

Mark Scheme (Results)

Summer 2007

GCE

GCE Government and Politics (6493) 01

June 2007 Mark Scheme

Question 1

(a) Using the source material explain the levels of representation achieved by the three main parties in the 2005 election.

The Labour Party obtained 35.2% of the vote and received 55.1% of the seats; they were over-rewarded in the process of representation. The Conservative party obtained 32.3% of the vote and received 30.7% of the seats, they were penalised in the process. The Liberal Democrats obtained 22% of the vote but only received 9.8% of the seats they suffered the largest distortion.

Level Three (4 -5 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge surrounding political concepts, processes, institutions and an understanding of the relationships between them.

The source will be referenced with clarity and precision. The detail will be accurate, informed and provide a full explanation.

Specific comment will be made for each of the three main political parties.

Level Two (2 -3 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes, institutions and an understanding of the relationships between them.

Responses will be less complete, lacking full precision and without comprehensive detail. Relevant comment for each political party may be lacking.

Level One (0 -1 mark)

A limited and quite restricted demonstration of knowledge of political concepts processes institutions and with little understanding of the relationship between them.

(b) Using the source material and your own knowledge why are marginal seats important under the first-past-the-post system used for Westminster elections?

The source indicates that marginal seats are important as few seats actually change hands; hence the election is in effect decided in a minimal number of constituencies. The article suggests that only 20,000 voters will decide the outcome of the next General Election. This greatly magnifies the importance of marginal seats. First-past-the-post is said to create this situation. Own knowledge may include detail surrounding safe seats where both parties amass unchallengeable leads. It may be possible to contextualise 20,000 votes in the total electorate of over 40 million. The significance of marginal seats could work to the disadvantage of third parties such as the Liberal democrats who may not have 'heartlands' enjoyed by the Labour and Conservative Parties.

Level Three (7 -10 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Excellent conceptual awareness with full illustration, amplification and evaluation.

This level must cover a range of points from both the source and the candidates own knowledge. The use of relevant examples and illustrations clearly constructed and communicated will define entry into this level and the progress within it.

Level Two (4 - 6 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Reliable conceptual awareness with examples illustration which provide insight.

Responses which fall in this level may rely exclusively on the source (but still show development from it) or exclusively on the candidates own knowledge. The referenced examples may be narrow and not fully developed.

Level One (0 - 3 marks)

A limited and restricted demonstration of knowledge of political processes institutions and some of the relationships between them. Minimal conceptual awareness with no examples or illustrations. Restricted scope and no meaningful development.

(c) Explain the advantages of electoral reform for Westminster elections.

Electoral reform may create several benefits. It may strengthen the legitimacy of the Westminster parliament if a truer reflection of how the electorate voted is translated into seats. It may serve to redress the injustice suffered by the Liberal Democrats under FPTP. It will allow into Westminster parties who find it difficult to win constituencies. It may serve to encourage participation in politics in general and raise levels of participation in that turnout increases. It may deliver coalition government which promotes compromise and collaboration as opposed to sectarian politics, thus ensuring political stability. This may mean that major political changes have widespread public support.

Level Three (11 - 15 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Excellent and clear examples and illustrations. The accompanying analysis displays a sophisticated awareness of informed view points accompanied by precise and full evaluation of the speculative reform possibilities. The response will show an informed political vocabulary with an excellent standard of communication.

Level three responses will show a depth of detail and a full appreciation of the possible beneficial consequences made for electoral reform. This knowledge will be accurately evaluated and considered, it will often be placed in a contemporary setting with reference to alternative electoral systems and their differing outcomes. The supposed benefits will be considered and a precise evaluation will be reached.

Level Two (6 - 10 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Reliable conceptual awareness with appropriate examples. The accompanying analysis displays an awareness of informed view points accompanied by some evaluation of the speculative reform possibilities but will not be totally encompassing. The response will show a reasonable political vocabulary with a satisfactory standard of communication.

Level two responses will be able to consider the speculative impact of electoral reform but the response will be characterised by not covering the full potential changes and giving these possibilities a rounded summation. In short the response will not be totally encompassing lacking full detail and complete analysis.

Level One (0 - 5 marks)

A limited demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Limited conceptual awareness with no realistic examples. Very limited analysis with a scant awareness of the reform possibilities. A very basic attempt to evaluate and consider the possible benefits of electoral reform. A very basic level of written communication with sparse use of political vocabulary.

(d) Make a case against electoral reform for Westminster elections.

There are several arguments in favour of the current FPTP system. Firstly it works; it is a tried and tested system which delivers a Government. Furthermore often the Government which FPTP creates has a majority which allows it to implement its manifesto and have a mandate. People readily understand the system and change would undermine the trust and confidence of the public. Added to this there is no major public disquiet or antagonism towards the system. The public under FPTP all have a representative to whom they can turn to for issues which concern them. The system is said to be beneficial as it keeps out firstly extremists who could damage democracy and small parties who may have excessive influence as possible coalition partners. The cost and upheaval in changing the system may be cited. It may be argued that reform does not necessarily increase levels of participation. The response could indicate the problems associated with adopting alternative electoral systems (PR majoritarian for instance) This may encompass issues such as a negative view on coalitions and the destruction of constituency boundaries plus other supposed regressive moves.

