Examiners' Report

June 2010

GCE Government and Politics 6GP01

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Introduction

This was the second 'summer' sitting of Unit 1 and overall performance indicates that centres and candidates are now better prepared for the demands of the paper. In terms of popularity, the question on pressure groups attracted marginally the greater number of candidates as one of the two choices; however in terms of performance and raw scores candidates performed marginally better once again on the question on democracy. This reiterates previous comments that popularity and performance do not necessarily equate.

This was a General Election year and although the paper was set some time before its announcement, a detailed knowledge of outcomes of the 2010 results was not expected; however at the same time it could serve to advance candidate performance as any other political event. It would be rare if a student of Politics had not been influenced by and taken note of the events in May. The outcome was that for the vast majority of candidates, the General Election was a huge revision boost and it was used well.

Question 1

As noted, the question on pressure groups always attracts a large number of candidates, and sadly performance has failed to match this popularity. The weakest area concerns the distribution of power in the body politic with the actions of pressure groups have to be evaluated.

Pluralism and elitism are at the core of the pressure group power spectrum. It was disappointing to see that a large section of candidates ignored power and pressure groups altogether and introduced tangential issues to deal with these two concepts. Often pluralism simply meant toleration (there is a connection but it does not replace an accurate definition) and elitism, a type of mafia grouping who dominate society with wealth or birthright.

Question 1(a)

As noted it was a minority who managed to attain high scores. Many merely provided a definition of toleration for pluralism and a depiction of a public school section for elitism. Pluralism and elitism are not nearly as well known and defined by candidates as is desirable.

Indicate your first question choice on this page.
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Chosen Question Number: **Question 1** ☒   **Question 2** ☒

                               Question 3 ☒   **Question 4** ☒

(a) Pluralism in a wide sense represents diversity and multiplicity and when describing a political theory describes a dispersal of power and a multicultural acceptance of ideas. Pluralists believe in tolerance of a various religous, cultural and political beliefs and that all are free to express their selves and flourish together. The opposite of pluralism is elitism where the power is held by a few 'elite' members and all outsiders have little to no say voice or influence. Elitists do not believe in the dispersal of power nor of the freedom of expression. Pluralism allows different cultures to mix whereas elitists believe that power whether it be social, economical or political should only be held by a narrow section of government. We live in a pluralist democracy but elitism can be seen in communist countries like china and cuba but also in military dictatorships and religious states like Iran.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The response crucially notes power and its dispersal or concentration. Secondly it identifies the two concepts as 'opposites' and the principles which they are concerned with.

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Examiner Tip

All key terms need to be learnt. Be ready for these to be part of the longer questions but they may often appear for short definitions on part (a).

Indicate your second question choice on this page.

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Chosen Question Number:　**Question 1** ☒　　　　**Question 2** ☒

　　　　　　　　　　　　Question 3 ☒　　　　**Question 4** ☒

(a) Elitism is a very strong form of an indirect democracy. It basically means society is not ruled by the people but by a very small group or a single person. Many elitist societies do not even allow the chance to vote and are therefore communist. An example of elitism could be the house of commons. The commons is mainly imposed of white males middle aged oxbridge educated. There are very few women and people from ethnic minorities.

Where as pluralism is what it sounds like. It includes many people to work as one community and all make decisions together. The purest form of this is ancient athens. The idea is to let as many people have a say as they want. But this doesn't often work in large community as it would be impossible to fit that many people into one discussion

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

Here is a candidate who writes at length but barely picks up any marks. A precise and accurate definition is not presented to us.

Question 1(b)

Few candidates found this part (b) difficult. A minority moved to describe 'types' of pressure groups and their tactics which is not exactly the same as their functions. What came through particularly well were the educative function and the scrutiny function of pressure groups. Impressively more candidates are furnishing their responses with contemporary examples which displays their knowledge and understanding.

