



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2022

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Government and Politics

General Certificate of Education

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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1 Government in Wales and the United Kingdom

General Comments

Unit 1 provides an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their ability for all three assessment objectives that underpin the Government and Politics qualification. The level of knowledge (AO1) seen throughout this year's paper was acceptable although both Section A questions had a mean mark of 2.9. The ability of candidates to demonstrate and meet the demands of AO2 continues to improve with a clear focus seen in Section B responses on comparing, contrasting or explaining connections. The continuing challenge seen with AO3 in Section C is encouraging students to analyse and evaluate the specific question offered in the paper.

Most candidates were able to complete the correct number of questions in the time allowed. However, a minority of candidates did not complete or attempt some questions. Candidates should be aware of the potential marks for each question, and use the time available accordingly, as the consequence of not completing or attempting questions has consequences on their overall mark.

Unit 1's title is Government in Wales and the UK. The system of government in Wales should be given as much attention as the UK equivalent.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1** The mean mark for this question was 2.9 and it had a facility factor of 48.8. Many candidates were able to answer this question well by referring to a range of relevant factors as regards the UK's relationship with the UN (membership of Security Council, veto power). Some less successful responses offered knowledge of the UN without the focus on the UK's relationship with the institution. There were some responses where candidates wrote too much for these Section A questions which caused inevitable issues with timing later in the paper.
- Q.2** The mean mark for this question was also 2.9 and it had a facility factor of 47.8. A significant number of responses were able to offer generalised arguments for a Welsh legal jurisdiction. There was a lack of detail in the development of these arguments in some responses.
- Q.3** This proved a popular question with 73.8% of candidates choosing this option in Section B. The mean mark was 13.9 and it had a facility factor of 58.0. Many candidates were able to explain the fluid balance of power between the Prime Minister and Cabinet in an effective manner. Common points of discussion seen across responses were the PM's appointment powers, collective responsibility and the idea of individual ministers as 'big beasts' within the Cabinet.

Many responses offered a range of relevant factors with contemporary and specific development relating to PM's from Johnson back to Thatcher. Some responses displayed a lack of focus on Assessment Objective 2 as they offered independent knowledge on the PM/Cabinet without discussing the connections and interactions between the institutions. These were a minority and the ability of candidates to meet the demands of Assessment Objective 2 this year was encouraging.

- Q.4** This question was answered by 25.4% of candidates. The question had a mean mark of 14.1 and a facility factor of 58.7. Most responses seen were clearly focused on comparing and contrasting the legislative processes in the Welsh and UK parliaments. There were many candidates who structured their answer in a manner that prioritised AO2 in terms of comparing and contrasting and this met the demands of Assessment Objective 2. A feature of less successful responses for this question were ones that lacked specific examples of actual legislation passed in both Parliaments but especially the Welsh Parliament. There was also an imbalance seen as regards knowledge and awareness of the legislative process in the Welsh parliament as compared to the UK Parliament. Inevitably, this restricted the quality and force of comparisons being made with some candidates depending exclusively on the extract for their points of contrast and knowledge.
- Q.5** This was a popular and well-answered question. It was chosen by 81.7% of candidates and had a mean mark of 12.5. Successful responses were able to offer a two-sided and developed response that answered the specific question. Some responses were limited in terms of the range of arguments they offered and chose to focus on a single factor only, e.g. select committees. There was also some drift in a minority of responses as candidates discussed the legislative process as opposed to focusing on the scrutiny function of the UK Parliament.
- Q.6** This question was answered by 85.2% of candidates and had a mean mark of 12.8. Most responses showed appropriate analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the British Constitution. The higher quality responses revealed themselves by grappling with the 'despite many recent challenges' aspect of the question and offered contemporary analysis and insights into the modern challenges faced by the British Constitution. The candidates who showed the ability to answer the specific question set in the exam were rewarded for their analysis, evaluation and judgements. There were some responses that offered a generalised, topic-based discussion of the British Constitution. Consequently, they failed to deal with the unique thrust of the question.
- Q.7** This was the least popular question in Section C chosen by 30.6% of students. It had a mean mark of 10.8. Many responses lacked range and depth in terms of analysing and evaluating the extent of the First Minister of Wales's powers. There were some responses that chose to evaluate devolution in general and consequently were largely irrelevant as the question required a specific discussion on executive power in Wales.

