

Examiners' Report  
January 2012

GCE Government and Politics 6GP01 01

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## **Introduction**

The numbers of candidates completing Unit 1 in January continued to rise and the standard presented in this series proved the paper to be both accessible and one on which to discriminate between performance levels.

Assistant examiners commented that candidates demonstrated a clear grasp of contemporary events and made pertinent reference to these in supporting their responses. Often, where this was done, it became easier to move into the level three mark range.

On the negative side, it was clear that the (a) section on functional representation was not well-understood. Again, on question three (pressure groups), many candidates avoided the central task of restricted influence of pressure groups, by simply stating restricted influence was a product of the absence of success factors. The question on political parties was again less popular than the three others. Having noted that, many Centres that encourage their candidates to take up this challenge invariably do perform well.

## Question 1

1a)

Part (a) was well-answered: most candidates managed to compare differences and included examples. The best answers made good use of synthesis by giving a point for *referendum*, then one for *election*, rather than a paragraph on each. However, the latter route still delivered high reward. There were relatively few weak answers and these tended to explain the features of a referendum, rather than offer any sort of comparison with elections. Another common error was to spend too long on examples and not enough on key differences.

1b)

Most candidates answered this well and there were very many high scores. It is clear that Centres certainly deal with the topic of compulsory voting very well. Many readily portrayed increased levels of participation/legitimacy, an educated and better-informed electorate, and comparisons were made with Australia. Fewer argued that it would be a civic duty. Two minor concerns included confusion with, and linking to, votes at 16, and arguments against compulsory voting.

Examiners require a minimum of three points, clearly explained, to attain level 3.

Examiners require a minimum of 2 points, clearly explained, to attain level 2.

1c)

As is often the case for the longer questions, this question featured a more diverse range of answers. Most answers, even the weaker ones, could identify what *representative democracy* was, and could offer some basic arguments for and against its merits. The weaker answers focused on a very limited range of issues and supporting evidence, eg by just looking at the electoral system or the type of MPs.

The stronger and most impressive answers extended the range and addressed points such as the nature of MPs (race/gender/ethnicity, etc), the electoral system, House of Lords, professional and educated nature of politicians (Burkean theory), the limited knowledge of the wider electorate, the representative role of pressure groups, enhanced access to devolved institutions, practicalities of representative politics, etc.

A minority, which failed to read the question fully, took the approach of contrasting representative democracy with direct democracy.

At level 3, examiners expect to see a range of points, clearly explained, and illustrated with a degree of balance.

At level 2, the points will not be explained as clearly, and the examples may be sparse. Alternatively, the response may be good but essentially be one-sided.

1b)

*Compulsory voting* presented few problems. Differentiation was achieved in the detail and depth presented and the clarity of the explanation.

1c)

This is a full response and it is clearly a level 3 answer. Little more would be expected of a candidate in the allotted time available.

(b) The first argument in favour of compulsory voting is the fact that it increases participation. The UK ~~has~~ has seen participation in elections drop from above 70% in the 1970s to barely 60% - 65% in recent years, therefore compulsory voting would eradicate this deficit. It has been proved in Australia where they used it and obtained a 90% turnout for the vote in their general election.

Another argument in favour of making voting compulsory is simply because it spreads the power out and so it is less concentrated in the hands of a few, if everyone voted the government would also ~~gain~~ be more legitimate as a higher percentage of the population voted for them. For example if a government won on a majority <sup>but only</sup> of 30% of a vote the population voted then they lack acceptability to the people. Compulsory voting would therefore decentralise power to aid democracy.

In addition compulsory voting would be a means of educating and informing the public on political issues. ~~The electorate~~ Those who didn't consider voting before may look at manifestos; ~~given~~ given of opinions they never knew they had and take advantages of things such as watching

You should start the answer to part (c) on page 8

((b) continued) were televised inter party debate before the 2010 election. Compulsory voting would counter apathy and people would become more <sup>politically</sup> active.

(c) The UK is a fulfil many of the criteria of a representative democracy, with for example free and regular elections, constituency links with their representatives (MPs) and also accountability of government. Although the UK is a strong, democratic society, the extent and effectiveness of the 'representative' aspect can be questioned.

The first way in which the UK is a representative democracy is through <sup>the election of representatives</sup> ~~elections~~ <sup>How</sup>. They are free and fair, held every five years. ~~in order to make the government properly accountable.~~ The electorate select their MP, who is their direct link to the government and represents their constituency's needs, presenting a case to the government to fulfil them. For example residents in the Crawley constituency, unhappy about the closure of the A and E unit at their hospital, wrote to their MP who then <sup>perused</sup> ~~put up~~ a case in parliament.