(b) Explain three political functions of pressure groups
participation / inform govt / forming/implementing policy

Pressure groups are important to politics in the UK because they promote political participation. Here citizens can join groups to express their views on a particular cause or to represent their interests. Citizens can participate by demonstrating, signing petitions, attending group meetings or donating to the group. These examples are more typical of outsider groups like Greenpeace.

Another vital role played by pressure groups is to inform. Pressure groups may have expert knowledge on a particular topic that could add to Government knowledge eg. the Howard League for Penal Reform. Groups also inform the government of public opinion at the time, and they are an important medium through which influence can be exerted between elections the Stop the War Coalition informs the government about public news on foreign policy, for instance. Such groups can also inform the public on these topics and raise awareness.

An important function, mostly attributed to insider groups, is the formulation and implementation of public policy. Insider groups like the National Farmers Union are used both for advice on policy creation and to help implement policy. Insider groups like the RSPB, RSPCA and NSPCC have also

Insider groups like the RSPB, RSPCA and NSPCC have also been given similar privileges, with the latter being granted special powers in order to help prevent child cruelty.

Question 1(c)

This was not a 'new' question and as such presented few problems for candidates. If issues arose, it was often because there was a lack of balance in the response and occasionally candidates tended to present all the good things and all the bad things surrounding pressure groups and thus marginalised the credit which they could receive.

(c) Within a democratic society, pressure groups are popularly viewed as a positive force within the political system. However, some have argued against the force of pressure Groups, considering it to undermine democracy:- in its definition of Government "for, by and of the people" Abraham Lincoln, and implications for participation and political equality, I would suggest pressure groups are an asset.

In the first place, the UK democracy is pluralist - in providing political equality it implies that competing voices should be heard and recognised. Pressure Groups do so, by dispersing power away from a single party government, and spreading it to these wider political forces, which is having their say, can scrutinise and balance Government. Therefore pressure groups can prevent "executive domination" in politics - which would be undemocratic.

Second, democracy is supported by the importance of popular participation - as to

make it indeed, government "by the people". Pressure Groups encourage this participation, where there been a failure to do so in elections. Perhaps the crisis of declining turnout can be balanced against increasing pressure group activity, in an era where partisanship has been lost to individualism and "new" or "issue" politics. For example, groups such as Make Poverty History encouraged masses to be involved in the issue of international debt, and Anti-Iraq War groups saw mass protest while traditional political activity has dropped.

Furthermore, pressure groups supplement a democracy which is most based largely on the wishes of the majority, or just the largest proportion of society. The FPTP system can leave huge minorities ignored, and pressure groups serve their interests. Thatcher government, for example, was arguably not geared toward the large working class, yet the TUC supported these peoples interests all the same. Thus a link to general public opinion is always provided for Government, between elections, maintaining the democratic principle of responsiveness - Government "for the people".

((c) continued) Nevertheless, it can equally be argued that pressure groups undermine the political democratic process as they tend to be selfish to one issue/sector of society, whereas a democratic system has to ensure the equal functioning of all policy areas, for all equal individuals. In being selfish, pressure groups can hold the country to ransom, preventing efficient Government. This was seen to be the case in the influence of the TUC, in which strikes by the miners caused huge problems for other individuals and for the economy.

Secondly, pressure groups have been seen to be elitist and undemocratic in themselves. Again, Arthur Scargill of TUC, could be said to be working more on a personal, perhaps egotistical agenda than really representing his miner's needs. Thus pressure groups may wield alot of power, whilst not necessarily offering a true voice of the people.

Furthermore, democracy is based on the principle of the mandate - that the government has a duty to exercise policy as defined in its manifesto, a pressure

groups are selfish to an issue it cannot do so. If, for example, the Labour government proposed commitment to the Trident Programme, it would be undemocratic for the CND to be able to hinder this.

