



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (LEGACY)
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2018

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GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

General Certificate of Education (Legacy)

Summer 2018

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

GP1 – PEOPLE, POLITICS & PARTICIPATION

Overall Comments (GP1)

- The cohort reflected the fact that these were re-sit candidates.
- Candidates were aware of the requirements of the questions, and the vast majority were able to provide two complete questions.
- Most candidates were able to provide some focus in their responses; however, relatively few were able to provide sustained, accurately detailed and relevant answers at the highest level, especially in the part (c's).
- Part (b's) were generally done well, however too much time was wasted in introducing the subject at length.
- Across all questions there was an understandably overt emphasis on Brexit, but this was often to the candidates' detriment as specific development was often curtailed.
- Issues with illegible handwriting remain and centres should strive to provide access to laptops as the usual way of working to ensure that every candidate is rewarded for their knowledge, analysis and evaluation.

GP1:

Question 1

Part (a) was explained well, however, few candidates were able to develop further than the generalised Labour for the Working Class and Conservatives for the Middle Classes. Most candidates were able to explain the part (b) well, but the tendency to introduce at length was especially evident here. A number of candidates brought in other factors further than issues, which were usually not creditworthy. The majority of candidates were able to analyse and evaluate the factors well for the part (c), although many struggled to provide specific development.

Question 2

Candidates didn't have any difficulty answering the part (a). However, some answers struggled to focus exclusively on 'First-Past-the-Post' and explored other voting systems, and thus provided a lot of detail which was not credited. Lengthy introductions were a feature of the part (b), often ensuring that candidates didn't leave sufficient time to explore the specific requirement of 'a fairer result' as opposed to proportional representation in general. Part (c) was generally answered very well; centres must ensure that candidates are aware of referendums other than the Brexit referendum.

Question 3

Few candidates answered this question. There was no real issues with the part (a), although very few candidates were able to explain the multi-faceted nature of 'nationalist parties' in the UK. Most candidates provided a generalised answer to part (b), but were able to provide some explanation. Part (c)'s lacked a range of factors and knowledge, the spectre of the Brexit Referendum providing the core of all answers, as would be expected, but other issues were not explored well.

Question 4

This was the only part (a) that candidates struggled with many students being uncertain of 'access points'. The majority were unable to develop with specifics. Most candidates tended to ignore the influence and 'without using direct action' element of the question and focussed on how pressure groups influence government in general in part (b). Part (c) didn't cause any major issues, and was answered well for the most part.

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GP2 GOVERNING MODERN WALES

General:

This examination series is one of the last for the Legacy specification and the candidates for AS level are all resitting the units.

The Examiner's Report will, therefore, not be as detailed as in the past regarding the skills that were well or poorly demonstrated as there is little opportunity for application of the advice to this Legacy specification.

Suffice to say that the key to attaining a good mark is, and has always been, the demonstration of strong skills of explanation, analysis and evaluation applied to relevant and accurate knowledge that has been selected to support arguments made, and a strong focus directly on the question set rather than the general topic area.

An increasing trend this series has been the 'hypothetical' answer – 'This could mean...', 'might cause...', 'If' etc. which are then not developed with actual examples or evidence. This speculative approach is to be discouraged.

Question 1

In part (a) most candidates could define a convention. However, there were some creative but incorrect 'examples' of a constitutional convention, such as that the Prime Minister gets the keys to 10 Downing Street. In part (b) most candidates were able to answer generally about the importance of statutes compared to other sources, and about Parliamentary sovereignty. There were a number of answers that focused on the criminal law rather than constitutional statutes and these were not focused on the question set. In part (c) significant numbers of candidates struggled to answer the question set, and instead answered on the general strengths and weaknesses of the British Constitution. Many answers were restricted to the aspect of rights only. Some advanced weak arguments such as it is confusing.

Question 2

Most candidates knew the difference between a regional and a constituency AM but very few could accurately name a regional AM for part (a). There was a majority of strong answers to part (b) that used the passage effectively and brought in other factors such as the difficulty of the legislature adequately scrutinising the executive. Many answers to part (c) lacked range or depth across the topic. Some were restricted entirely to the use of referenda or the First Past the Post electoral system. Whilst these have some relevance, they are both topic areas from GP1 and do not feature in the topic description in the specification for GP2.

Question 3

The part (a) here was well done with most candidates correctly defining and developing an accurate description. Part (b) demonstrated some lack of understanding about who is expected to maintain collective responsibility, with some candidates explaining that it applies to all MPs and failing to realise its significance for the core executive. Strangely, for part (c) virtually no answers explored the importance of a cabinet in a coalition government, despite the recent UK experience of this, or the experience of coalitions and mixed party governments in Wales. The command to 'critically evaluate' was ignored by a number of candidates who simply described what the cabinet does.