Another way in which the democracy in the UK is effectively representative is the fact that there is freedom of media, and freedom of pressure group activity to influence

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) policy makers. This is effective as the media can scrutinise parliament, for example the recent MP's expenses scandals in the late 2000's between 2007 - 2009. The fact the pressure groups can operate and push a case are a key element of the current system is seen through their extensive memberships, like the RSPB has over 2 million members for what is seemingly a small issue. These pressure groups are representing more niche views of the electorate that parties may not cover. The effectiveness of <sup>the freedom of</sup> pressure groups <sup>was</sup> highlighted when Ash in 2005 ~~was~~ aided the government in making the decision to ban smoking in public places.

In addition, representative democracy in the UK is effective as the politicians who are making decisions are experts in their fields and they have experience, not only this but also <sup>having</sup> politicians oversee representatives mean they are more likely to make rational, reasoned judgements rather than being persuaded by emotional appeal. For example, in the recent budget George Osborne (MP) made many cuts to the public sector

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) in order to tackle the deficit, whereas ordinary citizens may have thought more in their own interests.

There is also evidence of effective representative democracy as the government are accountable to the people. This is both through elections every five years. For example that the last Labour government were voted out in 2010 because the people felt they were not managing the UK as well as they should. This means that the politicians should act responsibly as there is a chance of being voted out of office.

~~Another point about the representatives~~

However, although there is obviously effective democracy in the UK to some extent it may not be as effective as we like to think.

Although there are MPs and parliament to represent citizens, government still is the ultimate sovereign and can choose to ignore the electorate. For example the recent <sup>maximum</sup> budget cuts rises to £9000 a year saw millions opposed - ~~yet~~ the law was still passed. Also MPs have

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) a tendency to 'vote along party lines' as a way to improve their political career, here we see how democracy is not representative as the views and wants of the citizens are not being taken into account.

Furthermore, the increased use of direct democracy undermines ~~the~~ like the 2011 referendum on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May about whether we should keep a ~~AV~~ change the voting system to AV, undermines the fact we elect representatives to make decisions on our behalf and therefore highlights how the government may be weak and ineffective.

Not only this but also, a key element of representative democracy is that elections are fair, ~~the~~ however First past the post (FPTP) is arguably not. It distorts results so that small parties are discriminated against and large parties are favoured. ~~For so~~ In 1974 Conservatives <sup>gained</sup> ~~won by~~ 200,000 ~~for more~~ votes than any party but ended up with 4 less seats. The system leads

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) to tactical voting and a misrepresentation of the true views of the people and to it is not effective. In addition participation in the system has decreased from 70% in 1970s to 65% now - participation is suffering and therefore so is democracy.

We have seen how the election of representatives ~~is~~ <sup>also</sup> both effective at representation but also detrimental to democracy, through voting on party lines or self interest, as it is clear that the freedom of activity and accountability of government make a case for effective representation. However this is undermined by use of direct democracy and disprop majoritarian systems as well as lower participation for this reason I think the UK has a long way to go before it can claim to have truly effective representative democracy.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

- 1b) This reaches into level 3 for reward: it is precise and retains a sharp focus on the question.  
1c) Note the use of examples and the balance (not fully even) which is developed.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

- 1b) Again, as a general rule, three well-explained and detailed points will access level three marks.

(c) Representative democracy and liberal democracy define to the point exactly how the UK and its political system is run.

A major feature of representative democracy is the elections - 'free and fair', they allow power to be presented to the electorate in choosing who they wish to represent them in parliament and essentially government; this enhances democracy within the UK, allowing the people the power, as well as ~~the~~ <sup>having</sup> 'knowledgeable' representative who are believed to be capable of running their country well. ~~The~~ The elections should be, effectively, an extraordinary way to enhance democracy; but the fact that turnouts for many of these elections are low, raises one to question just how effective they may be; many people are slowly beginning to distrust the government - the MP's expenses scandal in 2009 is an example of one particular event which caused many to question ~~the~~ if our political system is actually in the hands of trustworthy representatives. Turnout for the general elections in 2005 was 61%, and although this went up in 2010 by an increase of 4%, this is still an extraordinarily low amount, to base the representation on.

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued)

The Iraq war is another issue which claims to have major distrust within the electorate - even though support from the electorate for this event was particularly low, in 2003, the Labour government at the time still went ahead with it anyway.

Representative democracy may also be suffering due to the misconceptions that politicians do not always operate fairly in involving the electorate or even public within decisions about the political system. Referendums which they may choose to put forward may only be done so really if the government is confident of the answer they will receive, or if they are capable of discussing a matter in a very representative manner of the public, especially as referendums are getting less and less commonly held, and definitely isn't promoting a healthy view of democracy.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

This is a mid-range mid level 2 response. In essence, there is a lack of detail and scope, it is not well-planned and there are limited communication skills.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Although time is a factor, it pays to plan and consider how to answer a (c) section. Quite often, examples add depth and allow you to reach crucial AO2 marks.