Therefore, In conclusion, I would argue that while there are many defeits to Pressure groups they remain a key investment of the Freedom of Speech, and are thus desireable.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This is an example of a mid range response. There is balance but the depth and scope is restricted. More could be advanced and developed. Examples are used but they are to an extent either dated or generalist. The reference to the miners is not anachronistic but there is much more contemporary material to use and bring the response to life.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When as is often the case that the (c) response opens with the phrase 'To what extent...' a balanced response is required. That balance does not necessarily have to be exactly split 50/50 but it must be accepted that there are at least two common perspectives or sides to the debate.

Question 2

As with the previous question on pressure groups, a good few candidates were weak in part (a) but then recovered in parts (b) and (c). It is worth noting that for parts (a) and (b), countries other that the UK can be referenced. For part (a), the example of illegitimacy often came from Burma or Zimbabwe and for part (b) representative democracy was contrasted quite often with the Athenian model.

Question 2(a)

Candidates were often perplexed by the term legitimacy and gave some very vague definitions It was an area where few full mark responses were seen. Elections were often cited as a source of legitimacy with few other avenues exampled.

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                        Question 3 ☒   **Question 4** ☒

(a)

Legitimacy is the belief that you have been given the right to govern. It suggests that you have been given consent by those who elected you. During elections legitimacy is sought, the party with the most votes has the most legitimacy. You could argue that in the UK, ~~the~~ our Gov.t is rarely ever legitimate because they never get over 50% of votes cast. In 2005 Labour only got 21% of the whole electorate (those who voted and those who didn't) and in 2010 the conservatives only got 35.6%. This shows that although legitimacy is sought, it's rarely given.
In the UK the Gov.t also seeks legitimacy through referendums and different consultation methods.

Question 2(b)

This proved a very straightforward question. All candidates had to do was to explain three positive features of representative democracy. Often this was done in contrast to the flaws of direct democracy which was fine.

(b) There are a number of positives associated with representative democracy. One would be that within each constituency the electorate are provided with a choice of parties to represent them, with all their policies clearly outlined within the parties manifesto. Another positive feature of a representative democracy is that you as a nation will have a stronger government as you have qualified and highly educated people making decisions with regards to the nations goings on. A third and final positive feature of representative democracy is that the government can be held accountable for the decisions it makes by the electorate and of course voted out at the next elections, and also in theory by Parliament, however with the uk's ~~government~~ Parliament being used as an example its very difficult for the

> government to be held accountable by parliament as in order
> to ~~take role they must~~ ' form a government they must have
> clear.
> a majority of seats within Parliament.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

Here the brevity of the response means that only three marks are collected for AO1, with no evidence presented to gain AO2 marks.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Examiners do not credit on the length of the response, but here the answer provided is minimalist. Ensure that for a question which seeks three aspects, each one is given due credence and attention to detail.

Question 2(c)

Quite often candidates were able to write developed answers to this question and to draw on a vast hinterland of information in the process. These often included issues such as the constitution and the more recent expenses saga. It was not uncommon and it proved very expedient for many candidates to use this as a report on the previous Labour's government's democratic.

> (c) Democracy Michael Crick called democracy "the most
> promiscuous word in the English language" and thus it is
> a difficult concept to define. It is a process and state of
> mind that acknowledges the following : that government should
> be accountable, parliament should be representative and civil liberties
> should be protected. A successful democracy is one that manages
> to achieve these features and strike the balance between representativeness
> and governability. However many people believe that declining
> turnout, reduced trust in MPs and the increasing infringement of
> civil liberties has resulted in a loss of democracy in the UK.
> However one must keep these worries in perspective and remember that
> the UK remains a liberal democracy with limited malpractice in the system.
> In a representative democracy it is crucial that there is

regular participation' as it appears that H * . The Most significantly there has been a ~~significantly~~ lower turnout in recent years leading many to say there is a 'democratic deficit' and the government lacks legitimacy. In 2010 there was a 65% turnout across the country with turnout as low as 44.1% in Manchester Central. This is reinforced by low turnout in the EU elections where 34% voted (in contrast to the higher 43% average in Europe.) Furthermore the turnout in referenda has been poor with only ~~65%~~ 50% for the "Establishment of a Welsh Assembly" and a mere 47% for

