



GCE Examiners' Report

Government and Politics

GCE

Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a Question/Question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these Questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Unit 1 – Government in Wales and the United Kingdom	7
Unit 2 – Living and participating in a democracy	10
Unit 3 – Political concepts and theories	13
Unit 4 – Government and politics of the US	16
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	19

Executive Summary

Overall, there was a mixed performance across the four units this year, with some sections of units proving to be more successful than their counterparts in other units. Nevertheless, it is possible to pinpoint some areas of success and other areas that need a little development for future series.

As far as successes are concerned, the most accessible question this year came in Unit 2 (Question 1), where candidates offered some impressive knowledge of pressure groups and scored well as a result. After this, was the Unit 1 question on the British constitution, where candidates also performed very well. Overall, a trend emerged that indicated candidates' knowledge of staple themes such as pressure groups, devolution and the first-past-the-post system is very good, and they are able to express their ideas clearly and effectively. On the other hand, where their knowledge is not as developed, they struggle to express their ideas as coherently, often repeating themselves in an effort to disguise the lack of depth. While there isn't an overarching link between all of these areas, there are links between subgroups, for example, the questions focusing on Wales were responded to with somewhat less elan than those that focused on Westminster or the wider United Kingdom. In another group, areas of the specification that are more conceptually challenging also proved problematic for candidates, with issues such as freedom of expression and incumbency seemingly a greater challenge to candidates.

On a positive note, it was pleasing to see candidates engaging with stimulus material more effectively this year and, in Unit 2, the use of the tabularised data proved to be successful with many candidates performing well: they were able to extract data and provide cogent commentary on it, rather than rely on paraphrasing which was less easy to fall back on with this style of question.

In the A-level papers, Units 3 and 4, Section C offered up some striking similarities in terms of candidates' performance, with both of these offering the weakest responses overall. The answers to these tended to long descriptive and/or narrative tracts that did not engage with the question as fully as may have been hoped. Candidates are strongly encouraged to practice more of these types of questions and consider if they are being as analytical and evaluative as they can be, to ask themselves "Am I fully engaging with the set question?". They then need to ensure they can do this in the time allowed in the examination.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Effectively timing responses to enable them to attempt all required questions.	HTTPS://RESOURCES.WJEC.CO.UK/PAGES/RESOURCESINGLE.ASPX?RIID=3412	Examination walk-throughs for AS units 1 and 2, and A-level units 3 and 4
Conceptually challenging areas of the specification	(UNIT 3) RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE (UNIT 4) RESOURCE WJEC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WEBSITE	Knowledge organisers to support the A-level units, 3 and 4

Responses to the Section C questions of the two A-level papers	HTTPS://RESOURCES.WJEC.CO.UK/PAGES/RESOURCESINGLE.ASPX?RIID=2991	What makes a good essay? Resources to guide learning and teaching in the effective answering of essay questions.
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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 1 – GOVERNMENT IN WALES AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Overview of the Unit

Unit 1 assesses all three assessment objectives. AO1 is assessed in all questions. AO2 is assessed in Section B whilst AO3 is assessed in Section C.

The content and topic areas of this year's paper covered a wide range of the specification and the questions proved accessible to all candidates. There are two compulsory questions in Section A, a choice of one question from two in Section B, and two questions from three in Section C. It was noticeable that Question 7 was the least popular question in Section C, and it is an observed and established pattern in Unit 1 that, when provided with a choice, candidates choose to answer the questions that focus on the UK parliament and government as opposed to the Welsh parliament and government.

The knowledge base for Section A answers this year wasn't as detailed as previous years. The terms chosen for Section A prove challenging for many candidates. There was encouraging evidence in Section B that candidates were able to establish and explain connections and comparisons between aspects of the course. The development and knowledge provided to support such connections/comparisons wasn't as detailed as previous years and there was an over-reliance on the extract in many responses. Section C responses demonstrated that candidates were able to provide a developed and two-sided discussion. There was a range of relevant arguments with good supporting examples to enrich the responses.