This response makes one central point. It does not complete the comparison of direct democracy (which is noted), with representative democracy.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1**  **Question 2**   
**Question 3**  **Question 4**

(a) Referendums differ from an election because a referendum, a form of direct democracy, is a vote on a policy decision affecting the nation, for example a vote on whether we should ~~remain~~ remain members of the EU. An election however, is a vote for to decide elect our representatives, with the party receiving the most votes winning the election and running the country.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

There is no need to fill a full page for a part (a) question but the response here is minimal: one difference will not sustain a high mark.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

As a general rule (unless there are commands to the contrary), two well-made points will suffice to attain full marks.

## Question 2

Questions on political parties continue to be the least popular of the four on the examination paper. However, it is noted that candidates who make this choice are well-informed and have a good contemporary political insight.

2a)

This was the first time that liberalism formed part of a section (a) but all examiners noted that candidates encountered few problems with this. Most answers could identify at least one, and usually two, ideas linked to liberalism. Some were developed and extended more clearly and fully than others, earning more marks in the process. The most obvious ideas mentioned were freedom, civil liberties, and tolerance. Candidates also referred to the more ambiguous issue of individualism in relation to limited welfare and the reduced role of the state, along with the contrasting view of social liberalism that supports greater welfare. Some good answers linked in to current party policies.

2b)

Again, most responses could indicate at least two, and usually three, examples of Labour policies. Stronger answers were developed more fully, and weaker ones were a little vague and lacked a specific policy. Some candidates stated that Labour believes in the free market or that a traditional Labour view supports greater equality, yet there was little further clarification.

The best answers often integrated reference to Blair, Clause 4, Brown and Ed Miliband. They used developed and clear actual policies of recent years, ie if they mentioned the party's support for the free market, they would refer to a specific policy example, eg use of PFI, support for privatisation or greater use of private money in services such as the NHS. The mark scheme was wide but deliberately so. Any Labour policy was credited if it was contemporary and still in place - thus reference to Blair and Brown, as well as Milliband, came into focus. To an extent, it was easier to identify previous leaders than Milliband, given the fact that Labour is now in opposition.

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2c)

Based on the broad range and quality of answers, most students found this a more challenging question than section (b) and it produced varying standards of response. The weaker answers did, on the whole, accurately identify some key Conservative and Liberal Democrat ideas and beliefs. However, they failed to grasp the demands of the question in developing this information and then comparing both parties' policy positions before and after the coalition. This key watershed was a crucial factor. Some weaker answers also focused on one party more than the other.

There were some very good answers showing that candidates understood what was required. They structured a well-organized answer accordingly, namely by identifying the traditional views, policies and positions of each party. Candidates then offered examples and policies to suggest whether the policies/positions had changed or not, since the coalition was formed. There was some excellent and sophisticated analysis and reference to the two parties' positions on Europe, tuition fees, tax and welfare in particular, in the stronger answers.



At level 3, examiners expect to see a range of issues covering both parties, with points clearly explained and illustrated with a degree of balance.

At level 2, the points will not be as clearly explained. Alternatively, the response may be as good but essentially will be one-sided or focused exclusively on one party.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1**

**Question 2**

**Question 3**

**Question 4**

- (a) One idea that is key to liberalism is freedom and rights. Liberalism holds that everyone should be free to flourish in their actions/views and unless it impedes upon someone else freedom, only then can government intervene. This freedom can be protected in rights for example the Human Rights Act 1998 in Britain. Another key idea of ~~such~~ liberalism is tolerance, this means we should embrace, certainly not oppress, a wider ~~range~~ variety of views and cultures and accept and protect minorities. For example, lib Dems don't want a cap on immigration.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is a very good response. Two ideas are well-documented and portrayed.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1**

**Question 2**

**Question 3**

**Question 4**

(a) Liberalism is almost always associated with free market economics and it has been given the name neo-liberalism. Liberalism ~~has~~ is also associated with a type of democracy, A liberal democracy, a democracy in which the state doesn't seek to interfere with the lives of its people, and



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

There is a range of ideas raised here but the response is more list-like than showing full knowledge of, and understanding, the (AO1) criteria. Free market economics, liberal democracy and human rights? None is developed.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Time is obviously a factor in part (a) questions but the response above fails to demonstrate the clarification and exposition required. Producing a speedy list is not fully answering the question.

### **Question 3**

Questions on pressure groups are always popular and often display contemporary political insight. The main problem encountered was on part (a), where it was clear that although functional representation is a key term, it is not well known and understood. The loss on part (a) was invariably recovered on the two remaining sections of the question.

3a)

This response was by far the weakest of all of the section (a)s. It was clear that most students failed to understand what this concept meant. Most responses gained a few marks by offering some fairly broad answers about the role and function of pressure groups in a rather generic way.

There was a small minority of candidates that identified the specific requirements of the question and included reference to the role of pressure groups between elections. These offered a specific single-issue-based representative function on one issue, as opposed to the multi-issue focus of parties as well as the role of pressure groups in supporting minorities (with appropriate supporting examples).