* a recent MORI study argued that poor participation is directly contributive to a weak and unhealthy democracy

((c) continued)

'"The Establishment of a North East Assembly" referendum. However arguably the in a post - Thatcher society of 'individualistic consumerism ~~individualism~~' people are just participating in another form - through conscious consumerism. A You Gov Poll of 2009 said that 55% of people think of the social ramifications of the produce they buy. However these limited forms of participation cannot make up for the fact that with a decreased ~~electoral~~ turnout (due to a lack of trust in MPs with only ~~65%~~ 50% of people who trusting their MP according to a Gallop Poll of Jan 2007.) people are not being represented as well as they should be.

~~The~~ In a post 9/11 and 7/7 era, the government has been increasing its powers and civil libertarians have argued that they are infringing civil liberties (particularly of minorities) and thus being undemocratic Between 1997 and 2005, the government has passed 600 pieces

of legislation increasing police power and the UK Information Commission
spoke of the dangers of "sleepwalking into a surveillance society."
The 2004 Civil Contingencies Act (2004) gave the government
~~increasingly~~ extensive powers in an "emergency" and The Guardian called
the Act "the single biggest blow to our democracy of this or
last century." This combined with the 2001 Anti-Terrorism
(Crime and Security) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (2005)
have eroded our civil liberties to what many believe is an unacceptable
extent. However the HRA (1998) which incorporates elements of
the European Convention of Human Rights has enshrined our

((c) continued) rights in a document and 'semi-entrenched' them.
The judiciary now has the power to reject government legislation
that contravenes the Act and is 'unconventional' ie the
Belmarsh Ruling (2004) that overturned elements of the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act which permitted detention without charge *
        Liberals argue that the electoral system itself just
isn't democratic ~~itself~~ as it does not give a fair
proportion of seats to the amount of votes gained (instead
giving a 'winner's bonus.' In 2005 Labour won 35% of the
vote but 55% of the seats whilst in 2010 Conservatives won
36% of the vote and 47% of the seats. It is unfair to
smaller parties as the Liberal Democrats received 23% of
the vote but only 8% of the seats. The Green Party received
219,000 votes and only 1 seat whilst UKIP won 900,000 votes
but not a single seat. Thus democracy (deriving from "demos"
(people) and kratos; rule) doesn't seem to be rule by the
people at all as there are significant numbers being left
unrepresented. This problem is clearly continued in Parliament *
    There are many flaws in the UK democratic system that

desire from both the people and the institutions'. Arguably there is a great need for reform, with Nick Clegg promising that he would attempt to reinvigorate politics by the "biggest reform since 1832." Both reforms to the electoral system and to the ~~reduction~~ adoption of a codified constitution so

To improve democracy we need more 'root and branch' reforms

((c) continued) we have an entrenched bill of rights to protect our freedom. However the system does retain the basic democratic features of representation (through free and fair elections) and holding the government to account (through elections.)

(★) where minorities are heavily under-represented. Only 6% are from ethnic minorities, 21.5% are women with only 3 Muslim women MPs in Parliament. It is arguably an elitist undemocratic body as 33% went to Oxbridge, 35% went to private school with a disproportionate 20 Etonian MPs. However there are continuing efforts to make it more representative and democratic with a policy of positive discrimination (ie Labour's all women shortlists.)

Question 3

Political parties continue to remain the least popular topic. However, what was lost on popularity was made up with quality. It became clear that centres who opt for this topic have prepared candidates well and they performed at high levels. Perhaps the boost of the ever so recent election sharpened minds and broadened the area upon which to comment. As always there is scope to improve and advance knowledge and the following scripts selection aims to do that.

Question 3(a)

The difference between left wing and right wing political ideas was handled remarkably well. Many gave the origins of the term (though this was not a prerequisite) from the French Revolutionary era. The most common link for illustrating the distinction asked for, was the ideas of the Labour and Conservative Parties.