As all Questions were attempted, it allowed candidates a good range of topics and the element of choice in Section B and C gave them the opportunity to choose their strongest areas of knowledge.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A (Assessment Objective 1)

Section A questions are assessed against one single assessment objective (AO1). The questions in this section require candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a specific aspect of the syllabus. This year's paper asked the candidates to describe the importance of parliamentary privilege as well as describing the role of the Cabinet system within Welsh government. The question on parliamentary privilege was not especially well answered. There were responses that were familiar and confident in their discussion of the term and were able to offer valid definitions and relevant examples. Unfortunately, some responses were uncertain of the term's actual meaning and definitions were sometimes uncertain and inaccurate. There was confusion with other terms such as parliamentary sovereignty, and it's disappointing to note that some answers were not valid or creditworthy for this question. The term parliamentary privilege is in the specification and candidates are encouraged to familiarise themselves with all terms in the specification to prepare effectively for compulsory Section A questions.

Question 2 asked for a description of the role of the Cabinet within Welsh government. There were responses that described a range of aspects of the Cabinet system within the Welsh context and relevant and contemporary examples were provided. The responses that were accessed the higher bands of the mark scheme were those that focused on providing a description of the Welsh Cabinet. There were some responses that described concepts and functions of Cabinet without exemplifying within the context of Welsh government. As with previous years, candidates need to ensure that they are addressing and remaining focused on the set question and answers would benefit from a range of contemporary examples.

Section B (Assessment Objectives 1 and 2)

Question 3 invited candidates to compare and contrast the role of the opposition in the UK and Welsh parliaments. This was a popular question, and many candidates were able to satisfy the demands of AO2 by producing answers that were focused on providing a thorough comparison of the roles of both oppositions. There were some answers that demonstrated knowledge without going on to use that knowledge to make comparisons, but most candidates were effective in their attempt to meet the demands of AO2. Some candidates relied exclusively on the extract in this question and it's important that they are reminded to use their own knowledge in this question as well as using the extract. Some candidates continue to provide an unnecessary introduction and conclusion in this question. It is also unnecessary to analyse and evaluate in this question without linking it to an explicit point of contrast between both oppositions. There was a lack of precision and detail as regards the opposition in the Welsh parliament when compared to the detail in answers when discussing the opposition in the UK parliament.

Question 4 asked candidates to explain the connection between collective responsibility and prime ministerial government. There was a lack of range to the responses to question 4 with some candidates offering only a single connection with some development. It is encouraged that candidates provide a range of connections and comparisons in their Section B answers to provide a fuller explanation. The extract is intended as a springboard for ideas in Section B questions and candidates are encouraged to use and interrogate the extract to spark some ideas as regards connections. Some responses were able to discuss recent PM's (May, Johnson) and their varied relationship with collective responsibility in a sophisticated way to explain its impact on their authority. Assessment Objective 2 drives all Section B questions and candidates and centres should emphasise this when preparing for both AS exams.

Section C (Assessment Objectives 1 and 3)

This was a popular question that was answered effectively by many candidates. Candidates were able to provide a well-balanced and developed discussion that included a range of relevant examples. The relationship between parliament and government and the extent of executive dominance that exists were discussed in some detail and there were many responses that were structured effectively enabling candidates to communicate their ideas with clarity. Some responses failed to concentrate on the specific focus on the question and chose to discuss themes such as Cabinet power and the Supreme Court. The skill of reading and understanding the specific question is a fundamental necessity in the examination room and all candidates should read the questions with great care.

Question 6 was also extremely popular and was answered well. The extent of reform needed to the British Constitution was a topic that candidates were able to discuss with confidence. There was a slight imbalance to some responses with a lack of discussion on arguments defending the current constitutional arrangements.

As ever, the candidates that can provide modern examples to animate old arguments are well rewarded. Some arguments were provided without the necessary support in terms of explanations and evidence and it's important to emphasise that candidates must develop and expand on the arguments that they provide.