3b)

Most students were able to suggest three clear factors and provide examples. However, there were many candidates who simply took a factor that makes a group successful (money, members, insider/outsider status) and reversed it to argue that the absence of that factor was the limiting issue to restrict their influence.

Celebrity endorsement, although important, is perhaps not the crucial factor many suggest! Some credit was available for this response but it did limit the reward. Essentially, some students clearly didn't read the question closely and only talked about success factors.

Examiners require a minimum of three points, clearly explained, to attain level 3.

Examiners require a minimum of two points, clearly explained, to attain level 2.

3c)

This question again featured a range of responses in terms of depth and detail.

On the most basic level, even the weaker answers managed to define pressure groups. These could identify some basic outline arguments that suggested pressure groups had grown strong on the one hand over recent years, yet also then offer counter-arguments that they had become weaker. However, some weaker answers confused examples or argument. For example, some candidates believed the foxhunting ban had been overturned and that on a very simple level, all large pressure groups had influence.

The stronger answers took such arguments and developed them in much greater depth and with detailed analysis. Candidates offered some excellent supporting examples and contemporary evidence before reaching an overall judgement. They also developed more sophisticated arguments, eg the example of the Iraq War, where large public mobilisation did not lead to a change of government policy. Other pertinent examples were covered effectively, including the HS2 issue, the role of trade unions, student protests and how pressure groups in general were effectively utilizing new technology to advance their cause.

At level 3, examiners expect to see a range of points, clearly explained, and illustrated with a degree of balance.

At level 2, the points will not be as clearly explained and the examples may be sparse. Alternatively, the response may be as good, but essentially be one-sided.

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1**  **Question 2**   
**Question 3**  **Question 4**

(a) Pressure groups promote functional representation as they are a source of influence to the government. An example of a pressure group is the British Medical Association a group that carries out services therefore it has a function. It represents members of the public through direct action such as campaigns and protests that promote its functions.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This response lacks any clear connection to the key term and gives a generic description of pressure groups.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

All the key terms on the specification should be mastered for the examination.

(b) Three factors that could restrict the influence of pressure groups are the size of pressure group membership; the organization and leadership of groups and the wealth and financial powers of an organization.

The size of pressure groups, if large are often interpreted as displaying the success of an organization - when actually large membership would suggest a lack of financial and economic power. This may also be the result of passive 'cheque book' membership, which although associated to a pressure group fails to exert influence or have an effect on policy formulation. Similarly although the Stop <sup>the</sup> War Coalition had a ~~massive~~ significant membership figure of over 1 million protesters, but did not change the Labour's government's decision to go ahead ~~on~~ with the war in Iraq in 2003. Instead it is smaller, more influential insider pressure groups that have the biggest impact on policy formulation, such as the Howard Penal Reform with membership of only 3,000 in contrast to the Trade Unions Congress 7 million.

Similarly pressure group influence is significantly limited or restricted by the lack of organization and leadership within a ~~party~~ group. Either lacking the expertise and knowledge needed to help influence the

You should start the answer to part (c) on page 8

((b) continued) formulation of policy-making process or lacking the necessary contacts needed to exert influence on governments. Many remain outsiders due to peer leadership of groups and the lack of internal democracy, making them unaccountable to their members and therefore undemocratic. Insider groups, who are less high-profiled such as the CBI or BMA are equipt with important specialist knowledge in their particular interests, wold their financial power and networking skills to exert influence.

Finally, pressure groups are also restricted by the views of the government of the day and the compatibility of both party and pressure groups ideological agendas. For example during the 80s, many business groups found great favour and influence over government under Thatcher's Conservative administration. The combination of shared or similar political beliefs through ~~the~~ economic similarities and financial power saw them successfully exert influence. Whereas the Trade Unions, who had found favour under the previous Labour government, found themselves limited in their actions due to ideological differences. Today under the Coalition government, pressure groups such as the Countryside Alliance and Greenpeace have found political favour and influence under the Conservative led Coalition,

((b) continued) just as the Trade Unions did under Labour before.



(c) 'Are pressure groups becoming less powerful or more powerful?'

Pressure groups are a group of individuals who wish to exert influence over government and policy formulation - but do not wish to win elections or governmental power. Since the 1960s, over half of existing pressure groups today were born, suggesting that in the last 50 years, the rise of pressure groups has seen them become increasingly powerful.

The recent student cuts in 2010, demonstrated the emergence of political activism ranging from the youth to public sector protests and the very recent Occupy London campaign against Capitalism and bankers wages. This recent growth of pressure group media attention and figures of membership on the rise, highlight the growing trend of the power of pressure groups - with 40-50% of UK citizens belonging to at least one voluntary organization compared to just 1% of the population belonging to a political party. This rise could be attributed to the rise and power of 'cyberactivism' in which e-politics has enabled a wider spectrum of society to air the political grievances and opinions. Although these recent sector protests did not alter

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) government policy, they did however dramatically highlight the growing mood and political activism of citizens. Mobilizing and uniting together for either sectional interests and the protection of self-rights or the wider use of promotional cause groups addressing more altruistic or moral problems in society such as Make poverty history or Shelter.