> classes and businessmen. They seek to
> conserve traditional aspects of
> society, such as family values, and
> look to free the market from state
> intervention, therefore, examples of
> right-wing policies would be
> privatisation, a free-market and
> harsh, mandatory prison sentences

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Examiner Comments

A clearly constructed answer linking political doctrines to left and right wing. It shows an impressive level of knowledge and understanding with the links to socialism and right wing views.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

On the previous 2(a) question, legitimacy can be identified with its opposite, illegitimacy. Here on this question both extremes are presented. All that is required is to highlight the key points of each. Again as with all concepts the response does not have to be solely built on UK examples and here many candidates cited fascism and communism in their depiction of left and right wing ideas.

Question 3(b)

On the surface this can be covered with the dichotomy between Old and New Labour. In reality much of that debate, although not sterile has seen the ground beneath it move in recent years. The Party has more divisions over policy and approach in recent times. These include overseas policy (Iraq & Afghanistan), economic policy and constitutional issues. As such this latter approach is more contemporary and realistic of the issues which segment sections of the current Labour Party.

> (b)
> The Labour Party is indeed divided
> upon a vast & diverse range of issues
> in the political sphere. This has
> become even more apparent since
> Tony Blair introduced 'New Labour'

party when he became leader in 1994.

Tony Blair pursued a totally different policy approach, entitled the 'Third Way', which was in stark contrast to the policies proposed by Michael Foot in the Thatcher years (1979-1990). This engendered a more prudent approach to progressive politics.

One issue on which many in the Labour Party is with regards to nationalisation of industries within the UR. Originally, Clause IV of the Labour charter was committed to nationalising most industries. Many on the left fringe such as Tony Benn, Michael Meacher & Dennis Skinner are fervently committed to this clause today. However, since Blair, the programme of privatisation has continued. This was part of the third way' doctrine. This issue does divide

((b) continued)

Many within the Labour Party.

Divisions are rife within the Labour Party with regards to foreign policy. Since 9/11, Britain has pursued an interventionalist policy with NATO & the US. MPs on the left disagree

with the UR's decision to participate in the Iraq war in 2003. For many, the decision contradicted so much of what Labour stood for that many, such as Robin Cook, stood down from the cabinet.

There are also divisions with regards to unilateral disarmament. Gordon Brown remained committed to the 'Trident' nuclear deterrent in the 2010 election manifesto. Others, many of them CND campaigners, seek to abolish Nuclear weapons. Labour's 'third way' saw Britain defending national interests especially after 9/11 •There is also disagreement over state management of the economy. Labour & the 'third way' remained committed to Laizzez-faire economics

((b) continued)

& freedom in the stock market, many in the Labour party remain committed to the socialist principles of state interventionalism & the idea of the state being the provider of welfare.

In conclusion though many socialists principles remain, as is evident in the 1qq4

Introduction of 'the minimum wage', Labour's 'third way' is completely different to the rugged ideology which once predominated the Labour movement. Many who hold to former socialist principles in the Labour Party are at loggerheads with 'New Labour'. For this reason, there are significant divisions within the Party.

ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

This is a good example of an answer that tries to bridge the gap noted above. It acknowledges the Old v New Labour factions, but also examines ideas and policy divides in the Party.

ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

All parties are collections or groupings of ideas. There exists factions within each. It is vital that you identify the factions within both the Conservative and Labour Parties.

Question 3(c)

The request for policy and ideas hints that we can see two levels of material here for this question. The ideas, the principles of a political party and the policies, the actions they implement (or wish to implement) when in office. Many candidates identified that there has been a move to the centre in a post Thatcher type of consensus. In terms of policy this means a good deal of posturing over common held views. In practice the recent General Election provided a mass of detail for policy divergence.

