussion of a range of landmark cases.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2015

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

GP4B: CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

Principal Examiner: Alison Denton

There is a tendency on this paper for candidates to waste time defining terms in the question, such as 'institutional racism.' Candidates should assume that the examiner understands these terms, and should concentrate on scoring marks instead.

No candidates attempted question 1. Question 3 was the most popular and had the highest mean mark and facility factor.

Q1: there were no responses to this question.

Q2a: some candidates provided valid explanations including prevailing anthropocentrism and the belief that green issues do not win elections. Some candidates just trawled through each political party's position on the environment, which did not answer the question directly.

Q2b: there were good responses to this question in which candidates argued that competition and lack of state regulation and enforcement are a challenge for the success of environmentalism. Counter-arguments included evidence of some success such as Green Party politics. Most candidates judged the premise in the question to be more accurate than the counter-arguments.

Q3a: better answers to this question explained factors such as the challenge to the idea of the public/ private divide, the greater chance of breaking the glass ceiling and the undermining of patriarchy. Some answers were just lists of feminist positions on the public/ private divide, and a substantial number of answers dealt with causes, not impact, which was poorly focused on the question set.

Q3b: answers to this question varied greatly in quality. Better answers examined arguments such as legislation and greater rights for women as well as the extent of continued patriarchy, and many used examples such as the wage gap, access to education and the situation in more fundamentalist societies. Many candidates were able to evaluate effectively the current relevance of different types of feminism. Weaker responses were narratives of feminist belief unapplied to the question set, or a series of unexplained and unsupported assertions.

Q4a: many answers were competent here, but a large number of them ignored the 'institutional' part of the question, and wrote about racism in general which did not tackle the central thrust of the question.

Q4b: surprisingly few candidates were able to detail examples of major legislation to protect minority rights. There were many answers that did not tackle the question directly enough and instead trawled through theories and writers, or dealt with the importance of protecting minority rights only, or argued whether Britain is a multicultural society. None of these approaches tackled the question set directly enough.



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