Question 7 was the least popular of the Section C questions. There was an improving knowledge of the Welsh parliament as regards legislation passed and an understanding of the legislative process. Unfortunately, some responses were overly descriptive and failed to offer analysis and evaluation of the legislative process in Cardiff Bay. Responses to question 7 tended to lack a range of arguments and the analysis and evaluation wasn't as pronounced as with other Section C questions.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 2 – LIVING AND PARTICIPATING IN A DEMOCRACY

Overview of the Unit

Unit 2 covered a good range of areas from the specification and allowed candidates to answer a variety of Questions on different topics. The Questions gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate AO1 skills of knowledge and understanding in all three sections, AO2 skills in application of knowledge in Section B and AO3 skills of analysis and evaluation in Section C. Section A, Question 1 and to a lesser extent Question 2 were, overall, answered to a reasonable standard by most candidates. There appeared to be some lack of understanding of limits to the freedom of expression (Question 2), but most candidates were able to gain Band 2 marks in this Question.

Candidates had a choice when answering Question 3 and Question 4. Both Questions used a table format, rather than a written extract. This appeared to be useful to all candidates, and most were able to achieve Band 2 and Band 3 marks, with very few responses placed in Band 1 and some more developed responses reaching Band 4. In general, it was apparent that candidates had knowledge of both Questions but there were still a minority of candidates that were not using their knowledge to engage with the extract to make relevant connections.

Candidates also had a choice in Section C (two out of three Questions). All Questions had varied responses with Question 6 proving to be popular and Question 7 less so. In terms of timing, there appeared to be fewer candidates not completing the whole paper, and candidates continued the previous trend to keep answers concise for Question 1 and Question 2, which is a positive development.

As all Questions were attempted, it allowed candidates a good range of topics and the element of choice in Section B and C gave them the opportunity to choose their strongest areas of knowledge.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A (Assessment Objective 1)

For Question 1, most candidates did outline three methods used by pressure groups, with the more successful responses addressing the full question of exerting influence. On the whole candidates used a range of examples but sometimes they were not the most relevant in terms of the method chosen. Quite a few candidates repeated the same pressure group example for all the different methods chosen, which was not effective in addressing the set Question. Some candidates gave unnecessary detail of the different classification of pressure groups, which was not needed for this question. Candidates who used three separate paragraphs addressing the three points generally had a clearer structure.

Question 2 provided more varied responses, with candidates answering the question in diverse ways and gaining the full range of marks. Some candidates attempted to show three different points and examples, which was not necessary for this question.

This question was generally weaker in terms of examples than Question 1, and some candidates struggled with the issue of limits on freedom of expression. Some candidates lost focus on this and gave descriptive answers on freedom of expression generally. More developed responses offered a range of limits and relevant examples. As with previous years, candidates need to ensure that they are addressing and remaining focused on the set question and answers would benefit from a range of contemporary examples.

Section B (Assessment Objectives 1 and 2)

Candidates had a choice between Question 3 and Question 4, with Question 4 appearing to be the most popular. Question 3 gave candidates an opportunity to use their knowledge of referenda, and many showed good knowledge of recent votes with better candidates focusing on the set question of how referendums affect participation in a democracy. Most candidates were able to use the wide range of information in the extract to make connections and answer the set question. Some candidates did not use the full range of information in the extract and focused on the 2016 referendum at the expense of a broader discussion. However, some candidates demonstrated a wide range of knowledge and used the extract effectively to make connections. There is a small number of candidates who are still using an introduction and conclusion for this question, which is not necessary. A minority of candidates did not make use of the information in the extract and failed to gain AO2 marks, though this trend was less pronounced here than in Question 4.

