

## Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Government and Politics

Candidate Responses with Examiner's

Commentaries for GOVP1



## EXEMPLAR CANDIDATE RESPONSES AND EXAMINER'S COMMENTARIES

### UNIT 1: People, Politics and Participation

- 1 Read the extract and answer parts (a) to (c) which follow.

#### Social Class and Voting Behaviour

Social class has long appeared a key factor in explaining voting in Britain. Labour, as the name implies, was a party set up to represent the interests of the working class. The Conservative Party was associated with the interests of the property-owning middle class. In 1967 a political scientist famously observed that 'class is the basis of British politics; all else is embellishment and detail'. During recent decades, however, class allegiances have weakened as a result of a process of *de-alignment*. Issue-voting has increased as traditional ties between parties and classes loosened. Nevertheless, a link still exists between class and voting. The proportion of votes for Labour still increases, while the Conservative vote decreases, the further one moves down the social scale.

Source: adapted from LEACH *et al*, *British Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

- (a) Briefly explain the term *de-alignment* used in the extract. (5 marks)
- (b) Using your own knowledge as well as the extract, assess the impact of issue-voting on the results of general elections. (10 marks)
- (c) 'A link still exists between class and voting.' Discuss the extent to which social class still influences the voting behaviour of Britain's electorate. (25 marks)

**1a) Briefly explain the term *de-alignment* used in the extract****Candidate A**

De-alignment in this extract means that people aren't voting according to their class anymore. About 50 years ago there was class and partisan alignment, where people stuck to voting to one party according to their class. For example, the working class mainly voted for Labour and the upper and middle classes voted Conservative. Recently there has been more partisan dealignment, where people don't vote according to their class. People vote for other reasons than class.

**Examiner's commentary**

Candidate A clearly has a good general understanding of the term. The answer provides a clear definition of de-alignment and recognises that the term is often used in relation to the decline in loyalty towards a particular party (partisan dealignment) as well as the weakening ties between social class and party (class dealignment). That said, the response does not really move significantly beyond a re-stating of the material provided in the extract. At the higher levels candidates would also be expected to bring in evidence from their own knowledge (eg statistics) or refer in passing to the debate surrounding voting behaviour (eg the supposed declining influence of primacy factors such as social class and the rise of issue voting).

	A01	A02	A03	Total
<b>Mark awarded:</b>	3	N/A	N/A	<b>3</b>

**Candidate G**

De-alignment: this means not to be a part of something. There are two main types of dealignment. Class dealignment which is people are voting not on the basis of class. Partisan dealignment is people are not loyal to a particular party.

**Examiner's commentary**

This is obviously a more limited response than that offered by Candidate A. No evidence is offered by way of development/explanation (either from the extract or the candidate's own knowledge) and there is no attempt to pick up on the issue of changing patterns of voting behaviour. Despite these limitations, however, the candidate does provide a fairly clear, concise and accurate definition. This would be enough to take the response into L2.

	A01	A02	A03	Total
<b>Mark awarded:</b>	2	N/A	N/A	<b>2</b>

## 1b) Using your own knowledge as well as the extract, assess the impact of issue-voting on the results of general elections.

### Candidate H

Issue voting is commonly recognised as the consumers approach to voting, as the voters act like shoppers by making rational decisions on which parties policies they prefer. By issue voting, a voter is making a decision purely on the policies that a party stands for or what is written in their manifesto.

In the 1980's, issue voting did not effect the results of general elections, as people did not tend to vote by which issues they agreed with, but more by class (alignment theory). However studying a voters survey of the parties and key issues after the 2005 general election it is clear to see voters have adopted this new way of issue voting. The survey shows that the economy is they key issue in which the majority of voters are interested in, to which, in their opinion, Labour held the best policy. Between 0-60% of people used issue voting in the 2005 general election, so it is clear that it has begun to play a big part in voting behaviour.

Although issue voting is becoming increasingly popular, it is important to remember that there are other factors that impact upon election results. The links between class and voting and other factors have simply been weakened, not disappeared completely.

### Examiner's commentary

The early mention of the 'consumers approach to voting' (ie the 'consumer model') and the reference to 'rational decisions' (ie the 'rational choice model') which follows, show that the candidate has a good grasp of what is meant by the term issue-voting. More theoretical detail on the model (eg reference to 'valence' or 'saliency') would have added depth to this theoretical understanding, as would a willingness to offer examples of issues that have been to the fore in recent general elections. Though the extract itself does not offer such examples, they are clearly demanded by the question ('the impact of issue-voting in recent general elections') and should not be that hard to identify e.g: the importance of Iraq in 2005, 'sleaze' in 1997, the Falklands Factor or Labour's manifesto ('the longest suicide note in history') in 1983, the 'winter of discontent' in 1979. This answer is, on the whole, well communicated, although the phrase 'Between 0-60% of people used issue voting in the 2005 general election' clearly needs further clarification/explanation.