Level Three (14 - 20 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Excellent conceptual awareness with full examples. The analysis displays sophisticated awareness of differing political viewpoints and has a clear and full evaluation of the issues. There is an informed use of political vocabulary accompanied by an excellent standard of written communication.

Level three responses will provide informed and relevant detail to the issue of the problems which may emerge with a change to the electoral system for Westminster MP's / and or the benefits of our current system.

The informed detail will form a basis for extensive analysis. The clarity of the response will determine both the entry into the level and the progression inside it.

Level Two (7 - 13 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Reliable conceptual awareness with appropriate examples. The analysis displays an awareness of differing political viewpoints and has an appreciation of the context to evaluate the issues concerned. There is an informed use of political vocabulary accompanied by a sound standard of written communication with some use of political vocabulary.

Level two responses will be able to develop the debate on the disadvantages of changing the current method of election Westminster MPs but will often lack detail and depth and not usually possess a wide empirical platform to provide a basis for considered and detailed evaluation of the issue. However examples will be cited with some analysis.

Level One Descriptor (0 - 6 marks)

A limited demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Superficial conceptual awareness with scant examples. Limited and marginal analysis with no real appreciation of the issues surrounding change. The conclusions if made at all will only have limited relevance to the preceding discussion. A basic level of written communication with occasional use of political vocabulary.

Level one responses will present a partial and incomplete consideration of the supposed disadvantages associated with the speculative change to the current method of electing Westminster MPs

Question 2

- a. *Using the source explain the dilemma which the Prime Minister perceived over his relationship with Europe.*

The Prime Minister perceives a type of a “no win” situation over his relationship with Europe, in that office holders have a choice to cooperate in Europe or to be unreasonable in Europe. Cooperation with Europe is implied to be betrayal domestically (by some) in the UK and to be a disloyal course of action. Whereas to be unreasonable in Europe delivers praise domestically (by some) in the UK, however this places the UK apart from its continental neighbours. Both the two options present a situation which a UK Prime Minister cannot solve or win. It is in essence a statement that there are only two choices before the PM and that both these demands cannot be satisfied.

Level Three (4-5 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge surrounding political concepts, processes institutions and an understanding of the relationships between them.

The source will be referred to with clarity and precision. The detail will be accurate, informed and provide a full explanation.

Level Two (2-3 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes institutions and an understanding of the relationships between them.

Responses will be less complete, lacking full precision and without comprehensive detail.

Level One Descriptor (0-1 marks)

A limited and quite restricted demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes, institutions and little understanding of the relationships between them.

b. Using the source and your own knowledge, what have been the achievements of the Labour government with regard to the European Union since 1997?

The source indicates four main changes claimed by the Labour government (and by the Prime Minister). Firstly there is enlargement. Secondly the changes made to the defence system along with France. Thirdly, the introduction of a programme of economic reform. Fourthly the reformed budget is noted.

Candidates own knowledge may enhance and develop the above four suggested achievements, in providing detail of the enlargement, the citing of the European Rapid Reaction Force, economic reforms for instance to the CAP and the detail of a reformed EU budget.

Other own knowledge may include the reduction of the UK rebate during the UK presidency of the EU. The treaty changes from Nice and Amsterdam, the introduction of the Social Chapter. The paving Bill for a referendum on the proposed EU constitution, the establishment by Gordon Brown of the 5 economic tests before the Euro can be mentioned, these can be considered amongst other actions of the Labour government.

Level Three (7-10 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Excellent conceptual awareness with full illustration, amplification and evaluation.

This level must cover and explain a range of points from both the source and the candidates own knowledge. The use of examples and illustrations with clarity of construction will define the entry to the level and the progress within it.

Level Two (4-6 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Reliable conceptual awareness with examples and illustrations and evaluation.

Responses that fall within this level may rely exclusively on the source (but still illustrate some development from it) or on the candidates own knowledge. Referenced examples may be tangential or tenuous.

Level One (0-3 marks)

A limited demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Minimal conceptual awareness with no examples or illustrations. Limited evaluation and restricted analysis.

Level 1 responses will present very little development information and may fail to fully address the issues raised. On occasions mere repetition of the source will fall into this level.

c. Explain the major differences between the UK political parties over the European Union

The three main UK national parties remain committed to membership of the EU, there are however differences in their approach to the body. The Liberal Democrats remain perhaps the most enthusiastic and pro-EU party in that they support the move to a more federal EU and would welcome the introduction or adoption by the UK of the Euro: they would however seek administrative reform. The Labour Party is positive about the EU and promotes the benefits of membership both economically and socially. However that is not to deny that within certain sections of the Labour Party there does exist hostility to the EU. The Conservative Party is perhaps more sceptical of the EU than the other two Parties, in its 2005 manifesto it highlighted the drive for greater accountability from the EU, it remains hostile to any notion of adopting the Euro and abandoning the £. As with the Labour Party there are sections of the Conservative Party who are more hostile to the EU this is the Eurosceptic wing of the Party, here the loss of Parliamentary sovereignty is considered dangerous.