Question 4 was a popular question, and most candidates were able to use the information in the extract to make connections and address the set question. Many candidates used their own knowledge to add evidence to their points but only a minority used more contemporary examples, with popular references being the 1992 election. Many candidates did not make use of the attribution of the extract that referred to the 2017 election. Similarly to previous years, some candidates did not use the information in the extract, which was a missed opportunity to gain AO2 marks, and was a trend that was more noticeable for this question of Section B. As the extract used a table format, there was less paraphrasing of the content, but some candidates used the information without explaining it in any meaningful way. More effective responses used the information in the extract and demonstrated their authors' own knowledge. These were developed and sustained responses that accessed Band 4 marks in both AO1 and AO2.

Less effective responses tended to focus on the two main parties and did not address the four smaller parties in the extract, and this they did not gain marks for range. Some candidates tended to offer descriptive responses, giving a range of factors that showed media influence on voting behaviour, including political theories, in "for and against" arguments, which are not an effective means by which to structure the response to this question.

Both Question 3 and Question 4 were accessible for all candidates and led to candidates achieving a range of marks across the bands, particularly Band 2 and Band 3.

Section C (Assessment Objectives 1 and 3)

While candidates answered all essay questions, and produced a full range of results, Question 5 and Question 6 appeared to be especially popular. For Question 5, candidates constructed a debate, with a minority using a one-sided argument focusing solely on the judiciary as the best protection of human rights. Many candidates were able to show reasonable knowledge of the judiciary and an understanding of the issue of the protection of human rights with some good contemporary examples; particularly notable was reference to the Rwanda issue.

Some candidates were confused between the Human Rights Act (HRA) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), but most had a good grasp of parliamentary sovereignty as a counter argument to the statement. Although there was some variety of examples, this could be strengthened to give a wider range and not all of the evidence used was the most effective or relevant. As with all Section C answers, some candidates used a formulaic “for and against” structure, which tended to depth and range, but there were some stronger responses in evidence, ones that fully engaged with the key concepts and offered well-developed and balanced evaluation. Overall, candidates focused on the question set, and sought to reach a valid conclusion.

Question 6, the other popular question, saw candidates providing analysis of the set question. Many candidates covered a list of reasons why the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system should be replaced but employed these reasons in an argument with varying degrees of success. Most were able to give a balanced debate, but some focused on either positives or negatives of the system. Some candidates gave detailed, often descriptive paragraphs on alternative systems and this at times lacked focus on the set question. More persuasive responses demonstrated a range of current examples to add strength to their authors’ arguments and provided depth and range. Although this was a popular question, some candidates lacked wider knowledge on the topic and restricted their answers to a few points without evidence. Most candidates were able to draw a conclusion on whether the FPTP system was outdated and should be replaced, but higher-scoring candidates based this on evidence used in the essay, with those at the lower end of the mark range reliant on offering non-supported and asserted judgements.

Question 7 was the least popular in terms of the number of responses seen. Some candidates produced strong answers, with effective AO1 and AO3 skills evident. Candidates showed good knowledge of the ideologies of smaller parties, with most the most widely cited examples being the SNP, UKIP, Reform and the Green Party. Higher-scoring candidates provided analysis of the impact of ideologies of smaller parties on a wide range of factors, including effects on government, the main parties, pressure groups and voters. This question appeared to have fewer formulaic responses than its Section C counterparts and many candidates provided responses that were fluid and provided cogent discussion. Many of the candidates who responded to this question seized the opportunity to use a wide range of contemporary examples, and many produced an evidence-based judgement.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 3 – POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Overview of the Unit

Unit 3 provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills across all three assessment objectives (the recall and understanding of knowledge, the deployment of that knowledge to answer a specific question, and analysis and evaluation leading to a judgement). The examination is split into three sections, with the first – Section A – comprising two, each worth 16 marks that require candidates to explain a concept with examples. This assesses AO1 and AO2. Section B then offers candidates a choice of three questions, from which they choose two. This assesses AO1 and AO3. Finally, Section C, which addresses Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3, is a compulsory question. Across the cohort, candidates performed better in Section A. Section B was, by and large, successful with candidates mainly having reasonable knowledge of the concepts raised; however, it was Section C where candidates seemed to struggle the most. Several had issues with timing, writing long and needlessly narrative responses. This pattern replicates what we have seen in previous years, and we encourage centres to give their learners timed experience of answering individual questions, so that they are able to judge more accurately what they are capable of writing in a limited period of time and cut their cloth accordingly.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A (Assessment Objectives 1 and 2)