Similarly the 1990 ~~Red~~ Anti-Poll Tax Campaign saw the power of the electorate, significantly damage the premiership of Margaret Thatcher and consequently leading to her fall as Prime Minister. The power of public opinion within pressure groups is important - as these groups claim to represent the voices of society and so governments are often fearful of upsetting or not acting to the demands of the public opinion for fear of electoral damage. Similarly the February 1974 and 1979 elections, were arguably damaged by the Miners' strike '73-74 and the 'Winter of discontent' and ~~and saw~~ the power of pressure groups were also amplified through the Snow Drop Campaign 1996, in which public outrage to the Dunblane School Massacre saw the possession of handguns made illegal and therefore a successful pressure group.

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

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You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued)

With the devolution of power, pressure groups have other means or sources to seek influence instead of the Parliament under Westminster. The Welsh Language Society regularly consults the devolved Welsh Assembly to ensure the protection of the Welsh Language. Similarly, if pressure groups are ignored by domestic policy, there is always the ability to exert influence on the European parliament or bodies, seen through World Development Forum and the growth of 2,400 Non-~~organizational~~ governmental-organizations such as the Red Cross or Catholic Church who exert power on an international and global level. Another example of these access points was demonstrated through the Human Rights Act 1998, which saw the encouragement of more liberal pressure groups emerge such as Liberty -empowering the voice of minority groups such as ethnic or religious minorities.

The power ~~assess~~ of these pressure groups can be measured in terms of their increased membership and education of society increasing the promotion of civic politics and a less disillusioned voting electorate, particularly focusing on the youth, through new innovative and horizontal forms of direct action.

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) and protest. The power of the media has significantly boosted their profiles and seen them become a powerful force - which governments must recognise. However as demonstrated by the the Stop the War Coalition in 2003, the mass publicity and size of a group does not always impact the influence over policy making. Instead more influential, wealthier pressure groups such as the British Medical Association or the Confederation of British Industry whose close ties and financial power over government, makes them influential figures in the policy formulation process. Being regularly consulted by government and even as the National Farmers Union demonstrated implementing their own policy that they have shaped and therefore gaining an unfair political leverage and not accountable to public scrutiny due their unaltered status.

In conclusion, there is clear evidence to suggest that the power of both insider and outsider pressure groups is growing - making them a powerful alternative to parliamentary democracy. While pluralists argue they increase political equality through the widening of power, arguably power still remains in the hands of the elite and the 'ultra-insider' pressure groups whose economic power and expertise sees them what

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) to government, acting together in partnership and thereby compromising its ideas or interests and limiting political room to manoeuvre. Outsider pressure groups withered remain powerful in profile an image such as the National Union for Teachers, or National Union of Students but as demonstrated by the Tuition Fee demonstrations fail to have an impact on policy making as the £9,000 cap remains. Therefore power of pressure groups like within government, remain in the hands of the elite - this being the 'ultra-insider' pressure groups.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

This is a level three response for both part (b) and (c).



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

The candidate fully adheres to the demands here of the question. Candidates should avoid remodelling their prior ideas and keep the question at the core of their response.



## Question 4

Elections proved to be another equally popular question and, in the main, it was answered very well. Many candidates were able to handle the data on elections impressively and accurately, to support a line of argument.

4a)

Some impressive knowledge was demonstrated by a few candidates, who showed complete knowledge of the workings of the system, including the d'Hondt formula. However a good number of candidates failed to outline the workings of the system clearly. Common mistakes were:

- asserting that the party list system allowed voters to list their choices by preference
- claiming that on closed lists that voters can rank the candidates in their preferred order.

Most candidates gained marks for recognising that the list system was PR and that it was used in the European Parliament, although a few cited other examples such as Israel.

4b)

4(b) was perhaps the best-answered of the part (b) questions on the examination. Many candidates laid out three clear examples with reference to pertinent examples – especially of disproportionality, minor party discrimination and the landslide effect. A small number wasted effort on strengths, without using them to highlight weaknesses, but most recognised that these belonged in part (c).

Examiners require a minimum of three points, clearly explained, to attain level 3.

Examiners require a minimum of two points, clearly explained, to attain level 2.

Like section (b), even the weakest candidates were familiar with some of the core arguments in favour of the First Past The Post (FPTP) electoral system. The key points were covered by most candidates, namely its:

- speed and efficiency
- ability to create strong, stable governments
- capacity to keep out extremist parties such as the BNP
- good link between MP and constituency.

The stronger candidates developed such points in significant depth and detail to warrant a greater amount of marks. They often integrated negative or critical references to systems of Proportional Representation, in the process. Some strong answers also offered some effective analytical comment as to how and why, despite its tendency to produce majority governments, FPTP produced a hung Parliament in 2010.