(c) There has been historically a great deal of adversarial politics between Labour and the Conservatives. Emphasised in the 1983 election where Thatcher pursued policys of free market and small government while Foot pursued policys of high taxes, public spending and government intervention (described by one Labour MP as, "the longest suicide note in History"). However the recent shift of both Labour (under Kinnock, Smith and finally Blair) and the Conservatives (under Cameron) to the centre ground has resulted in increased consensus, although the recent 2008/9 recession exposed true adversarial policies for the first time since 2005.

The key policy recently has been the economy which originally Labour and the Conservatives disagreed on. The Conservatives originally pursued a "fiscally prudent" line with low government spending while showing up a tax "bombshell" for future generations. However Labour policy was for big government intervention with an 8% rise in government spending and

£500m pledged to the long term unemployed.
However in September 2009 Mandelson

((c) continued) announced that the Labour party
agreed that cuts would have to be made.
This shows consensus politics as the only thing
the parties disagree on is when the cuts
should be made (immediately or after a six
month period). Furthermore both parties
now agree on a 50% tax on those earning
over 150,000 per year.

The parties also agree on the NHS and in
their attitude to crime. Cameron said in
Jan 2010 "Burglars leave their human
rights outside," displaying a typically right wing
attitude, one which Labour surprisingly (given its
left wing origins) agrees with, Gordon Brown
promised 20,000 new prison places by 2014
mirroring the Torys tough attitude to crime.
The parties have also agreed to ring fence NHS
spending, another key area of consensus. *

However the two parties do disagree on:
ID cards and as such civil liberties. Originally
labour proposed ID cards for all, although it
has since backed down and wants to force
all non-UK citizens to wear them. The
Conservatives however are totally against ID

((c) continued) card, saying they are a waste of public money. This is one example of a key area of adversarial politics between the two parties.

In summary since their respective beginnings both Conservative and Labour policies have drifted to the middle ground as both parties suffer from class dealignment due in part to their new status as catch-all parties. However there is still some adversarial politics between the two parties with ID card being emphasised because some see them as as infringing on Civil Liberties. ~~these are most ideas are~~ In comparison to the adversarial nature of the two parties in 1983 however, the disagreements today are minor and infrequent.

*The shift for the conservatives to the "green" party is another area of consensus, with labour promising a £500m green stimulus package and the Conservatives a "green bank" giving recycling homeowners up to £130 per year.

Question 4

This was one of the best informed and answered questions on the paper. It caused very few problems or ambiguities. Parts (a) and (b)were handled exceptionally well: the only flaw came for a minority of candidates in part (c) where some took a line to condemn exclusively first past the post rather than concentrating on the case for PR (there is a link with the latter but it did distract a minority). Also the question was clear in the need to establish the case FOR proportional representation, not the case against. AO2 marks were in the assessment and analysis of the alleged strengths of that case.

Question 4(a)

This question was not 'new' and it was often well handled by candidates. The better candidates could illustrate their response with accurate examples. Again the recent General Elections served to advance responses with clear detail.

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Question 3 ☒   **Question 4** ☒

(a) One function of elections is to transfer Sovereignty to the people. In representative democracy's and liberal Democracies the electorate decides who they want to represent them, in Britain this would be in Parliament. The British Electorate decides who they would want to represent them in their constituency, in turn passing Sovereignty back to Parliament — 'Parliamentary Sovereignty'.

Another function of elections is to hold the incumbent government to account for its tenure as the ruling party. An example of this can be seen in Britain's latest election which showed voter apathy towards the Labour Party to which they lost nearly onehundred seats. This

shows the government has been held accountable at this latest election through this function of elections.

Question 4(b)

This part (b) presented no difficulties. Discrimination came in the extent and depth of the response. In short, how clear and detailed were the alleged advantages of first past the post.

(b) The 'First Past the Post' (FPTP) is an example of an electoral system. It is the system used for UK general elections.

One advantage of the FPTP system is that it allows people to vote for who they want to represent them locally. It is so argued that other electoral systems, such as Proportional Representation, do not allow this, and similar electoral systems may allow the Political Parties to allocate Members of Parliament that have no link to a local area whatsoever. The FPTP system, however, has candidates elected from 650 constituencies and so these candidates know about the issues of the local people and these people feel that their local issues are given a voice at Westminster.

