

# Examiners' Report January 2008

GCE

## GCE Government and Politics (8067/9067-70)

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# Unit 1

## 6491- People and Politics

### General Comments.

This January series continues to deliver an increased entry for the subject. Assistant examiners clearly identified candidates who were prepared and enjoyed the opportunity to display their political knowledge, backed up where relevant, with clear and perceptive examples.

Three common themes emerge from the comments of many assistant examiners. Firstly, there was a distinct lack of contemporary knowledge of many candidates. In the main this covered the use of material that was often out of date and not always fully relevant. Secondly, there was a trend to re-word or redesign the question asked and provide a response of the candidates own construction. These issues are singled out again below. Finally, assistant examiners noted that a significant minority of candidates lacked clear communication skills and this restricted their ability to progress through the mark levels.

As has been the case for a considerable number of series the most popular question was that set on pressure groups. Increasing in profile was the question on political parties, which is a development to be welcomed and encouraged.

### Question 1

(a) This caused little if any problems. Virtually all candidates were able to provide a brief definition of a political party and most supplemented this definition with an example, which clarified this knowledge.

(b) By contrast to (a) above this did present real difficulties for many candidates. A broad range was within the accepted response, this covered areas where policy may have differed at the margin to areas where there was a substantial policy divergence. Many candidates presented information, which was either wrong in content or out dated. The main area, which was exposed, to be weak was the policy ideas of the Conservative Party where policies which were claimed for the Conservative Party, included EU withdrawal, the re-introduction of hunting with hounds (fox hunting) or the reversal of the devolution process. It is acknowledged that there has been a growing area of policy consensus between the two parties, but there is a substantial amount of material to provide evidence for this question. It does signal for centres the need to focus on contemporary developments in the policy arena.

(c) This question has appeared in past series and in the main was handled well. Candidates who tended not to progress beyond level 2, were restricted quite often as they failed to address both aspects of the question as demanded. Many responses were limited in that they took the path of a "then and now" scenario of New and Old Labour, a route by which it was possible to advance but not to fully secure the higher reward. By contrast those who understood the context of socialism then carried out an assessment did exceptionally well and secured a far higher reward. It is worth noting that the contemporary well informed candidate stood out: it is an advantage to have and use up to date information. Credit was given for the candidates who questioned the commitment of the Labour Party ever to a full socialist platform. Several assistant examiners wished to point out that Labour has reformed but not abandoned Clause IV of its constitution: not an error which was ever penalised but one they stress that they wish to see corrected.

### Question 2

(a) Not a difficult question and handled quite well. The main reason for a lack of progress was often the manner in which the response was focused. A large minority answered the question by stating and defining each type of democracy without directing their response to the difference that existed between them. Hence some by default could be rewarded whereas other could not.

(b) It was possible to answer this question by developing the problems and difficulties associated with referendums and also on the possible implications of more direct democracy in the UK. Many chose to use the problems of direct democracy as it operated in Ancient Athens and used this route quite effectively. The breadth of opportunity in this question was never fully developed.

(c) Many used this final question to state all the good and bad points surrounding representative democracy in the UK. It was a minority who used the question to assess the "direction of travel" of representative democracy and in the process to gain marks more easily. Reiterating earlier comments surrounding up to date examples, again detail here was vital to develop analysis and evaluation. Hence the candidates who know turnout levels at a range of elections and questioned the changes in recent years to the second chamber were able to construct a more focused response.

### Question 3

(a) Few candidates experienced any major problems here. Only a small minority failed to provide a conceptual definition. Most correctly identified this as the generic term for which there are a multitude of systems which attempt to deliver a proportional result.

(b) Again most assistant examiners commented that this was done quite well. If problems did occur it was in the labelling and categorisation stage. As is the usual case it was perhaps STV, which was the cause of most confusion. Occasionally candidates failed to show or wrongly identified where the system was used, this was not a fatal error but was nonetheless a common one.

(c) It was evident from the lower marks that many candidates found this a challenging question. Again only to reiterate the common theme that this requires an up to date appreciation of recent political events, namely elections in the UK held under systems of PR. It was vital to have evidence from the Scottish elections, which have used AMS for the Scottish parliament and STV for local elections, the use of AMS in Wales and the EU Closed Party List. Without informed and accurate data the higher levels of reward were simply inaccessible. Similarly it was not enough to assert a better representation for the smaller parties (crucial as this was) without also considering the impact on the Labour and Conservative parties.

### Question 4

(a) This caused few problems for candidates. If anything many provided too much material in that they defined both classifications cited in the specification and thus provided insider and outsider groups in addition to promotional/cause and sectional. This then may have clouded the examples required.

(b) It was noted by many assistant examiners that candidates took this as an opportunity to turn this into a question to discuss the differences between political parties and pressure groups. Where similarities were raised in the main they tended to be brief and lacking in detail. Here there was clearly noted to be a severe shortage of developed answers with supporting illustrations to prove clear understanding.

(c) This question proved to be a key discriminator. Virtually all assistant examiners reported how a huge number of candidates preferred to construct their own question, rather than the one asked, one candidate approach is a classic illustration of the move to change the terms of reference;  
"Pressure groups have become more important in recent years because critics argue that they either promote or compromise democracy".  
Where the confines of the question were adhered to often a lack of relevant examples was not supplied to advance criticism and evaluation. Many note the numbers who are members of the RSPB but not explaining what this means in reflection to the question asked.

## Unit 2 6492 - Governing the UK

### Question 1

The most popular question with plenty of well prepared responses, spoiled by the fact that too many candidates misunderstood the term 'features' in part (b).