Section A offers two compulsory questions that both required candidates to explain the nation and organic society, using relevant evidence and examples to support that viewpoint. On the whole, candidates performed well in this section, although their knowledge of the nation in Question 1 was marginally better than their knowledge of organic society in Question 2. Explanations tended to be reasonable, and most candidates were, therefore, able to access Band 3 in both of these questions. Only a few candidates reached Band 4, and these demonstrated the candidates' thorough knowledge and understanding of the nation and organic society, as the candidates used a range of evidence to support their views. This was especially noted in Question 1, where many of the top-scoring candidates emphasised subjective characteristics to explain issues in depth.

The most common way for candidates to answer these questions is to directly commence their explanation, develop their point, discuss a key thinker on the topic and give an example before referring to the question. There was no requirement in either question for candidates to use an introduction or conclusion, however, many chose to do this without gaining any credit for it. Candidates were able to explain the difference in defining the nation by referencing inclusive and exclusive nationalists, other candidates focused on particular defining characteristics such as language, religion and ethnicity, while others looked at particular schools of thought such as Liberal, Conservative and Post-Colonial Nationalists. All of these strategies were equally valid. Candidates were able to explain the fundamental nature of organic society to conservatives by referencing connections to other conservative values. Some referenced the fragile nature of society, institutions, the family, morality and the nation. All were equally valid, but listing all of them was not necessary.

Several candidates expended too much time on this question, to the detriment of later questions; however, many others left these questions until last, and it was clear from their hurried and unfinished responses that they had not given themselves sufficient time for these. As such, we would advise that candidates undertake some additional practice to ensure they are able to provide, in a shorter period of time, the required focused responses.

One area of concern was the failure of a handful of candidates to produce a coherent organised response. These candidates offered a stream of information that lacked any real focus on the question.

Section B (Assessment Objectives 1 and 3)

Section B offers a choice of three questions that, in this series, required candidates to analyse and evaluate the coherence of Nationalism, Liberal views of freedom and aspects of Socialism, using relevant evidence and examples to support their viewpoint. On the whole, candidates performed well in this section, although candidates preferred to answer Question 4 their knowledge of Nationalism in Question 3 was marginally better than their knowledge of Liberalism and Socialism in Questions 4 and 5. Analysis and evaluation tended to be reasonable, and most candidates were, therefore, able to access Band 3 in their chosen questions. Only a few candidates reached Band 4, and these demonstrated the candidates' thorough knowledge and understanding of Nationalism, Liberalism and Socialism, as those candidates used a range of evidence to support their views. This was especially noted in Question 3, where many of the top-scoring candidates emphasised, concepts shared by all nationalists and areas of tension.

The most common way for candidates to answer these questions is to offer a two-sided response consisting of two or three points on each side. Each paragraph will analyse and evaluate one part of the argument using examples and thinkers to elucidate their point. Candidates were able to analyse one side of the argument and then the other, while others were able to deal with each point in turn. Both these strategies were equally valid.

Unfortunately, several candidates gave responses that weren't much longer than their Section A answers and, as a result, lacked the desired depth and range. Further, a handful of candidates failed to write in structured paragraphs. The responses of these candidates suggest that their authors found it exceedingly difficult to formulate a coherent argument and instead were able only to offer a description of the ideology instead. This listing of key facts was not well rewarded.

Section C (Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3)

Section C provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills across all three assessment objectives. This compulsory question is worth a third of the marks on the paper and it is anticipated that candidates will devote a third of their time to this question; their responses being of greater depth and range than those to their other questions.