Question 4

There were no responses to question 4.

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GP3A THE POLITICS OF THE USA

A2 General:

It has been pleasing over the 13 series so far of the A2 papers for the Legacy specification to see an improvement in the general standards of examination completion and essay writing.

Nearly all candidates now complete all questions, and write essays that are well structured with topic range. More plans are now seen. A lack of real detail and depth of explanation is what keeps many to marks in Level 2. If anything, there is now a tendency for some candidates to write far too much. They should be encouraged to argue in a concise way, as really long answers rarely earn them more marks than a concise one would.

Weaker candidates demonstrate weak skills, for instance they state an example as though it were an argument; they make assertions which they fail to explain and support; they give general descriptions, explanations and examples only; they write hypothetically; they analyse cause and effect inaccurately; they fail to address the question; their analysis is over-simplified; they struggle to express themselves clearly.

As has always been the case, the better marks are earned by candidates who address the set question directly in a sustained way, and who explain their arguments, using relevant examples to clearly support them. They tend to cover the majority of the topic material and their understanding of the topic comes through in the clarity of their writing, the depth of their explanations and examples, and their organisation. They understand that the examination is primarily testing skills.

Unfortunately, those candidates who address the wrong assessment objectives, e.g. they evaluate and argue in the part (a) where explanation is called for, or they describe, narrate and make unexplained and unsupported assertions only in part (b), cannot really expect to do well.

Question 1

Part (a) was well done by some candidates who focused on the concept of momentum but the majority explained about the length of campaigns or the importance of money without adequately explaining the significance of momentum. Others focused only on momentum at the very end of the presidential campaign. There was surprisingly little made of the effect of early victories in the primaries, or of declaring candidacy early in the invisible primary, or of front-loading of primaries in the first few months.

Part (b) presented candidates with a good opportunity to dissect the 2016 presidential election, and most took it. There were some very good answers. Those that earned mid-range marks were confined to 2016 only, comparing Clinton and Trump but making very little use of factors such as money or the media, or the workings of the Electoral College. Few candidates were able to address the evaluative angle in the question of 'too' candidate centred, but some did, and did so well.

Question 2

In part (a), those candidates who focused on the influence of the Religious Right, e.g. on factions and ideology of the Republican Party, did well. Too many candidates wrote simply a description of the beliefs of the Religious Right.

There was a majority of good answers to part (b), and some excellent ones that were very thoughtful and analytical, e.g. some candidates commented that 2016 showed the dominance of the two parties because 'outsider' candidates like Sanders and Trump were keen to adopt the major party labels rather than run as third party candidates which is where their ideologies more naturally placed them.

Question 3

The part (a) caused some candidates to write about the Democratic Party, or to assert that there is too much democracy in the USA. Those candidates who earned the higher marks discussed the impact on voting behaviour of so many voting opportunities, pointing out such factors as turnout, apathy and lack of engagement, unpredictability etc., with some candidates giving valid examples.

There were excellent answers to part (b) but a significant number of candidates resorted to historical narrative from the 1930s to today, or gave simplistic analyses such as gender being a core voting factor with the Democrats able to rely on the votes of women until 2016 when women voted for Trump. On the whole, analysis lacked sophistication, with many candidates asserting that Hispanics are a core vote for the Democrats and relatively few candidates exploiting the increase in independent voters in the last few decades.

Question 4

The key word in the part (a) question was 'pluralism'. Too many candidates did not read this adequately, and responded with an answer focused on how pressure groups are good for democracy, which was not the question.

Part (b) produced a minority of excellent answers where candidates really got to grips with the question set and compared and contrasted the power of pressure groups and parties well. There were the usual general answers as well, though, that answered a slightly different question to the one set, usually offering thoughts on whether pressure groups are too powerful.

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GP3B – POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Overall Comments (GP3b)

- As has been the case since the introduction of the present specification few centres entered candidates for the paper.
- There was a clear attempt this year to provide a contemporary focus, linking the ideology with the ideas of twenty first century political parties and providing recent examples. However, most candidates actually struggled with providing pertinent links and evidence which was relevant to the question set.

Question 1

A comparatively small number of candidates were able to explain the views of libertarians. Most candidates concentrated on the views of classical and modern liberals, and thus a number of answers were made generally relevant in passing. Again, the strands of classical and modern liberal thinking were to the fore in part (b), to the detriment of other forms of liberal thinking. However, most candidates were able to provide sufficient factors to provide a clear discussion and coherent evaluation.

Question 2

Most part (a) answers consisted of a very generalised, topic based discussion on socialist thought. The very best were able to provide distinct factors which developed the social, economic and class struggle factors in a relevant manner. In part (b) candidates found it difficult to link the 'resurgence of socialism' to the greatest issues. Unfortunately, most candidates either described the resurgence of socialism without much link to greatest issues or provided a generalised overview of issues for socialists from Marx to Blair.