(a) Some candidates took some time explaining what a constitution is and what its functions are. This was unnecessary as the question was about codification. Most were fully aware that a codified constitution is contained in a single document. Less asserted that it was superior to other law, i.e. expressing some idea of a dual legal system. The term 'authoritative document' or the like was accepted as a description of superiority. About half the candidates referred to the entrenched nature of a codified constitution. Though, strictly speaking, a codified constitution is not *necessarily* entrenched, it is *effectively* so. Thus entrenchment is a valid description. Stating that codified constitutions are 'difficult to amend' was accepted as entrenchment. For full marks candidates needed clearly to refer to two ideas - the single document, separate or superior from other laws or its effective entrenchment. An example, usually the USA, was an important element of a good answer.

(b) Very sadly many candidates decided to read this question as *sources* of the constitution, rather than *features*. The use of the term 'features' in questions remains under review as it is so consistently misunderstood by candidates. Those who did concentrate on 'sources' could be credited for noting the plurality of sources, the importance of prerogative powers (which some might describe as a feature) and parliamentary sovereignty, but few marks were available for this. Those who did correctly refer to features such as its flexibility and uncodified nature, constitutional monarchy, unitary status and lack of separation of powers (often correctly described as a 'fusion' of the executive and legislature) were well rewarded. Some candidates were rather out of date in referring to the lack of separation of the judiciary, which is now clearly no longer so.

(c) There were many well prepared responses and most candidates understood what was required for a good answer. Most concentrated on the ease with which the constitution can be changed, but only the stronger candidates developed this by explaining what kind of problems arise from this (e.g. the setting aside of human rights in the interest of law and order policy or the drift towards 'excessive' prime ministerial powers). Many chose to concentrate on the electoral system and its distortions. This was valid. Other typical issues were the survival of non-elected elements, the over-mighty executive (though the idea of elective dictatorship was too often ignored) and too much centralisation, though this last criticism can be slightly muted in the light of devolution. The best responses tended to explain the effects of the lack of the separation of powers, though many were out of date on the judiciary and the old chestnut of the Lord Chancellor's triple role, now reformed. Some candidates decided to give a balanced answer, describing good qualities of the constitution, but in such cases only the explanation of criticisms could be credited as the question was not evaluative.

### Question 2

A surprisingly less popular question than the first in view of the fact that versions of questions (a) and (b) have been very common in the past. It was common to see poor, generalised responses to parts (a) and (b). These terms are explained fully in all reputable textbooks so there is no problem with access to information. Sadly part (c) was too often attempted by candidates who were not prepared for its specific demands.

(a) Some were well prepared and gave a good conceptual answer, with an example, nearly always from the USA. A common fault was to treat this question in generalised terms, referring to systems merely 'dominated' by a president. The term 'presidential system of government' is specifically constitutional and conceptual so such generalised responses

received little credit. Many candidates were able to refer to separate elections, separate accountability and separate membership of executive and legislature, but too few mentioned all three, each of which is a key element.

(b) Here again too few candidates could treat the question conceptually. A sizeable minority treated the question as being about parliamentary sovereignty. This is relevant when referring to parliamentary government in the UK, but is questionable when referring to the term parliamentary government as a concept, but it does not constitute an accurate answer. However, a good number understood the importance of the fact that, in a parliamentary system, the executive is not separately elected and is drawn from the legislature. Only stronger candidates developed this by pointing out that the executive sits in the legislature, draws its political authority from the legislature and not directly from the electorate, and that the executive is accountable to the legislature. As Britain is a classic example of this there is plenty of exemplary material available.

(c) Too many candidates chose to interpret this question to be a general critique of parliament, thus ignoring the key term 'representative role'. As such only the parts referring to representation could be credited. Quite correctly, better answers concentrated on two factors - the adverse effects of the electoral system and the fact that parliament is not demographically representative. Only the strongest responses developed the idea that MPs in particular are inhibited in their representative role by the power of the whips and party discipline. Most candidates understood that this question was evaluative and required a balanced view. However, analysis of the representative *strengths* of parliament were relatively sparse. Fortunately some stronger candidates did try to analyse the representative role and activities of the Lords (i.e. group representation) and pointed out that many MPs do a very good job in representing constituents and constituencies.

### Question 3

Surprisingly less popular than questions 1 and 2, given the standard nature of the questions. As with the first two questions, candidates failed to understand often that the term 'cabinet government' is somewhat conceptual and is not meant to be merely descriptive. It was also surprising that part (c)) was often poorly done in view of the predictability of this kind of question.

(a) There were too many vague responses referring merely to a collection of senior ministers and some notion of policy or decision making. What was too often lacking was the concept of collective decision making and responsibility. It was also commonly not appreciated that the term cabinet government presents the prime minister as only first among equals.

(b) Sadly, as with some questions above, a sizeable minority misread or misunderstood the question and merely described the powers of the prime minister when the question was asking for sources of that power. Of the candidates who did specify sources there were many good responses, identifying party leadership, parliamentary support as well as some indirect authority from the electorate to add to the standard and correct response that prerogative powers are crucial. A few very able candidates added that the sources of power can be variable with some coming to the fore at some times and others in different times. These tended to be illustrated with examples.

(c) Many candidates rehearsed the standard arguments about prime ministerial power. However, the question required some appreciation of change and an evaluation of whether there was indeed a critical change in the position of the prime minister. Most chose to use Thatcher, Major, Blair and Brown as examples and this worked well. A few went back as far as Wilson and Macmillan which could be successful but then left too little time and space for contemporary developments. Such responses were thus inevitably incomplete. Those who confined themselves to Brown and Blair could construct a cogent answer but were left with a dearth of exemplary material. The best candidates explored the idea of a changeable political world within which a prime minister operates, thus suggesting there is no particular trend. Others chose a conventional route, merely suggesting that yes, prime ministerial power

has increased and described the key factors. This approach, though perfectly valid, tended to be less successful.