Some answers did cover the negatives of the system. Whilst this seemed to be acceptable in a fairly small volume as part of the overall wider argument, some responses went into too much depth on this aspect and answered the question in a for/against style as a result.

This was not what the question asked and this cost marks as a consequence. It took away the time and scope to develop the positive arguments in sufficient depth.

At level 3, examiners expect to see a range of points clearly explained and illustrated. The need for balance and making out a case against retaining FPTP is not required.

At level 2, the points will not be explained as clearly. The examples may be sparse or the points may be limited in range.

Chosen Question Number: Question 1  Question 2

Question 3  Question 4

(a) ~~The~~ For European assembly elections in England, Wales and Scotland the Party List electoral system has been used since 1999. ~~There~~ There are two different types of List systems. The first is a closed list system, used in Britain. A voter is given a ballot with a list of candidates from each party and has the right to vote for one party, but not ~~the~~ <sup>an</sup> exact candidate ~~from~~ from the list. The open list system is ~~the same~~ almost the same only in this case the voter does get to choose which candidate they wish to elect from the parties list. This is a multi-member ~~system~~ constituency system, meaning that each constituency has ~~one~~ larger region boundaries and more than one MP. For example, in regards to EU elections, England is divided into 11 regions ~~the~~ electing 3-10 members

You should start the answer to part (b) on page 5

((a) continued) ~~not~~ each.

(c) To elect ~~the~~ representatives to the House of Commons, voters use the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system. Though many argue it is the wrong system to be using, it seems there are in fact more arguments in favour of retaining it as the Westminster electoral system.

When the population votes for an MP they are voting for a candidate they want representing them in government and ~~and~~ someone that they can turn to with their ~~the~~ concerns and criticisms. FPTP ensures that this link between constituency and MP remains strong because it is a single member system. ~~Unlike other systems such as~~ Multi-member systems, such as STV, AMS, and List, weaken this link. It leads to confusion within the population of who, specifically, is looking out for them in the House of Commons. It also means that all MPs have constituent work. A major flaw in AMS, for example, is that there are MPs with constituent duties and those without. Losing this link by taking on a

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) new systems would be detrimental to the population.

One major argument for changing our Westminster electoral system is that FPTP does not provide proportional outcomes. People then say systems such as STV, for example, ~~make this~~ avoid this problem. However, proportionality often leads to an even greater problem that FPTP avoids, that is ~~to~~ unstable ~~and~~ coalition governments. ~~That~~ The more proportional the outcome the higher the likelihood of a coalition government involving, often, more than just 2 parties. This means that there will be a greater imbalance of influence that smaller, more extreme parties would have ~~at~~ an government because they are the essential swing groups, as is demonstrated in Israel with their current proportional electoral system. Although FPTP does not completely eliminate the possibility of a coalition government, as is evident with our government today, it is a ~~major~~ large minority where as

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) it would not be using <sup>Preferential</sup> systems such as STV or AMS.

Finally, although FPTP can be criticised for its lack of voter choice it should not be overlooked that it still gives the voter direct say in who they wish to elect. In <sup>the</sup> closed list system, voters only get to elect a party and it is then in the hands of the party ~~they~~ who take the place in each constituency. Even in the open list system, parties have a say in the order of the list which would influence a voter ~~to~~ in how they choose their candidate. This, therefore, does not seem like a better alternative to giving a voter complete choice over a ~~single~~ candidate. It is simple and ensures that the voter has full authority over which candidate they choose and that they are not influenced nor are the spoken for by a party.

In conclusion, in order to remain in a country with a strong government,

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) good constituency links and the voters making their own choices it is obvious that FPTP should be retained as the electoral system for the House of Commons.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Although not well-presented for (a), this does contain expansive knowledge and clarity.

For part (c) the response shows clear understanding and comprehension.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

It is vital to deliver precision when describing electoral/voting systems. These have to be revised in depth.



Indicate your first question choice on this page.  
You will be asked to indicate your second question choice on page 13.

Put a cross in the box  indicating the first question that you have chosen.  
If you change your mind, put a line through the box  and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number: **Question 1**

**Question 2**

**Question 3**

**Question 4**

FOR	AGAINST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strong, stable government</li><li>Clear outcome</li><li>Simple</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Disproportional</li><li>Wasted votes</li><li>Two party system</li><li>This is better</li></ul>

(a)

In a party list electoral system each voter has a multi-number of preferences and they must rank whatever candidates they wish to have elected ~~these~~ numbered in order of preference. When the votes are counted the candidates that have the most votes and who are over a given quota are elected. However, candidates who are below the quota are either eliminated or their second preferences are counted and then there is a formula used to assign a number of seats to the number of votes and this makes it proportional. An example of this is used in Scotland and Wales and they use the hybrid system AMS.