Question 3

Some understanding of paternalism was shown in most part a answers, and many provided quite a detailed descriptive account. However, explanations of paternalism as a source of conflict were not very evident. Only the very best candidates were able to provide accurate and detailed relevant examples. Although a number wrote at length in answer to the part (b), many were slightly confused as to the essentials of tradition and the idea of adaption and change. Others provided a lengthy commentary on Brexit and change. Some candidates were able to produce answers which encompassed the New Right and the changing philosophies of the contemporary Conservative Party and were credited accordingly.

Question 4

Part (a) was answered well for the most part, a number of candidates were able to explore the importance of various forms of nationalism seen in the politics of the UK. Part (b) answers showed that the majority of candidates were able to draw some comparisons between nationalism and supranational/international approaches. However, very few were able to provide a sustained argument exploring a range of factors in depth. No candidates showed a sophisticated awareness of themes such as self-determination, symbols and consciousness, culture and expansionist nationalism.

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GP4A THE GOVERNMENT OF THE USA

Question 1

Most candidates had a good go at this part (a) and were able to explain the significance of codification (people know their rights, the powers of the branches are listed etc.) but fewer tackled entrenchment accurately. Most simply said the Constitution is protected but did not really explain how it is, or why this is significant.

In part (b) there were many good answers that analysed whether the US Constitution is too rigid and inflexible, but fewer in number that tackled the last part of the question – ‘to be effective.’ As has often been the case, the weaker candidates over-concentrated on the Bill of Rights without mentioning the Articles of the Constitution itself.

Question 2

Those candidates who chose this question often did well. There were many answers that had a detailed understanding for part (a) of pork-barrelling and short-termism in the House and the more deliberative character of the Senate due to fixed terms of office. Surprisingly few candidates mentioned the occurrence of gridlock as a result of fixed terms.

There were some excellent answers to part (b) where candidates were fully informed, and in impressive detail, about the work of Congressional Committees, and were able to counter-balance their argument with a range of other functions of Congress, and some drawbacks of the Committee system.

Question 3

Part (a) produced disappointing answers on the whole, e.g. failing to name a single federal agency, or asserting that federal agencies take the pressure off the executive. There were some very good answers that demonstrated accurate and detailed understanding.

Part (b) was tackled with greater success and gave a good chance for candidates to write about the many constraints on the president and to counter-balance this with analysis of where a president can be successful, such as foreign policy. The weaker answers simply narrated the work of a few more well-known presidents without really providing analysis relevant to the question.

Question 4

This was a very popular question, and both parts were done comparatively well. In part (a) most candidates were able to confine their response to the process of appointment, as asked, but some paid insufficient attention to the question and explained why the job of a Justice is political and got side-tracked into Landmark Rulings.

Part (b) produced very good answers that were well-informed and detailed, but very few tackled the evaluative angle of the question – whether the Supreme Court is *too* judicially active.

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GP4B CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

Question 1

There were few answers to this question but candidates who chose it could explain some valid factors such as the perceived risks that globalisation poses to nation-states and cultures, and the potential economic inequities of globalisation. In part (b) most candidates provided only the positive sides of the involvement of international organisations in helping countries develop. The mark scheme, however, states that there is a need for differing viewpoints. There was a reluctance to discuss international organisations more widely than the EU.

Question 2

In part (a) some candidates saw the first part of the question and launched into an impassioned evaluation of why green consumerism will not work. This was not the question set, nor did this sort of response tackle the correct assessment objectives for the question. Others explained well how environmentalism impacts quality of life but failed to focus sufficiently on green consumerism. Where candidates thought about the question more deeply, responses were often very focused and good. Part (b) produced a range of interesting and well-informed responses. Some candidates were passionate and understood the topic well. These debates ranged across the topic and were rewarded well.

Question 3

Part (a) elicited quite a number of responses that simply listed the views of different strands of feminist thought on the issue of patriarchy, in a description. This is the wrong Assessment Objective for the question. Better answers adopted more of a compare and contrast style that addressed the requirements of the question more directly. Part (b) produced a range of answers, with some excellent discussions around the concept of conservative feminism. A few candidates interpreted the concept to mean feminists in the Conservative party and struggled to engage, producing a list of apparent Conservative feminists from Thatcher to May.

Question 4

Part (a) produced a range of answers, from one or two personal polemics around the certainty that different cultural groups and races simply will not get on, to detailed and thoughtful responses with relevant examples. Part (b) answers were good on the whole, with most candidates writing a two-sided debate and using examples culled from such diverse sources as Brexit, domestic terrorism, and the press reaction to the Grenfell fire tragedy to illustrate their points. It was good to see some responses making full use of practical examples, as in the past this topic (and often the others on this paper) has suffered from a too theoretical approach.



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