#### Question 4

As usual, the question on the judiciary was the least popular. This is a shame, especially as the judiciary in the UK is becoming significantly more important and there have been many news stories concerning the role of judges. It also remains true that the questions on this topic have been limited and therefore more predictable. It is therefore puzzling that so few are well prepared, either ignoring the question or attempting it in a cursory manner. Fortunately there were also a minority of excellent, sensitive responses.

(a) Most candidates could provide appropriate examples of civil liberties, though some strayed into American country where the 'right to bare arms' appeared a few times. Whether candidates were deliberately making a linguistic joke (hence the term 't-shirt amendment') or were merely bad spellers is not known, but it does give food for thought. More worryingly some were unable to distinguish between human rights and civil liberties, the key difference being the nature of the citizen's relationship with the state and the law, rather than a more general notion of social justice.

(b) This question was not, on the whole, tackled well. Many, who had presumably carefully prepared answers on judicial independence and neutrality, tried to adapt their material to the question. Invariably this was not successful. Stating that judicial independence, for example, is now better guaranteed does not tell us how judges attempt to protect civil liberties. It represents little more than background information. There were many who could refer to judicial review, but did not develop the point by explaining the term fully or using examples. Similarly the Human Rights Act was often mentioned without a full understanding of how it works. Thus, good, full answers were thin on the ground with relatively few being able to explain the role of judges in such cases successfully. There were plenty of references to Belmarsh, but little else. References to judges and judicial inquiries were, however, welcome.

(c) Again too many candidates simply explained how judges are able to retain independence and were unable to describe a changing situation. There were many responses which correctly traced the growing importance and activism of the judiciary but these too often failed to provide balance by pointing out the judges' powers remained circumscribed, not least by parliamentary sovereignty. That said, there was an encouraging degree of awareness among better candidates that the ongoing reform of the judiciary seems to be strengthening its role. There has been a great deal of news coverage of judges criticising government openly, notably Hoffman, Woolf, Bingham and Phillips and of disputes over issues such as sentencing policy and the rights versus public security controversy, but full use of them remained rare.

It remains regrettable that many candidates do not seem to be studying the judiciary, especially as it is becoming increasingly significant in British politics.

## Unit 3

### 6493 - The Changing UK System

#### General Comments

It was commonly felt, among assistant examiners that candidates performed slightly better than in past January series. It was noted in Question 1 that a concise appreciation of constitutional reform was provided, supported by relevant and perceptive examples. Perhaps less well handled, was Question 2 where assistant examiners indicated that a developed understanding of sovereignty still eluded many candidates in the first two questions. In terms of take up of each question, Question 1 was by far the more popular.

Slightly disappointing was the handling of the source material. It was felt that a majority of students once again merely tended to repeat line by line the content of the source without any attempt to convert this into their own words and thus show a fuller understanding of what the source was implying. However, ground lost on the sources was in general made up on questions c and d,

#### Question 1

(a) As noted above repetition word for word of the source was the main barrier to candidates' progression. An appreciation of the lack of interest in constitutional matters lay at the core of the response. An inability to contextualise and appreciate the source did manifest itself in many scripts.

(b) The source indicated a change in approach adopted by the Conservative Party to constitutional change yet a surprising minority almost ignored the source content and insisted that the Conservative position had not changed! A historical account of the attitude of the party was at times given, but crucially the response did not address the contemporary position. This result of this was that many candidates remained in level 2 and did not advance, in the main hampered by a distinct lack of knowledge of the current Conservative position. For instance, few knew of the Conservative attitude to the House of Lords reforms noted in the source, hence as a result there was a lack of developed 'own knowledge' to raise the mark allocation.

(c) Assistant examiners reported that this was handled well. A number of operational issues were identified; these were supported by accurate and informed examples, ranging from the problems associated with the Freedom of Information Act to Devolution and the stalemate with regard to second chamber reform. In evidence and clearly depicted was the 'West Lothian Question'. It was felt that there was good contemporary detail given on a range of issues.

(d) Candidates, who understood problems, invariably could see the opposite side of the equation and appreciated the supposed benefits of constitutional change. The key element which lifted the response into level 3 was developed examples; these provided a base for both AO1 and AO2 criteria. For instance, where the topic of devolution was identified then the advantages of this reform followed. Devolution was illustrated in all areas of the UK, producing distinct benefits for each region. Hence, the policy divergence emerging from Scotland, the peace dividend in Northern Ireland and the cultural revival in Wales were discussed. Assistant examiners were complimentary of both the range and scope of answers they marked. This provides evidence for centres that this area has been well taught, and clearly understood.

## Question 2

(a) As with question 1a, a similar and distinct pattern emerged here. Once again the source was often literally lifted without any personal interpretation. Again it was evident that there was an inability to contextualise and appreciate the passage. Virtually no candidate reflected the origins of the extract, to enable them to more easily understand its remit and scope.

(b) The second source identified the issue of 'pooling' sovereignty and how through 'pooling' that sovereignty had not been surrendered but rather combined. Few candidates were able to understand this view of the concept and hence the source in the main remained largely undeveloped. As a consequence most marks were earned by depiction how the UK has retained sovereignty from the candidates own knowledge. This covered areas not under the remit of the EU such as sections of criminal law and also the 'red line' areas protected by the UK government. Many concluded with the premise that the UK Parliament can ultimately withdraw from the EU and hence retains ultimate sovereign power.