Summary of key points

In all Section C questions, candidates are advised to offer analysis and evaluation on the specific question in the examination paper rather than offering a general topic-based response.

Unit 1 is focused on governments in Wales and the UK. There were questions on the Welsh system of government in all sections of this year's paper. In Section C the knowledge and analysis offered to the Welsh aspect of the unit was not as well developed as the other questions.

It is worth explaining to students the assessment objectives that underpin the Government and Politics qualification. Candidates need to understand the assessment objectives in order to write responses that enable them to access the marks. This is especially true of AO2 and AO3. Specific and contemporary exemplification of points is something that all candidates should aspire towards.

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UNIT 2 Living and participating in a democracy

General Comments

The paper worked well and allowed candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, analysis, and evaluation and also allowed candidates to make judgements on issues related to 'living and participating in a democracy'. It was noticeable that candidates had both long term and short term examples that they were able to apply to the questions. Despite the fact that candidates have choice when answering Q.3 and Q.4 and Q.5, Q.6 and Q.7, all questions were attempted which would suggest that the paper allowed students a fair choice, and they were able to choose questions that best suited them.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Candidates answered this question well. Many were able to describe three significant rights that citizens have and support them with a range of examples. Many focused on the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, the right of freedom of expression, the right to privacy and the right of religious freedom. The mean score for this question was 4.9 and the facility factor was also high at 76.8.
- Q.2** Answers to this question varied. Some candidates described what partisan dealignment was but did not describe the reasons for it. Those that focused on the question mostly offered a range of reasons including, decline of class-based voting, changing voter allegiance, dissatisfaction with the government of the day, and education and societal change. There were some suggestions that it was the main reason for devolved government in Wales. The mean mark for this question was 2.8.
- Q.3** Many candidates were able to compare and contrast FPTP with STV. Candidates used the extract as a starting point and offered own knowledge based on election outcomes and where STV was used. There was analysis of the significance wasted votes, minority/majority representation and which system was easier for the voter to understand and use. There were very few candidates who simply described the two systems with no attempt at comparison. This question was attempted by 76.8% of the cohort, had a high facility factor of 62.0 and a mean mark for 14.9.
- Q.4** This question was less popular and was answered by 22.6% of the cohort. Nevertheless, the mean mark was 11.9. Candidates who answered this question were able to compare and contrast the two movements. They considered the impact both have and the extent to which they have affected change. Many used own knowledge to support their explanation of recent developments within the environmental movement and compared this with the longer term impact of the women's movement. There were candidates who just described the activities of both movements and made little comparison.

- Q.5** This was the most popular of the Section C questions with 73.6% of the cohort attempting it. Candidates who answered this question tended to argue that while ‘turnout’ was significant it was not necessarily the most significant factor in determining the outcome of an election. Many considered additional factors such as, age, class, region, the role of the media, safe seats, manifestoes, Party leaders, Party ideology, economic/social factors and tactical voting. Many candidates clearly thought carefully about the focus of this question and used their knowledge and understanding to make considered judgements. The mean mark was 11.7.
- Q.6** Candidates who answered this question clearly gave some consideration to ‘who best’, and there was a range of people and institutions that were offered. Some candidates decided it was the judiciary and explained only that. However, many candidates chose from a range that included the Supreme Court, Parliament, the legal system (courts, judges, lawyers), the Government of the day, Acts of Parliament (e.g. Human Rights Act), pressure groups, the police and the ECHR. Some candidates also included analysis about the strengths and weaknesses of some of the above in their consideration of ‘who best’ protects human rights. The mean mark was 12.1.
- Q.7** Some candidates saw this question as an opportunity to list the arguments for and against coalition governments, and while that gained some credit, many candidates used those arguments and related it to the outcome of any general election. There was discussion, with examples, of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition and Conservative/DUP arrangement. There was discussion of reasons why coalitions might be fairer, e.g. range of opinion, greater representation of the electorate and preventing ‘elected dictatorships’ and arguments against why they may not be fair, e.g. broken promises, fudged manifestoes and short-termism. The mean mark was 12.1.

Summary of key points

Examiners noted the following from what they saw and suggest this advice:

- lack of plans for answers – where there was a brief plan answers followed a line of argument
- focus on the key words in the question – apply knowledge to the question that is asked rather than the question that was hope for or practiced in class and mock exams
- timing – if a question asks for the description of three things, only give three things
- give a judgement – there are no right or wrong answers for Q.5, Q.6 and Q.7. Consider the issues related to that question and give a supported, reasoned judgement.