On the whole, candidates performed less well in this section. Analysis and evaluation tended to be adequate, and most candidates were, therefore, limited to Band 2 marks. Only a few candidates reached Band 4, and these demonstrated the candidates' thorough knowledge and understanding of Conservatism as well as Nationalism, Liberalism and Socialism as the candidates used a range of evidence to support their views.

The most common way for candidates to answer these questions is to offer a formulaic list of ideologies with only a passing, superficial focus on the question. This cannot receive high reward.

The aim of this question is not to elucidate everything the candidate knows about the four ideologies, rather it aims to allow the candidate to discuss comparisons and similarities between the different ideologies. This is a difficult task, and candidates need a lot of practice to be able to produce a sophisticated response. One successful strategy was for candidates to select a number of global challenges and compare Conservatism's response to other ideologies. Such challenges included climate change, war, immigration and financial crises, among others, and their inclusion enabled candidates to evaluate Conservatism in relation to the other ideologies. Such responses were in a small minority but were highly rewarded.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 4 – GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF THE US

Overview of the Unit

Unit 4 is divided into three sections. Section A has two compulsory questions and is driven by Assessment Objective 2. Section B offers the candidates a choice of two questions from three and the focus here is the analysis and evaluation required of AO3. Section C assesses all three assessment objectives at the same time and is a significant and unique challenge in the assessment arrangements of the unit. AO1 (Knowledge and understanding) is awarded in each question across all sections but is always the least rewarded assessment objective. This is a skills-based paper where the knowledge is secondary and is there to support a particular skill, for instance analysis, evaluation, and explanation of connections.

Both Sections A and C were disappointing this year in terms of candidate responses, The explanations of connections in Section A often lacked range and therefore there was a decline in the successful demonstration of AO2 in this year's paper. The topic areas of filibusters within Congress and incumbency/voting behaviour were ones that many candidates found challenging in terms of establishing connections.

Similarly, Section C continued to present a challenge with many candidates offering a descriptive response to a question that required consistent analysis and evaluation from the outset. There is a need for candidates to realise that Section C also assesses AO2, and they must look to establish connections and make comparisons from across the specification in their answer to this question. It is a markedly different challenge from the more traditional Section B essays, and they must plan and construct their answers accordingly.

Contrastingly, Section B answers were encouraging, and candidates demonstrated good knowledge of federalism, the electoral college and the Supreme Court's protection (or not) of rights. Candidates demonstrated their ability to construct two-sided arguments with a range of arguments and appropriate development. Judgements were offered, conclusions were reached and there was evidence of effective planning in much of the work offered in Section B.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A (Assessment Objectives 1 and 2)

Section A consists of two compulsory questions that require candidates to explain the impact of one aspect of the specification on another. Question 1 required candidates to explain the impact of the filibuster on work of the US Congress. This proved a challenging question for many candidates. Many responses were unable to offer more than one impact of the filibuster and there was a definite lack of range to many responses. Explanations of the impact of the filibuster were not sustained and few answers got beyond a general connection on it delaying legislation within the Congress. There was a lack of precision and range to the examples provided and some responses offered a general description of the filibuster without focusing on the connections aspect of the question. The examples provided were often vague and generalised and this was a disappointing question in terms of candidate performance.

Question 2 asked candidates to explain the impact of incumbency on voting behaviour. Again, some responses were unable to offer more than one impact or connection. Such responses briefly outlined that incumbency had a generally positive impact on voting behaviour but lacked any further points of connection. There were some answers that developed and sustained a range of connections in their answers, but these were not common. Most responses were unable to satisfy the demands of a thorough Band 4 response as they lacked a range of connections and failed to sustain their explanations beyond a relatively superficial connection. Candidates discussed presidential and congressional elections in the context of this question and the more developed answers went on to discuss features such as gerrymandering, pork-barrelling, name recognition and financial advantage in their sustained explanations on the impact of incumbency on voting behaviour. Unfortunately, some candidates chose to write all they know on the factors that impact voting behaviour in their answer and thus ignored the central thrust of the question.