(c) Timing and focus served the more proficient candidates on this question. A contemporary spotlight on all parties was required. Some candidates used this as an opportunity to discuss the impact of Mrs Thatcher on the Conservative Party then spent well over half their response on the fallout within the Party in the 1980's and 1990's. This, whilst being informative, prevented a discussion of the current position of the party, which gained only scant attention. Some took a similar line with the debacle with the Labour Party in the 1970's and 1980's. In short, historical material was provided often at the expense of current material. However, many candidates welcomingly moved beyond the two main parties and discussed the Liberal Democrats and the Nationalist parties and UKIP.

(d) A significant minority chose to ignore two key words of this question 'further' and 'integration' and merely listed the advantages and disadvantages of the EU. This was thus a limitation on their progress.

However, for the majority of candidates, integration was a well known topic area and handled well. The more able taking integration in all its forms, economic, political social and military and considered the balance sheet for all. Many fully realised that this question had an ambit of more than adapting the Euro.

A plea that continually emerges from assistant examiners is the use of the ECHR and assimilating this to the EU. The ECHR is a separate body; it is wider and has a different purpose than the EU. This is never an area where a candidate loses any marks or is penalised for the confusion. However, clarification of the scope of the organisation would aid a fuller understanding and enable candidates to concentrate more fully on the EU.

## Unit 4

### Route A (6494) - UK Political Issues

#### General

As we have come to expect the general standard was rather higher than in June. Short answers were well constructed on the whole and, above all, most attempted to address the specific question, thus avoiding generalised, unfocused answers. Essays were similarly well written on the whole, though there was a slightly greater tendency to ignore the specific nature of the question.

#### Question 1

This question was tackled with more success than when Northern Ireland questions have been asked in the past. Virtually all candidates clearly understood what was meant by power sharing, though few explained it explicitly. As usual with Northern Ireland questions a fair number of candidates adopted too historical an approach so their answers lacked contemporary material. This question was largely answerable in terms of the changes which have taken place between the GFA and the current resumption of devolved government after several false starts and suspensions for Stormont. The best candidates showed sensitivity to what changed in the year or so prior to final agreement. The uncoupling of Sinn Fein and the IRA was clearly vital, as was growing trust between the two extremist parties. Most suggested, accurately, that it was clear that Sinn Fein finally recognised the futility of armed struggle. The role of individuals such as Blair and Trimble, as well as the offers from the UK and EU of additional funding if government could be restored, were too often ignored. It was good to see some candidates referring, very cogently, to the growing personal relationship between McGuinness and Paisley.

#### Question 2

The key discriminator in this question was the extent to which candidates were able to understand the specific reasons why police powers have been increased. Terrorism issues was an easy and obvious example, but we also hoped to see developments such as growth in youth crime, fear of crime, violent crime etc as causes of greater police powers. Better candidates also showed that the growing prison population gave rise to the need for more summary justice. Most candidates were able to describe a good range of increased police powers, but less linked them to the issues described above.

A distressingly common assertion was that the police had been given 'shoot to kill' powers in response to terrorism. Presumably the confusion arose from media assertions that police may secretly have been given such powers (hence the de Menezes shooting) when there is no evidence that this is the case. It was ignored by examiners when mentioned. The issue of increasing the numbers of police and use of CSOs was tenuously admitted as 'police powers' so credit was given. Knowledge of ASBOs, on the spot fines, stop and search powers, DNA and CCTV was widespread.

#### Question 3

Many candidates were clearly hoping for a question on pensions and were well prepared with good answers. Virtually all candidates also were able to link the problem of the state pension with problems over private pensions, though with varying success. All seemed to know that the ageing population and worsening dependency ratio are fundamental problems. The nature of the fundamental problem of the state pension was widely understood and a substantial minority of candidates knew the main conclusions of the Turner report. There was also widespread accurate knowledge of the issue of index linking versus earnings linking of the pension. Many also understood how Labour has wrestled with the issue since 1997 and a few excellent responses linked the pensions issue with Gordon Brown's 'targeting agenda',

anti poverty programme and taxation policy. Many knew about the notorious 75p pension increase and understood how it had arisen.

The very best answers tended to discuss problems with private pensions and understood the link with the state pension, referring correctly to stakeholder pensions and the private pensions 'crisis'.

#### Question 4

Most candidates were able to deploy a wide range of examples of how governments have attempted to drive up education standards. The key discriminator, however, was how well candidates were able to demonstrate how these developments were designed to improve standards. Thus, for example, the greater importance placed on league tables, beacon status and the like, were designed to create a quasi market and so encourage higher standards. Targeting funding on better schools, as identified by Ofsted, was designed for the same purpose. Attempts to improve the performance of teachers, literacy and numeracy programmes and surestart were all much in evidence, though many lapsed into discussions of the problems which gave rise to such measures, analysis which was not required in the question. This was, in fact, the main failing among weaker candidates. Too many interpreted the question as linking education policy to social and economic problems. The question was about how the measures were designed to work. Higher level responses often demonstrated good knowledge of specialist schools and city academies, understanding how these might raise standards. Here again, however, some candidates attempted evaluation of such institutions, which the question did not ask for. It was generally true that too many candidates unnecessarily evaluated the measures. EMAs, more places in higher education and raising the school leaving age, as proposed, were all allowed as valid examples of raising standards.

#### Question 5

Many candidates had little problem in being able to deploy a large range of evidence demonstrating how race relations have indeed deteriorated. These typically cited the Lawrence case, recent examples of rioting in Northern towns, Islamophobia and terrorist related issues, growth in race crime, fears of ghettoisation etc. The difficulty for many candidates was in finding balance, though most attempted to do so as the question required evaluation. Inevitably, examples of improving race relations tend to be less specific than examples of deterioration. Candidates were, therefore, well rewarded for referring to the importance of positive role models, successes in the world of football, the work of the former CRE (candidates were not penalised in any way for not knowing its new title and remit) and for improvements in police practices. There was very good knowledge shown of recent race legislation, often being cited as evidence of improving relations, though some, cogently, suggested the growth of legislation was evidence of poor race relations. Though it was not necessary for high level marks, strong candidates were able to link the issue of race relations to the continuing debate over multiculturalism. Questions on race issues have not, in the past, been typically answered well. It was therefore refreshing to see so many good responses, especially from candidates who demonstrated both interest in and wide knowledge of the subject. Understanding of a balanced approach was particularly impressive.