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UNIT 3 Political concepts and theories

General Comments

This examination produced a range of responses. There were very few candidates who weren't able to complete the required questions fully, and an even smaller number who had not attempted all questions required.

The overall quality of knowledge and understanding was encouraging, with the majority of candidates having both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding across the ideologies, concepts and theories on this paper. There were some excellent scripts that demonstrated admirable competence in holistically integrating knowledge and skills and showed independent thinking. These were well-rewarded. The majority of candidates answered the questions in an academic way and there were very few candidates who clearly had not revised and struggled to make an attempt at an answer. However, there was very little evidence of planning in the answer booklets and where planning was evident, the plans tended to be brief and simplistic. There is an expectation that candidates will need time to think about the question and plan an appropriate response. This is particularly the case when candidates approach a response to Section C. This answer carries the most marks of the exam and requires a sophisticated response to reach the higher bands.

Unfortunately, there was little evidence that the majority of candidates gave the appropriate time and planning to this question. The essay in Section C is highly demanding and carries 40 marks; candidates are advised to plan well before beginning it in the examination, and to avoid answering it in a mechanistic way. The assessment objectives are not equally weighted for the questions in this examination. Knowledge is not given parity to application and analysis. Therefore, candidates and centres are advised to practise the different sorts of questions in advance of the examination and pay attention to what the marks will be awarded for. Unapplied knowledge – however thorough and accurate the long list of examples might be – on its own does not score well. However, unsupported arguments with no evidence will not score top band marks either. Candidates should avoid lengthy narratives that are not applied to the question and avoid answers that merely describe different ideologies and responses that are made up of personal opinions.

The range and depth of answers needs to take into account the number of marks available for each question – some Section A answers matched the length of Section B answers, while some Section C responses were shorter than Section B answers. This can have obvious implications on time allocation and awarding of marks. Section A questions are worth 16 marks while Section C is worth 40.

Most candidates structured their answers well. There were some where no paragraphing was obvious, but these were in the minority. Many candidates, however, struggled to write an introduction that scored them marks, with many defining terms in the question or rephrasing the question and asking it again. In general, introductions were adequate at best. It is also worth reminding candidates and centres that the examination is a test of the candidates' knowledge and understanding of the published specification. It is not expected that answers will be, essentially, history essays.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** As a cohort, candidates were able to score well in this question (mean 9.2). Many answers to this question were good, with most candidates able to explain the reasons why individualism is so fundamental to Liberalism, in terms of the impact these have on Liberal views on society, human nature, economics and, in particular, freedom. An awful lot of answers discussed the varying interpretation of individualism within Liberalism by concentrating on the concepts of positive and negative freedom. Some answers included introductions and conclusions that merely rephrased the question which added no value and wasted exam time. There is no need for an introduction or conclusion for Section A responses.
- Q.2** In general, candidates found this question more challenging than Q.1, the mean score for Q.2 was 8.4. Answers to this question tended not to be as focused as Q.1 with some responses giving general descriptions of socialism rather than the concept of community within socialism. Again, introductions and conclusions almost universally added no value to the responses.
- Q.3** Q.3 was the most popular question in Section B (73.8% attempt rate). However, it did not produce the highest mean score (12.3). Many candidates felt confident of their knowledge of Welsh Conservatism and Welsh politics in general. Unfortunately, sometimes this was misplaced and led to insecure factual knowledge being displayed through inaccurate statistics. There was also a tendency to discuss other ideologies and their impact on Welsh politics when the question explicitly focused on Conservatism. Some candidates tried to discuss a convoluted argument that Conservatism's impact on Welsh politics was mostly felt by Wales rejecting Conservatism and adopting other ideologies instead. Many responses were unable to sustain this at a high level for an entire essay. However, there were very good responses that were able to weigh up the lack of Conservative electoral success against Conservative influences on Welsh Language movement (Welsh Language Act 1993, National Curriculum 1988), Eurosceptic movement (Brexit, UKIP), economic policies (free market).
- Q.4** Q.4 was the least popular of the questions in Section B (59.4% attempt rate), but for those candidates who attempted this question it provided them with the highest mean score (12.5) and facility factor (53.3), suggesting it was the most accessible question in Section B. Most answers to this question demonstrated a secure knowledge and understanding of Marx's ideas. Most responses were able to refer to and use Marxian concepts within a balanced argument. Many were able to argue effectively that Marx's relevance has grown less relevant to Communism. However, the point was made that the influence is still there in particular when it comes to analysing society and the economy. Where candidates did not score well, it was often where responses drifted away from Communism to other forms of Socialism. Candidates found it difficult to sustain an argument of Marx's relevance to Communism by referencing Tony Blair and the Third Way. Where candidates were successful was in discussing themes of revolution, class and economic crises.