You should start the answer to part (b) on page 5

((b) continued) FPTP is described as a simple plurality system. However, there are several criticisms of it. One of these is the fact that it is disproportional compared to other electoral systems. An example of this was in the 2005 general election when the Liberal Democrats won 22% of the popular vote but only gained 52 seats and this clearly shows that the FPTP system is disproportional because if the election was under the AV system the Liberal Democrats would have won 126 seats with their percentage of the vote. The disproportional system of FPTP shows that with the use of this system it is excluding third parties as their supporters are spread out over a larger area.

Another criticism is that it is bias to the Labour party as in ~~the~~ the constituencies Labour only need 33,000 votes for one MP whereas the Conservatives need 38,000 votes for one MP and the Liberal Democrats need 100,000 votes. With this bias towards Labour it excludes the smaller parties such as UKIP who

You should start the answer to part (c) on page 8

((b) continued) have the support but it is spread out over a large area this meaning they can have no ~~is~~ MPs. This can be seen as undemocratic as everyone isn't getting a fair chance.

Another criticism is the fact there is a large number of wasted votes within each constituency as a candidate just needs one more vote than their opponents to win even when they do not have the popular vote. This was shown in north Belfast when Lisa Fin won the seat however there were thousands of wasted votes for the unionist supporters.

(10)

You should start the answer to part (c) on page 8

(c) Elections are at the heart of the democratic process and within the UK the current election is the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system. FPTP is used in the general elections and it works on the basis of 'one person, one vote, one value'. With the introduction of devolution in the early 2000s there has been the question whether there should be an electoral reform for the FPTP system. However, it has its advantages.

One advantage of the FPTP electoral system is that it can produce a strong and stable government such as in 1997 when Tony Blair's Labour Party defeated John Major's Conservatives by a landslide victory of a 167 seat majority. With FPTP being able to produce these governments it enables these new governments to fulfil their political manifestos thus ensuring they have the political mandate to govern. For example, in 1999 Tony Blair was able to pass the Lords Reform Act as he had the political mandate to do so and this also shows that the government is legitimate as it was chosen by the electorate and this in turn shows that there is a strong link between the government and the voters as the voters

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) have the confidence in the government.

Another advantage is the fact that it can produce a clear outcome the majority of the time. However, this excludes the 2010 election as it was an abnormally year where there was a hung parliament. With the production of this clear outcome it can enable the governing party to have the political mandate and thus in turn they can fulfil their manifesto. An example of this is the 2005 election where Labour won by a majority of 68 seats thus giving them the political mandate.

FPTP has ~~and~~ the other advantages of that the electoral system is simple. It is easy to use and the public can see where and how the MPs are elected unlike in some other electoral systems such as STV and the regional list system where formulas have to be used to calculate the number of seats that are won. FPTP is easy to use as the voter has just have to put a cross beside a candidate's name and then each ballot paper is counted up and the people with the highest number of votes in each constituency are elected as

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) the MP of that constituency and this was the case in the 2010 general election when the east of Kent MP Peter Robinson was defeated by the Alliance candidate Naomi Long.

However, there have been commissions such as the Jenkins Commission to find new ways of electing candidates to Westminster as some people see FPTP as disproportional. In the 2005 general election the Liberal Democrat party won a 22% share of the popular vote but they only gain 52 seats. One would see this is not proportional and not fair and this in turn has led to local elections using different electoral systems to elect their local politicians as they see these as more proportional and that with the multi-member constituency the majority of the electorate will have a politician to look to and thus increasing the link between the electorate and the politician. An example of this is in Northern Ireland where STV is used and there are multi-member MLAs for people to go to so this in turn could put

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) people out of favour with the FPTP electoral system. Another disadvantage is that the majority of the electorate are misrepresented as their vote was wasted within the election as FPTA is a simple plurality system thus meaning there are no second places. An example of this is in north Belfast where there is a high republican and ~~unpopular~~ <sup>unpopular</sup> presence and in 2010 Jerry ~~the~~ Kerry won the constituency however it was a tight race and thus led to the misrepresentation and wasted votes of the unionist votes. The FPTP electoral system is simple and easy to use and also it makes a strong and stable government and with these factors it is easy to say the FPTP will remain as the electoral focus for the general election for years to come.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

- For section (a) this is evidence of how it can go wrong. Nothing can be credited.
- However as we move to part (b), we see a response that gets into level 3 for AO1
- The response begins well but on the last two pages it diverts to the disadvantages of FPTP. If the negative points were used to support the positive ones, there is credit - this, however, fails to do so and no progress is made in this final section of the section c.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

It is common for part (b) sections to be focused on three issues/requests. Each one has to be developed and ideally supported by political illustration to get into Level 3 and thus maximise marks. Note that for a section c response there are 9 marks for AO2. Often it will be a contested political point (e.g. for v against) however candidates have to be prepared to evaluate one position and draw out the AO2 from this evaluation.

(c) The UK is a ~~is a~~ ~~fulfils~~ many of the criteria of a representative democracy, with for example free and regular elections, constituency links with their representatives (MPs) and also accountability of government. Although the UK is a strong, democratic society, the extent and effectiveness of the 'representative' aspect can be questioned.

