

General Certificate of Education
January 2007
Advanced Subsidiary Examination



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Unit 1 Electoral Systems and Voting Behaviour

GOV1

Thursday 11 January 2007 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GOV1.
- Answer **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B.
In Section A, answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.
In Section B, answer **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 60.
- The marks for part questions are shown in brackets.
- You will be marked on your ability to use good English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Advice

- You are advised to read through the examination paper before you attempt the questions.
- You are advised to spend the same amount of time on each question.

Answer **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B.

SECTION A

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

Each question carries 30 marks.

EITHER

- 1 Study the passage below and answer parts (a) and (b) which follow.

Liberal Democrats in the 2005 General Election

Different parties pursue varying election *campaign strategies*. For instance, in the 2005 General Election the Liberal Democrats' campaign strategy was aimed at targeting the seats of senior Conservative candidates. However, this strategy did not work as planned and it was Labour candidates who suffered most from Liberal Democrat advances. Generally, Liberal Democrats won seats from Labour in the Midlands and the North of England, as well as in Scotland, but failed to win seats from the Conservatives in Southern England. Liberal Democrats came second to Labour in well over a hundred seats and are now seen as the main challengers to Labour MPs in these constituencies. The result of the 2005 General Election suggests that three-party politics is now a reality in much of Britain.

- (a) Explain the term *campaign strategies* used in the passage. (8 marks)
- (b) Assess the importance of geographical factors when explaining contemporary patterns of voting behaviour in general elections. (22 marks)

OR

- 2 Study the extract below and answer parts (a) and (b) which follow.

Political Culture and Political Behaviour

As well as cultural differences between the mass public and political elites, there may be differences among various groups in society. These may be defined in terms of region, ethnicity or social class. A country's *political culture* may contain great variety or be relatively uniform in nature. Nevertheless, to understand the politics in a country it is necessary to understand something about the ideas that influence the political behaviour of individuals.

Political continuity is important in Britain and the older values have been allowed to merge with modern attitudes. For example, as education levels have risen in Britain so attitudes of deference and respect for authority have declined.

Source: adapted from A R BALL & B G PETERS, *Modern Politics and Government*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005

- (a) Briefly explain what is meant by the term *political culture* used in the extract. (8 marks)
- (b) 'Gender, class and age.' Assess the relative influence of these factors on the involvement of individuals in politics. (22 marks)

Turn over for the next section

Turn over ►

SECTION B

Answer **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

Each question carries 30 marks.

EITHER

3 Study the extract below and answer parts (a) and (b) which follow.

General Elections

General elections have limitations as a means of popular involvement in politics in that:

- they occur only every four or five years, so that for many people their political involvement occurs very infrequently;
- they are essentially an overall verdict on the performance of the government, and do not show the strength and extent of feeling on particular issues;
- they are usually won on a minority basis, which casts doubt upon claims that the government of the day possesses a *mandate* to pursue its policies.

Source: adapted from D WATTS, 'Towards a more responsive democracy: referendums or electoral reform?' in L ROBINS & B JONES (eds), *Debates in British Politics Today*, Manchester University Press, 2000

- (a) Explain the term *mandate* used in the extract. (8 marks)
- (b) To what extent can referendums be more effective than general elections in giving the electorate opportunities to influence government? (22 marks)

OR

- 4 Study the passage below and answer parts (a) and (b) which follow.

Electoral Bias in 2005

When Labour won the October 1974 General Election with 39% of the popular vote it had a parliamentary majority of only four seats. Labour was then supported by 28% of the total electorate. When Labour won in 2005 with 36% of the popular vote it secured a majority of 66 seats. Labour was now supported by only 21% of the total electorate. These differences are explained in part by the nature of the *electoral bias* that now exists in Britain's electoral system.

English constituencies have bigger electorates on average than those in Scotland and Wales, which means that Labour needs only 26 865 votes on average to win a seat whereas the Conservatives need 44 241 votes on average to win a seat. The electoral system is now biased against the Conservatives. This bias is revealed in a democratic deficit whereby Labour in 2005 had a lead of only 3% over the Conservatives in the popular vote, but returned almost twice as many MPs.

- (a) Explain the term *electoral bias* used in the passage. (8 marks)
- (b) 'Electoral reform is clearly more attractive to opposition parties than to the party of government.' Discuss. (22 marks)

END OF QUESTIONS

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