



General Certificate of Education

Government and Politics 2151

GOV3C Politics and Power

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Government and Politics

GOV3C – Politics and Power

General

This was a very small cohort of 25 candidates. All four topics were attempted, with the least popular being Britain in Europe.

Topic 1 – Power in Modern Society

Question 01

Candidates appeared very well prepared for this topic. Various elements in British political life, such as public schools, Oxbridge and the civil service, were included as examples. A substantial proportion of the cohort was able to refer to key thinkers such as Pareto, Mosca, Michels and C Wright Mills.

Question 02

The better candidates understood the focus of this question. They showed themselves familiar with key thinkers such as Bentley and Dahl. The majority rejected the proposition in the question and cited examples where governments had gone further than merely refereeing competitive interests. There was much discussion of the unequal power of the various interests in society. Some weaker candidates took a view of pluralism as meaning a non-concentrated system of government and discussed the separation of powers.

Topic 2 – Executive Power

Question 03

Most candidates understood the term 'core executive', which they saw broadly as a network of institutions and relationships surrounding the prime minister, cabinet, cabinet committees, cabinet office, advisers and senior officials at the heart of government. Fewer were able to address the key discriminator: 'deepen our understanding'. The better candidates were able to argue that the concept can act as a corrective to the view that sees the prime minister and cabinet as the sole source of policy.

Question 04

Generally speaking, this question was not done consistently well. The proposition in the question was controversial, and possibly somewhat novel to candidates, in its suggestion of executive dominance as a virtue. There was scope for comparative analysis in contrasting the US separation of powers with the fusion of powers found at Westminster. Some candidates did this to good effect. A majority were able to discuss the role of legislatures in scrutinising and detailed various instruments available for this. Most candidates concluded that executives should not dominate legislatures.

Topic 3 – Political Culture

Question 05

Candidates who were well prepared for this topic found this a fairly straightforward question. They were able to illustrate their discussion with examples, some of which came from around the globe. Weaker candidates, who did not recognise the terms as fundamental to any understanding of the topic, tried to give meaning to them on the basis of intuition.

Question 06

Candidates offered definitions of key terms such as class and social cleavage. They were able to categorise classes within society in terms of upper, upper middle, lower middle, and working. Some used a Marxist definition of class. There were discussions on the claim by politicians, such as Major and Blair, that Britain had become a classless society. In the development of their answers, most tended to concentrate on an evaluation of alternative bases for social cleavage such as race, gender and geographical location. They placed varying degrees of importance of these. Broadly, candidates tended to support, rather than reject, the proposition in the question.

Topic 4 – Britain in Europe

Questions 07 and 08

There were so few candidates who opted to answer this topic that it is not possible to make generalised comments on the characteristics of the answers. Those who wish to learn what the expectations of the examiners were for this topic are advised to consult the mark scheme that accompanies the paper.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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