- Q.5** Q.5 proved to be the Section B question that had the lowest mean score (11.6) and facility factor (48.5). Some responses were structured along a list of different types of Nationalism, while other answers took the form of listing for and against in a highly mechanical manner. Neither of these listing strategies were particularly effective. They tended to entail a descriptive response that avoided discussion. A more successful strategy was the discussion of themes within Political Nationalism. These answers discussed the use of customs and traditions, differing definitions of the nation, self-determination, ethnicity, among others.
- Q.6** Q.6 was the most discriminating of the exam's questions which provided a wide range of quality in answers. The Section C question is demanding in its wide scope, and the fact that candidates are expected to demonstrate all three Assessment Objectives. Many candidates took a mechanical approach to this – basically listing one ideology after another and weighing up its successes and failures. However, the thorough responses evaluated several ideologies by comparing and contrasting their contemporary relevance and influence in a particular aspect, then another, and integrated the discussion so that range, depth and all three Assessment Objectives were demonstrated holistically and fluently, and this was sustained in a discussion that was individual and highly focused. This is very difficult to perfect and requires a great deal of preparation and practise. This question was perhaps the clearest exemplification of the recent disruption to teaching and learning. In general candidates had a secure grasp of the knowledge and understanding of the course but did not feel confident enough to move away from a mechanistic listing of ideologies. The more successful responses were able to apply their knowledge and understanding of the market to discussions around the economy, welfare, the state, freedom.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to practise the demands of the examination under test conditions enough times to be confident with timings and produce their best debates in the actual examination.
- Centres need to focus candidates' attention on the Assessment Objectives for each question.
- The teaching of writing analytical evaluative applied responses is as important, if not more important, than the teaching of knowledge-based content.
- Independent research and reading are essential to give candidates the best chance, especially with the Section C essay. Model answers will not be a very useful preparation.
- Candidates need to understand that the examination is essentially a test of their understanding of the concepts and issues in the specification. Long historical narratives are rarely relevant. They need to strike a balance between the theoretical ideas and concepts, and their practical, contemporary application in the world today.
- Candidates need to pay attention to the key words in the question and ensure that their answer addresses these.

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UNIT 4 Government and politics of the USA

General Comments

The standard of this year's Unit 4 paper was encouraging and candidates in the main were able to show an effective combination of skills and knowledge throughout the paper.

The Section C responses were especially encouraging with many students able to discuss what they had been taught from the Unit 4 specification within the context of the specific question on stability. This is a question where candidates have an opportunity to structure arguments from the specification in a holistic sense and show an independence of thought in terms of analysis and evaluation whilst also discussing connections from across the entire unit. It is not simply another Section B essay as all three assessment objectives are being assessed, including 14 marks for AO2. Consequently, candidates should be encouraged by the wide-ranging, conceptual nature of the question to establish and explain connections from across the entire specification and to offer their arguments from a broad perspective of the unit.

Assessment Objective 1 is the least rewarded Assessment Objective in all sections of this paper and centres and candidates are reminded that students must do more in the paper than simply demonstrate knowledge. This knowledge must be used and animated in an effective manner to meet the demands of the other well-rewarded Assessment Objectives. It is therefore advised that centres continue to emphasise this point to students and spend time highlighting the other Assessment Objectives that relate to each question apart from AO1.

The overwhelming majority of candidates made a genuine and creditable attempt to answer all the questions in the paper. Very few candidates failed to complete the paper and there was little evidence that students had issues with timing in the examination. There was some planning seen for the Section B and C questions and this is to be further encouraged.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1** This question had a mean mark of 7.1 and a facility factor of 44.3. Answers to this question tended to be generalised. The most successful responses were able to demonstrate relevant knowledge on the role of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and crucially to explain how the role impacts on the wider work of the Congress. Some candidates were able to identify a range of ways the Speaker impacts on Congress's work and were able to offer specific examples to illustrate and develop these points relating to the legislative process, committees and the relationship with the President.