#### Question 6

As long as candidates could cite evidence from at least three areas of welfare provision they could qualify for a level three mark, though many went into four or even five areas. Naturally candidates had to choose between a narrow range at great depth and a wide range with less development. Either option could yield high marks. A few brave and usually admirable candidates attempted a thematic, holistic approach to the welfare state, discussing such issues as social exclusion, poverty and inequality and evaluating the recent success or failure of the welfare state in dealing with them. On the whole, however, candidates adopted the conventional approach of looking at health, education, social security and - not always - pensions or housing, in turn.

Virtually all candidates recognised the importance of evaluation and therefore attempted a balanced approach. Perhaps it would have been good to see more examples of discussion of why key indicators are often disputed. For example there is controversy over how poverty is measured and therefore how much it has been reduced. Similarly the statistics on improved health service or education provision are disputed amid some accusations of creative massaging of numbers etc. Nevertheless the vast majority of candidates understood how the evidence points in both directions and could deploy useful factual underpinning for their assertions.

### Question 7

The least popular of the questions, perhaps because study of economic policy is declining or because it was felt the question was particularly challenging. The most common fault was to ignore the Liberal Democrats. This was especially problematic because it is the Lib Dems who most often break the consensus so there is more material to discuss. For example it is they who support a fair tax system, who are least averse to raising the overall tax burden and most support re-distributive policies. They are also, of course, distinctive in the attitude to the adoption of the European single currency. Answers which ignored the Lib Dems, therefore, could not expect to achieve more than half marks, however good in other respects. It was also slightly disappointing to see little sensitivity to lack of consensus *within* parties, though this was not a *sine qua non* of a level three mark.

Nearly all candidates recognised the need for a balanced evaluation and there was widespread understanding that consensus has grown, though some went back too far into political history and so suffered a lack of depth. Most credit was given to those who concentrated on more recent events than the Thatcher era. That said, there were many good responses and impressive awareness of the changes taking place under Brown and Cameron. Ideology was largely ignored though some brave souls dipped their toes into the waters of neo liberalism, Third Way and interventionism versus non intervention. They usually were rewarded well. There was much talk of the Northern Rock crisis, not surprisingly as it was such a recent event. In fact this was not relevant to this question unless the candidate was able to link the reactions of the three parties in relation to wider economic ideology, concerning neo liberalism, nationalisation, pragmatism etc.

## Unit 4

### Route B - (6497) Introducing Political Ideologies

#### General

The general standard of responses to this paper was broadly in line with previous years. None of the questions posed acute problems for candidates, with very few of them completely misunderstanding the questions set.

#### Question 1

This was the least popular of the short questions. Nevertheless, very few candidates who attempted it failed to demonstrate at least a basic understanding of collectivism, and in some cases highly sophisticated definitions were offered. In a small number of cases, collectivism was mistaken for collectivisation, largely blurring the point of the question. The main point of discrimination was between candidates who did little more than note the linkage between collectivism and state intervention and those who were able properly to explain it. However, only a small minority of candidates showed a full recognition of the fact that the state has often been seen as a tool through which collective goals are achieved, which is why collectivists have often looked favourably on forms of state intervention. Good responses were often able to discuss a variety of types of collectivist interventionism. Where an awareness was demonstrated of anti-statist collectivism this, of course, could not be rewarded.

#### Question 2

This was a popular question. Very few candidates failed to show how liberal assumptions about human nature implied concerns about political power. Not surprisingly, Lord Acton's famous quote did sterling work here. However, there was a major difference between responses that did little more than illustrate Acton's warnings about power by listing the constitutional devices that liberals support to contain it, and those who properly explained why 'absolute power' is such an acute problem. Only a limited number of candidates were therefore able to explain how and why corruption, and therefore tyranny, intensifies as power is held in fewer and fewer hands. In a significant number of cases, responses appeared to be answering a question just about why liberals believe that power corrupts rather than one about their particular concern with concentrations of power. This was not a question in which there was great value (or, perhaps, any value) in exploring differences between classic and modern liberalism. In weak cases, candidates wrote more about liberal attitudes towards the state, rather than about the distribution of power within the state, which meant that they answered a different question.

#### Question 3

This was a popular question and, generally, very successfully answered. Most responses were able to offer two and often more conservative justifications for property, explained with differing degrees of analytical insight. In the best answers, explicit reference was made to the different views of traditional conservatives and the liberal New Right, with the former viewing property, amongst other things, as a responsibility linked to tradition and continuity, while the latter views property in terms of individual rights and economic incentives. In strong responses, candidates were able to explain when and why conservatives had employed essentially liberal arguments in favour of property, recognising the extent to which modern conservatism has been influenced by liberal economic thinking. In some weak responses, the liberal merit-based justification for property was simply mistaken for the conservative view. In view of the liberal New Right, such a response was not altogether wrong but it was, clearly, limited.