Section B (Assessment Objectives 1 and 3)

Section B consists of three questions and candidates are expected to choose two questions to answer. This year's paper had question on the electoral college, the balance of power between federal and state power and how effectively the Supreme Court protects citizens' rights. Questions 3 and 5 proved to be the most popular choice with candidates and this was a section where candidates' performance was generally sound.

Most candidates were able to analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Electoral College effectively in Question 3. There was a generally reasonable standard of analysis and evaluation as candidates provided a range of arguments both for and against the electoral college. There were good explanations seen with candidates developing their arguments with the classic and anticipated examples; Trump/Clinton 2016, Ross Perot, smaller states maintaining their influence, faithless voters. Occasionally, candidates offered one-sided and imbalanced responses with some unable to offer a coherent defence of the electoral college. It is imperative that Section B answers are two-sided and balanced to reach the "reasonable" and "thorough" bands.

Question 4 was the least popular of the Section B questions. There were some very good answers seen to this question that evaluated the balance of power aspect of the question fully and provided a contemporary and developed analysis of where power lies between the federal government and the states. There were some answers that offered a historical narrative here and such responses tended to be descriptive and lacking in analysis and evaluation.

Question 5 was a question that prompted some topic-based responses as opposed to answers that fully focused on the demands of the question. There were some very good responses seen but many chose to discuss the Supreme Court in a general sense and lost their way by discussing the power of the Court or describing the appointments process. The best responses were those that focused on a range of rights and analysed and evaluated how effectively the Court upheld those rights. Terms such as judicial activism/judicial restraint, loose/strict constructionists were deployed and discussed effectively within the specific context of the question. A key discriminator as regards knowledge for this question was the range and quality of examples used. There were some answers that provided an exceptional range of modern cases to enrich and further their points of analysis. Unfortunately, many responses failed to go beyond a couple of mentions to some classic cases from decades ago and therefore didn't demonstrate a contemporary grasp of the question.

Generally, Section B was the strongest section in this year's paper. Most candidates were able to organise and communicate their ideas effectively into a two-sided discussion with some focus and development on the set question. At times, there were responses that were too short or were one-sided, but the structure of responses was generally encouraging.

Section C (Assessment Objectives 1,2 and 3)

This question is intended to be a holistic opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the Unit 4 specification in its broadest sense. This is a question without topic specificity and the nature of the task enables candidates to choose for themselves what aspects of the course they wish to discuss. Obviously, they must relate their writing to the set question but in answering this synoptic question they are free to choose whatever aspects of the specification they deem relevant. This year's question asked whether the principles that underpin America's democracy remain important in today's America.

Candidates did not perform well in this section. Some offered a description of the constitutional principles and consequently lacked any meaningful analysis and evaluation. Others were unclear about the principles and chose to answer a generalised question regarding democracy. There were candidates who embraced the challenge of this question and who identified a range of principles and went on to analyse and evaluate their importance today. Federalism, limited government, checks and balances and popular sovereignty were the most common principles chosen and some candidates were able to draw upon a range of factors from the full sweep of the specification when evaluating the importance of the principles today. These were well rewarded for their efforts.

There were few Band 4 answers seen for this question with the majority of answers residing in Bands 2 or 3. This question continues to be a challenge for candidates. There is a lack of range to the responses and candidates are unable to successfully draw connections and comparisons from across the specification. Candidates need to appreciate that Section C is a different challenge from the traditional Section B essay which is narrower in focus. The holistic nature of the question is to be emphasised and they have the full range of the specification at their use in tackling the set enquiry.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4285

Email: gcegovernmentandpolitics@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [AS/A Level Government and Politics \(wjec.co.uk\)](http://www.wjec.co.uk/AS/A-Level-Government-and-Politics)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

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Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.



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