- Q.2** This question had a mean mark of 7.7 and a facility factor of 47.9. There was a clear focus on explaining the impact of partisanship on voting behaviour and many candidates focused on regional voting patterns or demographic groups with convincing knowledge to support the connections made. Attempts that were less successful tended to offer a counter argument to the connection rather than exploring how partisanship impacts voting behaviour. Also, less effective responses focused on discussing partisanship but neglected to explain its impact on voting behaviour and therefore neglected A02 which is worth 12 of the 16 marks.
- Q.3** This question had a mean mark of 13.0 and a facility factor of 54.1. This was the least popular question in Section B with 55.3% of candidates attempting the question. The most successful responses discussed a range of rights and focused on developing arguments that were focused on their contemporary relevance. Less effective responses were narrower in range often only discussing the second amendment and were consequently lacking in range. The most successful responses analysed and evaluated the relevance of a range of various rights included in the Bill of Rights with good discussion often seen on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 8th, and 10th amendments.
- Q.4** This question was answered by 59.6% and the mean mark was 12.9. The facility factor for this question was 53.8. Most candidates focused their response on the actual process of appointing Supreme Court justices and were able to analyse and evaluate the various steps in the process in an effective manner. Common arguments seen were the politicisation and hyper-partisanship of the process whilst many defended the process by referring to the more informal role of the ABA and the necessity to scrutinise justices who are appointed for life to a position of significant power. There were some examples of wholly one-sided responses which limit candidates for AO3 as a well-developed and balanced argument is required in Section B. The most effective responses were able to discuss this question in a contemporary context although surprisingly few candidates discussed recent justices such as Gorsuch, Kavanaugh or Barrett to illustrate and develop their points. Some responses failed to focus on the appointment process and evaluated the powers of the Court in a more generalised manner. It is vitally important that students answer the specific question.
- Q.5** An extremely popular question that was answered by 82.3% of candidates. It was the most effectively answered question in Section B with a mean mark of 14.1 and a facility factor of 58.8. Many candidates were able to discuss a range of checks and balances between Congress and the US President with the most effective responses evaluating the Congress against other factors such as the Supreme Court, federalism. As with all Section C essays it is the candidates that offer analysis and evaluation on the specific question asked that score well. It is a clear discriminator – those that offer a generalised, topic-based response as opposed to those that analyse and evaluate within the context of the specific question posed.
- Q.6** This question had a mean mark of 21.7 and a facility factor of 54.2. It challenged students to discuss the stability of the US system of government and it was encouraging to see many students attempt to offer a broad and holistic response to the question. Candidates used a variety of factors from across the range of the specification and successfully discussed these factors within the context of stability. There were some narrative responses seen in this question which, although rich in knowledge, did not offer the analysis and evaluation or interpretation of political information required to score effectively across all three assessment objectives.

As stated in previous examiners' reports, this is a question that will require candidates to show independence of thought and will require a wider scope and range than the essays seen in Section B.

There were many candidates this year who took the concept introduced in the questions (stability) and discussed, analysed and interpreted that term in a plethora of different ways by referring to different aspects of the specification (federalism, money, electoral college, presidential power, partisanship, media to name but a few). Responses that were fully focused on the key concept and showed an independence of thought to discuss what they had been taught within the context of stability were well rewarded.

Summary of key points

Candidates need to familiarise themselves with the demands of the examination under test conditions. Students should be prepared as regards organising their time effectively across the 150 minutes of the assessment.

Centres need to focus candidates' attention on the Assessment Objectives for each question and communicate that AO1 is the least rewarded of all three assessment objectives in this paper.

Students should be made aware that the Section C essay is not simply another Section B essay. It is broader, more holistic in nature, often conceptual and allows candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their independent thinking about the American system of government. The question will not neatly correspond to a specific section or bullet-point within the Unit 4 specification. Students are encouraged to draw their arguments from across the entire range of the specification and to pay attention to meeting the demands of all three assessment objectives.

Independent research and reading are essential to give candidates the best chance, especially with the Section C essay.

Candidates need to pay attention to the key words in each question and ensure that their answer addresses them. Answers should be structured well in order for candidates to organise and communicate their knowledge and ideas in the most effective manner.



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