#### Question 4

Virtually all candidates who answered this question showed a basic understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a transitional phase between the overthrow of capitalism in a proletarian revolution and the establishment of full communism. However, many found it far more difficult to explain why this phase was needed. The best responses recognised that the dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary to protect the gains of the revolution against counter-revolution mounted by the dispossessed bourgeoisie. In other words, a recognition was shown of the fact that capitalist class antagonisms persist after the proletarian revolution, creating the need for a temporary proletarian state. However, only a very small number of candidates were able to link this to the Marxist theory of the state as an instrument of class oppression, in this case wielded by the proletariat, the new ruling class, to subdue the bourgeoisie. Other purposes for the dictatorship of the proletariat include preparing for the establishment of full communism by helping to collectivise wealth through a process of nationalisation. Some explanations, however, were quite misconceived. For example, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not needed to bring the proletariat to class consciousness because, without class consciousness, there would not have been a proletarian revolution in the first place. Similarly, some responses seemed to confuse the dictatorship of the proletariat with Leninist vanguardism.

#### Question 5

This was a popular question and it was answered well by a large proportion of candidates. Most responses focused heavily on the free-market ideas of Thatcherism or the liberal New Right, although some candidates were able to discuss the deeper origins of these ideas, sometimes going back to Burke. Strong responses highlighted and explained the benefits of the free market from the neoliberal perspective - economic efficiency, consumer responsiveness, social justice and so on. The ideas of Friedman, Hayek and Nozick were often effectively deployed. The counter-free-market view was usually linked to One Nation conservatism and the ideas of Disraeli or post-1945 'middle way' thinking. However, in many cases, conservative reservations about the free market were described rather than explained, with, sometimes, a lack of analytical depth in responses. A further common weakness was a tendency to misinterpret neoconservatism. In some responses it was treated rather like a modern version of One Nationism, supporting interventionism and opposing the free-market enthusiasms of neoliberalism. Although some neoconservatives have reservations about the free market (particularly on the grounds of its implications for social order and stability), most have favoured the 'rolled-back' state, and have especially targeted 'excessive' welfare provision.

#### Question 6

Most of the candidates who attempted this question were able to show at least a sound understanding of liberal approaches to equality. Many demonstrated an awareness of foundational equality, formal equality, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. In some cases, a belief in foundational and formal equality was associated, unhelpfully, only with classical liberalism. A large proportion of responses primarily explored differences between classical liberalism and modern liberalism over social equality. Strong responses often examined how, although both classical and modern liberals believe in equality of opportunity, only modern liberals believe that state intervention to reduce levels of social inequality is required to establish a level playing-field. Classical liberals, by contrast, believe that capitalism itself provides a level playing-field, and also place greater stress on the economic benefits of social inequality (incentives, efficiency and so on). In some weaker responses, equality of opportunity was associated exclusively with modern liberalism. The best responses, however, went beyond an examination of differences between classical and modern liberalism and looked at the extent to which all forms of liberal egalitarianism could be viewed as 'qualified'. This was usually done by reference to their implications for social equality, contrasting the various liberal views with the more thorough-going egalitarian beliefs of socialism. Some very good responses emphasised that liberals place priority on

freedom rather than equality and believe that it is unjust for unlike people to be treated alike.

### Question 7

This was a popular question, generally well answered. In a very small number of cases did the mention of 'inevitability' draw candidates, unwisely, towards an examination of Marx's theory of history. The vast majority recognised that gradualism refers to democratic or evolutionary socialism, although many answers would have benefited from providing an explicit definition of gradualism at the outset. Strong responses examined the thinking behind the doctrine of the 'inevitability of gradualism', usually drawing on the ideas of Fabian socialists. This was often done convincingly with an emphasis being placed on factors such as the arrival of political democracy and the numerical strength of the industrial working class within the newly-enfranchised electorate. Where the assumptions behind gradualist optimism were highlighted, this provided a sound basis for exploring practical difficulties and pitfalls. Strong responses examined factors such as changes in the capitalist class system, the declining size of the working class, and the capacity of capitalism to 'deliver the goods' and persuade a growing proportion of working class voters that socialism may not be in their interests. Very strong responses also sometimes outlined Marxist explanations for the failure of gradualist socialism, looking in particular at the impact of bourgeois ideology or class biases that operate within the state system. Weaker responses to this question tended to describe, rather than analyse or explain, the 'failures' of gradualist socialism, with much attention focusing on the 'betrayals' of New Labour. In some cases, very reasonably, the successes of gradualist socialism were highlighted (redistribution, social welfare and so forth), but candidates overwhelmingly recognised that the resilience (and, in some respects, resurgence) of capitalism demonstrate that the dreams of early evolutionary socialists have not been fulfilled.

## Unit 4

### Route C (6500) - Representation in the USA

#### Question 1

This was a popular question that invited candidates to demonstrate their knowledge on the different types of primary and the ability to analyse their respective strengths. Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the difference between the primaries, with some describing the processes with great details and accuracy and including references to the primaries that had already taken place in 2008. Some, however, made basic errors, the most common of which was confusing closed primaries and caucuses. The analytical aspect of the question, for which more marks were awarded, effectively differentiated between candidates. The weakest candidates offered generic advantages and disadvantages of the use of primaries in elections, without directly addressing the two forms of primaries. The majority of candidates offered one advantage of open primaries (usually that they provide greater opportunities for participation) and two advantages of closed primaries (usually preventing "raiding" and voters making a more informed choice). Only a small percentage of candidates were able to offer two or more advantages of both open and closed primaries.