The Nationalist Parties (SNP & PC) are both in favour of EU membership and positively welcome the EU concept of a Europe of the Regions. Here the nationalist parties can access funds at primary source as opposed to through the Westminster "gate".

Parties such as UKIP are fundamentally opposed to the EU and actively campaign not for reform but for the UK's withdrawal from the body

Level Three (11-15 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Excellent and clear examples and illustrations. The analysis displays a sophisticated awareness of differing view points accompanied by precise and full evaluation of the issues. Informed political vocabulary with excellent standard of communication.

Level 3 responses will show a depth of detail and accompanying understanding of the main political parties position towards the EU. That knowledge will be contemporary and informed. This may be characterised by the latest manifesto positions from the previous election. Informed political examples will determine both entry into the level and its progress within it.

Level Two (6-10 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Reliable conceptual awareness with appropriate examples. The analysis shows an awareness of differing viewpoints supported by evaluation but not totally encompassing. A reasonable level of written communication accompanied with some usage of political vocabulary.

Level 2 responses will indicate an awareness of the difference in political parties and provide examples, these may not be totally encompassing and lack both detail and supportive analysis.

Level One (0-5 marks)

A limited demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Little conceptual awareness no realistic examples. Very limited analysis with scant awareness of differing viewpoints and only a basic attempt at evaluation. The conclusions may only have limited relevance to the topic. A basic level of written communication with sparse use of political vocabulary.

Level 1 responses will only marginally appreciate the ambit of the question with little supporting empirical material and evaluation.

d. Why, and to what extent, has the UK had a difficult relationship with the European Union?

It has been suggested that the UK has had a difficult relationship with the EU for a number of reasons. This may arise from our late and hesitant entry to the organisation and the problems around our membership which produced our only national referendum. The loss of Parliamentary sovereignty has been a core concern as political parties of all complexions have expressed concern at this loss and the implication which this delivers for our political mode of operation. For instance the loss of some legal sovereignty means the UK has to comply with rules and regulations not always of its own choosing. The previous Conservative Government from Thatcher to Major was beset by problems surrounding the EU: even in opposition the EU and the Conservative Party's policy to the EU was problematic. It could be said that anti-EU sentiment has been fuelled by organisations hostile to the EU such as the former Referendum Party and UKIP thus engineering hostility to the EU. It has been said that sections of the Press are oppose to the continued growth of the EU. The UK's close alliance with the US has been seen as divisive of loyalties and the isolation felt by the UK over its position on Iraq symbolises this problem. The proposed EU constitution was treated with derision and it was suggested if placed before the electorate in a referendum would have been defeated despite there not being a full awareness of the contents of the proposed constitution. Economically the cost of EU membership has been a sore point and our budget contribution often seen as excessive. The UK's attitude to the Euro has created tension within public opinion and also within political parties.

On the other hand this difficult relationship with the EU can be downplayed when put in context. Most member states have had issues with sovereignty and the UK is not unique here. The UK has had a significant impact on the EU by influencing in a positive manner enlargement and economic reform and far from being difficult this has strengthened the EU and the UK in a positive manner. It may be argued that individual economic and social rights have been advance by EU membership and also environmental standards have risen to the benefit of the UK. The relationship and ties of the UK and the US has served to avoid any major split across the Atlantic. On a wider economic scale the relationship of the UK and the EU has been excellent with the bulk of our trade with the EU and offering some protection in the face of a competitive global economy. The UK's reluctance to join the Euro has been respected within the EU and this has not caused major problems.

Level Three (14-20 marks)

A comprehensive demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Excellent conceptual awareness with full examples. Analysis displays sophisticated awareness of differing political viewpoints and clear and full evaluation of the issues. Informed use of political vocabulary accompanied with an excellent standard of written communication.

Level 3 responses will be able to offer empirical evidence and relevant analysis and evaluation. The use of informed examples and reasoning will underpin the response. The supposed "difficult relationship" will be contextualised and considered. The response will be characterised and show an awareness of the different viewpoints of the UK's relationship with the EU

Level Two (7-13 marks)

A sound demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Reliable conceptual awareness with appropriate examples. Analysis displays an awareness of differing viewpoints and good attempts at evaluation. A reasonable level of written communication with some use of political vocabulary

Level 2 responses will appreciate the context of the supposed "difficult relationship" but may lack a balance, with a bias to one viewpoint or perspective. Examples will be cited and there will be accompanying analysis.

Level One (0-6 marks)

A limited demonstration of knowledge of political concepts, processes and institutions and some of the relationships between them. Superficial conceptual awareness, with scant examples. Limited analysis with no real awareness of differing viewpoints. Marginal attempts at evaluation. The conclusions if made at all will only have limited relevance to the preceding discussion. A basic level of written communication with occasional use of political vocabulary.

Level 1 response will present a partial and undeveloped consideration of the relationship of the UK with the EU.