	A01	A02	A03	Total
<b>Mark awarded:</b>	3	2	2	7

### Candidate A

Issue voting is where people look at and compare the different political parties' issues and policies and decide which party offers the best for them. The impact of issue voting on the results of general elections can have a significant impact. For example the Falklands War in 1982, contributed to an increase in support for the Conservative Party. Some people say this was a key element in the Conservative's 1983 general election victory.

When people are deciding on which party to vote for, they mainly look for policies on health, education and unemployment. Therefore parties with good policies on these things, are more likely to receive more voters.

### Examiner's commentary

Candidate A offers a clear, outline definition of the term. The ability to offer a supporting example (the 'Falklands Factor' in 1983) makes it easier to credit the candidate under AO1 (knowledge and understanding). The second paragraph raises a number of issues that might affect electoral outcomes, without providing specifics or linking the points made to recent elections, as demanded by the question.

	A01	A02	A03	Total
<b>Mark awarded:</b>	2	2	1	<b>5</b>

**1c) 'A link still exists between class and voting.' Discuss the extent to which social class still influences the voting behaviour of Britain's electorate.**

**Candidate A**

In some ways the statement is correct, because even though the link between class and voting isn't as strong as it used to be, there is still something between them. For example in the 2005 general election, the number of people who voted Conservative from the Classes A and B was 37 whereas Labour only had 28 and the Liberal Democrats had 29. Labour had the most voters in the classes C2 and DE. This shows that there is still a link between class and voting because the middle classes voted for Conservative which is what was expected while the working classes voted for Labour.

However, there are some people who would disagree with this statement. For example, they would say that in the 1980s, Ivor Crewe argued that the working class had been split in two. There was an 'old working class' which consisted of manual workers who belonged to trade unions. They live in the North and vote for Labour. A 'new working class' has also emerged who have better qualifications and work in the public sector in Southern England. Significant numbers voted for Conservatives in the 1980s.

This shows that not all the working class vote for Labour anymore, just as not all the middle class vote for the Conservatives.

Even when there was supposed to be class alignment not all the middle class voted for the Conservatives. There was a small minority group who voted for Labour, and overtime this has increased.

In conclusion, even though there is some evidence to suggest that there is still some class alignment, I think overall, social classes are slowly eroding away and people are starting to vote based on things other than class such as the media, age and where people live.

**Examiner's commentary**

The candidate has a good awareness of the changing relationship between social class and voting. Significantly, there is a clear recognition that class remains a significant factor to this day, despite the rise of other factors. The ability to offer accurate statistics on class and voting in the 2005 General Election, as seen here, would normally be a feature of a higher level response on AO1. This subtlety of argument, which would be fully credited on AO2, is something that might not be apparent in more limited responses. The candidate's accurate use of subject-specific terms (eg 'old'/'new' working class) would contribute to their AO3 mark – as would any number of relevant terms not used by this candidate, eg embourgeoisement.

Although the answer provides a clear overview of class and voting more could be done to put social class into its proper context alongside other primacy and recency factors, eg age, gender, region, issues, campaigns, etc. This failure has resulted in a response which, though good in terms of depth on the influence of social class, is rather limited in scope.

	A01	A02	A03	Total
<b>Mark awarded:</b>	8	5	5	<b>18</b>

### Candidate B

Some people would agree with that statement arguing that as you go down the social spectrum there is still an increasing proportion of votes for the Labour Party, the Party which traditionally has represented the Working Classes.

They might argue that even if the people issue vote they will still be influenced by class as to what issues they think are most important and may well still finish voting for their party of class.

They may also argue that parties know which issues are important to their class and can adjust policy accordingly, therefore parties may still represent their traditional class best.

However, others may argue that today's society has much more social mobility making it harder for people to identify themselves with a particular class, therefore making them much less likely to vote on issues that are important to themselves.

It could also be pointed out that there are some issues which will not be affected as much by class, but which people may still vote on, for example, education may well be an important issue to all families with children of school age, regardless of class.

Studies have also shown that as people get older they are more likely to vote conservative than when they were young, however pensions are usually at the bottom of the social scale, which is an example of there being a weak link between class and voting.

It could also be mentioned that people in caring professions, like doctors, often vote Labour, despite being very high up the social scale.

### Examiner's commentary

The first and second paragraphs in this response simply re-work the material presented in the extract; little is added, either in terms of the candidate's own knowledge (AO1) or in terms of analysis and evaluation of the material provided (AO2).

In contrast, paragraphs three and four move beyond the extract, raising issues which are both relevant and, in some cases, very perceptive, eg the way in which paragraph three illustrates the problems inherent in distinguishing between class-based voting and issue-based voting is particularly impressive.

Further creditable points are made in the second half of the answer, although these later points sometimes lack clarity (eg the penultimate paragraph) and/or require further explanation.

The main thing holding the answer back is the candidate's inability or unwillingness to offer precise factual content (ie examples) in support of the points made. This lack of evidence means that a good deal of what is offered, though not necessarily incorrect, is a good deal less authoritative than it might have been.

	AO1	AO2	AO3	Total
<b>Mark awarded:</b>	6	4	3	<b>13</b>