#### Question 2

This was quite a popular question that invited candidates to analyse why pressure groups in the USA seek to influence the judiciary and to demonstrate their knowledge of the specific strategies used by groups to achieve this end. Many candidates offered only cursory analysis of the value of persuading judges, with the power of judicial review, to adopt its views. With federal courts having the power to effectively shape the Constitution, the framework within which all public policy operates, all pressure groups strive to influence this branch of government, but is particularly important to minority groups which do not have sufficient representation in the elected branches of government to effect far-reaching change. Even the stronger candidates who answered this question often failed to develop these points. A majority of candidates offered one or two methods of influencing the judiciary, most commonly the sponsorship of test cases as a method of, with *Brown v Board of Education* being frequently cited. Only a small percentage could offer three or more strategies used by pressure groups, supported by examples. The weakest candidates tended to throw all their knowledge of pressure group methods at the question, without sifting out those which related to the judicial branch. Most surprising was the common claim that judges may be influenced by lobbyists or demonstrators, suggesting that courts may be swayed by strategies that are not based on legal argument.

#### Question 3

This was a new question and, not surprisingly, it was the least popular short answer question by a substantial margin. It invited candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the recent fortunes of the left-wing faction of the Democratic Party and to analyse its influence within the party.

Only a few candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding that the left wing of the Democratic Party is associated with campaigns to defend and/or extend hard-won rights such as abortion, civil rights for racial minorities, gay rights, fierce criticism of the war in Iraq from the outset and a confrontational approach to conservatives in general and President George Bush in particular. A greater number were able to identify the fact that there are different ideological factions within the party, without explaining the policy differences between them. The weakest answers gave an historical account of the ways that the Democratic Party has adopted liberal policies since the New Deal.

The strongest candidates recognised that in recent years, activists on the left have been galvanised by the presidential campaign of Howard Dean in 2004, have found new outlets for their views on the internet through sites such as the *Daily Kos* and have raised funds for causes and candidates through internet-based movements such as *MoveOn.org*. Their political significance can be measured by the success of the Dean campaign in the 2004 invisible primary, raising an estimated \$120 million in campaign funds in an effort to remove President George W Bush from office in the 2004 presidential election, their defeat of Senator Lieberman in the Democratic primary ahead of the 2006 midterm elections because of his support for President Bush's foreign policy, and the prominence of left wing Democrats in Congress, such as Speaker Nancy Pelosi. On the other hand, Dean's campaign collapsed and Lieberman was returned to the Senate as an independent; left wing leaders in Congress have achieved little since 2006 and the left's standard in the 2008 presidential election was carried by the marginal candidate Dennis Kucinich. Moreover, the conservative wing of the party, the "Blue Dogs" saw their representation in Congress substantially bolstered in the 2006 mi-term elections and the leading presidential candidates in 2008 were both moderate centrists. Weaker candidates failed to analyse the relative weight of the factions in the party. Overall, the question was not done well. Hopefully, it will be done better when it returns in this, or similar, form.

#### Question 4

This was a very popular question that invited candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of factors that influence voter turnout and analyse them in terms of recent elections. The strongest candidates recognised that there are two types of factors affecting voter turnout. There are factors which are not significantly affected by the political climate, such as voter mobility (almost one-fifth of American voters move to a new location every five years and many of them may not have met the registration requirements for them to be able to vote or may not have registered to vote in their new location). Then there are factors that may well be affected by the political climate. Broadly classified as "political efficiency" issues, such as voters choosing not to participate because they feel the two main parties are too similar. The impact of these factors may vary from one election to another. For example, in the ideologically polarised 2004 presidential election, turnout increased substantially. Even factors such as voter fatigue can be affected by the political climate. As a number of students pointed out, although the 2008 presidential election campaign began as early as January 2007, interest in the contenders (particularly the prospect of the first woman or African American as president) and a tight race has led to high levels of interest and participation in the primaries. Weaker candidates tended to provide a long list of factors that can affect voter turnout but not analyse why the level of participation can vary from one election to another. The weakest candidates appear to have concluded, after six months of studying US politics, that Americans are lazy, have no interest in politics and will not vote unless the polling station is nearby and the weather is perfect.

#### Question 5

This was a popular question that invited candidates to explain and analyse the forces driving up the cost of elections, and to explain the mechanisms devised to keep spending in check, analysing their effectiveness.

Although this question had not appeared before, candidates had been well prepared for it by their centres. Despite this, there was a marked tendency for candidates, even those from the same centre, to address *either* the forces driving up costs *or* the effectiveness of campaign reform but not both.

The minority of students who addressed both aspects of the question effectively produced outstanding answers. The majority who addressed one aspect in detail tended to produce good answers. There were comparatively few poor answers.

### Question 6

This was the most popular of the essay questions and invited candidates explain and analyse conflicting viewpoints on the extent to which the principles of the Constitution to “establish Justice... and secure the Blessings of Liberty” apply to all Americans, regardless of race. The strongest candidates established a framework for their answers by outlining the evidence for/against continuing racial inequality, often focussing on the political implications of Hurricane Katrina. They then explored the range of ideological positions on whether there is a need for government to promote greater racial equality and the merits of alternative strategies. Thus although these answers discussed Affirmative Action in detail, they explored wider issues as well. This approach, delivered effectively, produced some extremely good answers.

Weaker candidates, while taking a broadly similar approach, tended to spend too much valuable exam-time explaining the historical context of racial intolerance and its continuing effects.

The weakest candidates tended to set out the history of racial inequality and then suggest that because (Republican) President George W Bush has had two high-profile African Americans in his cabinet and because (Democratic) Barack Obama has attracted such widespread support in the presidential primaries, all of America’s racial problems are in the past.

### Question 7

This was the least popular essay question, inviting candidates to explain the ideas and fortunes of the main strands of the Republican Party and analyse the extent of their influence within the party.

The strongest candidates were able to outline the principal policy positions of social conservatives, fiscal conservatives and the moderate “mainstreet partnership” faction and then weigh up how influential each group is within the party. The best candidates drew on recent developments, such as the unpopularity of President George W Bush and the success in the 2008 primaries of Senator John McCain to argue that the balance of the power within the party is shifting in the direction of the moderates. Others made an effective case when arguing that social conservatives have been the most significant driving force in recent years. Weaker candidates focussed on the main policies associated with the Republican Party and discussed the extent to which these policies were ‘conservative’ without discussing the balance of power within the party. Although less sophisticated, this approach produced some good responses.