Another advantage is that the FPTP system generally produces a strong government. This is because the party with the most seats in Parliament then forms a government, and this Party usually will have a majority in the House of Commons. This means Bills and legislation should be easily passed through Westminster, and the

((b) continued) winning Party should be able to implement policies outlined in the pre-election Manifesto. The recent 2010 election has shown that this is not always the case, though.

A third advantage is that radical parties find it very difficult to gain seats in the Houses of Parliament in the FPTP system. This can be seen as an advantage because far-right groups such as the British National Party are not represented at Westminster, and many people would view this as an advantage and benefit of the FPTP system.

ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Here three are detailed and the response moved into level 3. It does not maximise marks but is nonetheless a good response.

ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

As noted the recent General Election will have ignited interest in the subject and assisted candidates. It is impressive if key facts are linked and cited in answers.

Question 4(c)

As indicated previously, candidates lost impetus by concentrating on first past the post as opposed to proportional representation. Furthermore some failed to directly answer the question and address the question by 'making out a case in favour of'.

((c) continued)

There has for a long time been a debate about whether the F.P.T.P. System is really democratic and whether it should be replaced Proportional Representation systems have certain advantages which FPTP lacks.

First of all, there is evidence to suggest that there is widespread discontent with the current system. Election turn-out has been relatively low over the recent years with 61% in 2005 and 65% in 2010. This suggests people may be discouraged to vote by the fact that their votes will not be accurately represented. However, despite the closed list (P.R) system used in the European Parliament elections, turn-out for this is usually relatively low with 38.5% in 2005. Never theless, when Gordon Brown announced constitutional reform in 2008, 76% of the people were in favour of electoral change. This shows that the public are discontent with F.P.T.P. and

The current system therefore fails to represent people's wishes accurately. The 2010 election is a clear example. Labour, with 29% of the votes was able to achieve 258 seats wherzas the Liberal Democrats, with 23% of the votes only achieved 57. This may clearly be a reason why people not voting for the 2 mainstream parties may be

((c) continued) discouraged to vote as they may feel their vote does not count. In addition, such as system may encourage tactical voting which would not show real public wishes and would thus further be a threat to democracy. Under proportional representation, however, a party would be accurately represented in parliament, and therefore people voting for minority parties would be encouraged to participate.

Another advantage for P.R. is that it increases the legitimacy of the government. Under F.P.T.P a party does not need a majority of the popular vote to rule. This was shown in 2005 when Labour came to power with only 35% of the votes. This suggests the legitimacy of the party in power may be questioned as often not even half of the population voted them in. This cannot happen under P.R. as a party without 50% of the votes would form a coalition in order for the government to become legitimate and have the mandate to rule.

It has been a concern that if the FPTP system were removed, the unique link between an MP and their constituency would be lost. However some proportional representation systems such as the Single Transferable Vote provide larger multi-member constituencies. This is the case in Northern Ireland where there are 18 constituencies

((c) continued) and 6 members in each. In this way there is a wider choice of parties and candidates to represent the people, as opposed to with F.P.T.P. where people only have one MP to represent them despite the fact they may not have voted for them.

It has also been one of the main advantages of FPTP that it effectively prevents extremist parties such as UKIP and the BNP from gaining political representation and therefore not threatening democracy. However, other proportional representation groups such as the regional list system include a threshold (usually 5% -10%) which a party must reach in order to achieve any representation. This keeps out small extremist parties.

In conclusion, the introduction of PR to the Westminster elections would have a positive effect on democracy as it seems very likely it would increase voter turn-out. In addition, the government in power would be more legitimate. Lastly, by introducing PR it is still possible to maintain FPTP benefits such as constituencies and keeping out extremist parties.

Grade Boundaries:

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Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw mark boundary	80	49	44	39	34	30	26	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	100	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

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