The first ~~and~~ way in which the UK is a representative democracy is through <sup>the election of representatives</sup> ~~elections~~. They are free and fair, held every five years. ~~in order to~~ ~~to~~ make the government properly accountable. The electorate select their MP, who is their direct link to the government and represents their constituency's needs, presenting a case to the government to fulfil them. For example residents in the Crawley constituency, unhappy about the closure of the A and E unit at their hospital, wrote to their MP who then <sup>perused</sup> ~~put up~~ a case in parliament.

Another way in which the democracy in the UK is effectively representative is the fact that there is freedom of media, and freedom of pressure group activity to influence

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) policy makers. This is effective as the media can scrutinise parliament, for example the recent MPs expenses scandals in the late 2000's. between 2007 - 2009. The fact the pressure groups can operate and ~~play~~ ~~a~~ ~~so~~ are a key element of the current system is seen through their extensive memberships, like the RSPB has over 2 million members for what is seemingly a small issue. These pressure groups are representing more niche views of the electorate that parties may not cover. The effectiveness of <sup>the freedom of</sup> pressure groups <sup>was</sup> highlighted when Ash in 2005 ~~aided~~ ~~the~~ ~~government~~ in making the decision to ban smoking in public places.

In addition, representative democracy in the UK is effective as the politicians who are making decisions are experts in their fields and they have experience, not only this but also <sup>having</sup> politicians ~~are~~ ~~more~~ ~~representatives~~ mean they are more likely to make rational, reasoned judgements rather than being persuaded by emotional appeal. For example, in the recent budget George Osborne (MP) made many cuts to the public sector

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) in order to tackle the deficit, whereas ordinary citizens may have thought more in their own interests.

There is also evidence of effective representative democracy as the government are accountable to the people. This is both through elections every five years. For example that the last Labour government were voted out in 2010 because the people felt they were not managing the UK as well as they should. This means that the politicians should act responsibly as there is a chance of being voted out of office.

~~Another positive about the representative~~

However, although there is obviously effective democracy in the UK to some extent it may not be as effective as we like to think. Although there are MPs and parliament to represent citizens, government still is the ultimate sovereign and can choose to ignore the electorate. For example the recent tuition fee rises to <sup>maximum</sup> £9000 a year saw millions opposed - yet the law was still passed. Also MPs have

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13



((c) continued) a tendency to 'vote along party lines' as a way to improve their political career, here we see how democracy is not representative as the views and wants of the citizens are not being taken into account.

Furthermore, the increased use of direct democracy undermines our like the 2011 referendum on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May about whether we should keep a AV change the voting system to AV, undermines the fact we elect representatives to make decisions on our behalf and therefore highlights how the government may be weak and ineffective.

Not only this but also, a key element of representative democracy is that elections are fair, ~~the~~ however First past the post (FPTP) is arguably not. It distorts results so that small parties are discriminated against and large parties are favoured. For example In 1974 Conservatives <sup>gained</sup> ~~won by~~ 200,000 ~~the~~ more votes than any parties but ended up with 4 less seats. The system leads

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 13

((c) continued) is tactical voting and a misrepresentation of the true views of the people and so it is not effective. <sup>participation</sup> In addition participation in the system has decreased from 70% in 1970s to 65% now - participation is suffering and therefore so is democracy.

We have seen how the election of representatives <sup>is</sup> both effective at representation but also detrimental to democracy, through voting on party lines or self interest, as it is clear that the freedom of activity and accountability of government make a case for effective representation. However this is harmed by undermined by use of direct democracy and disprop majoritarian systems as well as lower participation for this reason I think the UK has a long way to go before it can claim to have truly effective representative democracy.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

For part (c) this is a clear response but it lacks the depth or detail to access level three marks.

## Paper Summary

Overall, there is much encouragement to take from this series. The examination proved to be adapted to discriminate between candidate abilities, and at the same time, it is manifestly clear that the subject has a growing audience and an improving performance level.

Good practice and points to improve include the following:

- The use of contemporary political examples serves to enhance and develop all assessment objective skills. The more up-to-date detail presented serves to connect candidates to the real political world
- This was most pronounced and effective with pressure groups, where candidates made reference to *Occupy London* and the *British Bankers Association*
- However, this contemporary insight for enhanced performance was not limited to pressure groups. It was equally as impressive when Assistant Examiners were presented with accurate data on elections, up-to-date information on democracy, recent referendum results and current policies and ideas of political parties
- All of the above signify the nature of politics: it is a moving feast and it does benefit candidates to do the additional research, which provides the contemporary evidence the subject requires
- Care needs to be taken to read fully and digest the wording of the question. Often inaccurate digestion of the specific words leads to a significant loss of marks
- A minority of candidates still fall into the trap of attempting to shape their answer to one that they had done previously, as opposed to the one set on the paper!

## Grade Boundaries

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