## Unit 4

### Route D (6503) - Introducing International Politics

#### General Comments

This paper contained a mixture of familiar questions, such as question 7, and completely new questions. Moreover students had to deal with topics which had not been addressed before, or were addressed in a more challenging manner. Question 3, for example addressed the polarity of the current international system, and not simply asking for an explanation of bipolarity or multipolarity as might have been asked previously. The newer, more challenging questions were excellent discriminators, in that weak students were unable to directly address questions and failed to give balanced analysis, but stronger candidates could. Overall, this year's paper was slightly more challenging than that in January 2007.

#### Question 1

This was understandably a popular question and most candidates drew distinctions between supranational and intergovernmental institutions within the EU (which was a previous question). However, very few mentioned the pooling of sovereignty, and some did not discuss sovereignty at all. Better answers had good knowledge of the ECJ, ECB and QMV in the Council of Ministers. They also discussed the extent to which the EU is not supranational, in areas such as foreign policy and taxation, for example. Sadly many still believe that the ECHR is an institution of the EU.

#### Question 2

This was the least popular short question but was generally well answered. Most candidates absolved the developing world from blame 'for they are only trying to catch up with the rich'. Several mentioned consumerism as a driving force behind carbon emissions in the North but few touched on the problems facing democracies who have to respond to the electorates' desires however unreasonable they may be. However knowledge of environmental treaties and agreements were not known by all students.

Good answers not only described the environment debate, with examples, but also analysed the extent to which the environment is willingly sacrificed in the pursuit of national interests. Answers also discussed the link between economic growth and environmental damage, noting that many nation states are reluctant to threaten economic growth in order to meet international targets to reduce carbon emissions. Strong candidates also remarked that the scientific debate concerning global warming, for example, is on-going and Bush, for example has so far not been persuaded that global warming is a significant threat which will not be dealt successfully by future generations. Most noted that if the superpower is unwilling to make sacrifices then other states, particularly LDCs, will also ignore the problem.

#### Question 3

This was the most popular short question and was generally well answered. All candidates successfully defined unipolarity though there was disagreement over whether it was a passing phase in the 1990s or whether it is here until such time as China and India reach economic and military maturity. Few expressed optimism that the EU could form a multipolar element. Some students failed to discuss whether unipolarity exists nor its implication for global order, and many seemed intent on discussing multipolarity. Better answers offered sophisticated analysis of the extent to which the international system is unipolar, and a discussion of the dominance of the USA.

#### Question 4

This relatively straightforward question required a description of the ICJ and ICC. Most candidates mentioned the problems of the enforcement of justice given that the UN has no dedicated power of enforcement. Many noted that the United States' refusal to accede to either court was an insuperable problem which undermined their global acceptability. Some concluded that 'justice is reserved for the losers.' The best answers contained sophisticated analysis and excellent knowledge of the development of international courts and of the role of international law in promoting order in international politics.

#### Question 5

This question was popular and quite well answered. Most candidates offered a reasonable definition of neo-colonialism and then went on to examine the baleful influences of MNCs and IGOs such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The examples given of MNCs (or TNCs) were not always well chosen. McDonalds (the most quoted) has more of a cultural and dietetic impact than an economic one. Likewise Walmart is only likely to appear in states which have relatively rich consumers. Most did qualify their condemnation with mention of corruption, war, natural disasters and debt but many answers were short on specific examples and very few considered the colonial legacy of economies which are dominated by one or two industries.

#### Question 6

This was the least popular of the "long" questions and provoked some very good and very bad answers. The chief difficulty was the distinction between hard and soft power. Most assigned the military to the hard sector but then decided that economic sanctions *et al* were soft. Few identified that soft power is usually a product of hard power which is the usual, though often unspoken, threat behind negotiations. Also very few looked to assign the "hardness" of the action with the importance of the interest being secured. Some excellent answers gave sophisticated analysis of the extent to which hard power is still dominant, with examples given of the use of hard and soft power, and analysis of their effectiveness.

#### Question 7

Most answers clearly relished a dose of anti-Americanism for it was the USA who carried the can and not the Europeans. SAPs were often quoted but there were few examples given of their specific impacts on named states. One specific example that did appear regularly was Paul Wolfowitz's incentive scheme for World Bank executives. Strong candidates had excellent knowledge of the impact of the IFIs, including specific examples of the impact of the Structural Adjustment Program or its new acronym (PRSPs). Awareness was shown of the different strategies and records of the two institutions and of the recent favourable assessment of the World Bank, and a balanced view of the IMF was given.

## Statistics

### Unit 1 (6491) People and Politics

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	54	47	40	34	28
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

### Unit 2 (6492) Governing the UK

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	58	51	44	37	31
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

### Unit 3 (6493) The Changing UK System

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	27	24	21	18	15
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

#### Route A Unit 4 (6494) UK Political Issues

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	59	53	48	43	38
Uniform boundary mark	100	72	63	54	45	36

#### Route B Unit 4 (6497) Introducing Political Ideologies

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	60	54	48	42	36
Uniform boundary mark	100	72	63	54	45	36

#### Route C Unit 4 (6500) Representation in the USA

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	58	53	48	43	38
Uniform boundary mark	100	72	63	54	45	36

#### Route D Unit 4 (6503) Introducing International Politics

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	60	53	46	40	34
Uniform boundary mark	100	72	63	54	45	36

#### Notes

**Maximum Mark (Raw):** the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the Mark Scheme.

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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