

Examiners' Report  
June 2015

GCE Government and Politics 6GP01 01

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# Introduction

## General Overview 6GPO1

This summer's paper proved to be fully accessible for the vast majority of candidates and at the same time provided opportunities for those who had prepared well to excel and prove the scope of their political knowledge and insight. Following the recent May 2015 General Election this added an extra layer of information for many who were able to display their contemporary awareness. However having noted this, the paper was set before the May General Election and reference to this was not a pre-requisite to gain full marks on any question or sub-section of the examination. However for many this was a bonus which they were able to exploit and advance their understanding of the subject.

### Key trends which emerged

We saw improved performance in the c sections across the paper and some candidates surrendered marks on a & b but improved level performance on part c.

The democracy questions continue to be the most popular and here we saw a lot of candidates who could articulate sound arguments for the state of democracy in the UK – good practice is becoming far more widespread.

In contrast questions on political parties continue to be the least popular but have a significant number of candidates who entered into Level 3 – again proof that with good preparation candidates can do really well.

Pressure groups were the second most popular choice – often as the second question of the two selected. However it was painful to see the centres who understood the scope of the specification on this topic and those who did not and as a result it was often a binary outcome on part c of the question where the key concepts which surround this were often ignored.

Few candidates had any difficulty with the question on elections. As noted above many made accurate and pertinent reference to the May 2015 General Election but this was not a pre-requisite to enter the top level and gain full marks – it was simply an additional avenue to use.

## Question 1

Q1a) Weaker candidates struggled to define democratic legitimacy and discussed power and authority rather than the right to exercise power. Stronger candidates were able to define democratic legitimacy accurately and offered the examples of elections and referendums as being two methods of achieving democratic legitimacy. A significant number of candidates had misread the question and consequently offered examples based on the traditional/hereditary type which could gain no reward.

Q1b) A great many candidates included referendums as a way of improving representative democracy and failed to articulate how this method of direct democracy synergised with representative democracy. This flaw affected a number of very able candidates who went on to score very respectable marks on 1c. Weaker candidates did not explain the ways but merely stated the method. A small but not insignificant number of candidates referred to the unrepresentative nature of Parliament in terms of socio-ethnic background of MPs/Lords but failed to explain 'ways' to rectify the fault through things such as all women short-lists or other quota systems, thus the loop was not closed down to gain effective marks.

Q1c) In terms of knowledge and evidence, there was a very broad range of responses to this question. Many respectable answers looked at it from the perspective of the 'participation crisis' and referred to the recent election as evidence of some possible improvement. A good number even cited the Electoral Reform Society's claim that the 2015 General Election was the most disproportionate ever. Others discussed the deficit by analysing the weaknesses and flaws with the democratic processes – problems with FPTP, unelected elements, over-mighty executive. Again, the better candidates referred to data from the recent election. A minority had difficulty with the notion of deficit and confused it with the economy. Nevertheless, overall, this question enabled candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and use it to good effect.

This is a mixed script - which begins at a lower level than its ends.

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

(a) Democratic legitimacy is the right to exercise power over people. One way it can be achieved is through elections, for example, the London Mayoral Election where people elect a mayor to exercise power over London. Another way it can be achieved is through tradition, this is true for the Royal Family, for hundreds of years the U.K has had a monarch who have gained legitimacy through tradition and the acceptance by the people, this acceptance is conveyed through silence, there has not been a revolution against the monarchy, for example.

(b) Representative democracy is the democratic system by which the U.K. operates, it is where constituencies elect an MP to represent them in Parliament.

One way in which it could be improved is by improving Parliament's functional representation. Currently, ethnic minorities, women and the working class are massively underrepresented. 50% of today's cabinet attended a private school and in 2010, only 4% of MPs were from an ethnic minority compared to 8% of the population. By improving Parliament's functional representation, representative democracy could be improved.

Another way that is argued could help representative democracy is regulating the size and population of constituencies to make the House of Commons more representative of the political beliefs <sup>of</sup> the U.K. Currently, Scotland have 59 seats in the commons even though their population does not seem to warrant this, this means that Scottish politics is overrepresented in Parliament, this is not representative.

Finally, if the House of Commons was more representative of the country's ideologies, representative democracy would improve. For example, in the 2015 election, although millions of people voted for the ~~Green Party~~ <sup>Green Party</sup>, they gained only one seat, such an unequal ratio of votes to seats means that representative democracy needs to be improved, this could be done by a reform of the electoral system.

Many political commentators claim that Britain is suffering from a democratic deficit, this is represented, they argue, through low election turnout, the prevalence of undemocratic institutions and the overcentralisation of power. In response, there is the argument that there is not a democratic deficit but instead, we have changed the way we participate in politics. In this essay, by ~~using~~ <sup>these</sup> assessing ~~the~~ points, we will assess the extent to which the U.K is suffering from a democratic ~~reasons~~ deficit.

It is argued that the low election turnouts show a democratic deficit. They represent the apathy of citizens to participate in politics and their unwillingness to partake in civic responsibilities. However, in response, although election turnouts are low, they are no longer falling. Yes, seventeen million people did not vote in the 2010 election but, this was a small increase from the last election, this points not to a deficit but ~~to~~ to a rejuvenation. Also against the argument that the public have become apathetic towards politics is one suggestion that low election turnouts actually show

((c) continued)

contentment with the system, not apathy or dissatisfaction

However, commentators argue that it is not only the activity of the people that point to a democratic deficit - less than 1% of the population is a member of a political party - but it is also the government itself. The House of Lords, many claim, is not in line with modern democracies due to its unelected nature. For such an ~~it~~ institution to ~~the~~ play a central role in British politics, points to a democratic deficit. Perhaps the lack of action against such an establishment

also furthers the idea of the population's apathy towards politics.

However, simply because there seems to be <sup>a lack of action</sup> ~~less protests~~ today, it does not mean that people are uninterested. Social media sites like Twitter and Facebook allow political commentary from the citizens and for debates to occur online. These types of activity show that people, especially the youth, are once again becoming interested in politics suggesting a political rejuvenation over a deficit.

But, the actions of the government do not show this same rejuvenation. There is definitely an overcentralisation of power with much of the power not even being locked to the cabinet but rather only to the prime minister himself. This is certainly true of Tony Blair who preferred to surround himself with advisors rather than ministers. The fact that power is so concentrated does suggest that ~~power~~ there is a democratic deficit.

But, by looking at the actions of the people it is clear that politics plays an active role. 40% of the population are a member of a pressure group. This shows that people are active, not apathetic.

In conclusion, perhaps what has been called a democratic deficit is simply the changing nature of democracy. Yes, there is a clear deficit within the government but it is difficult to label the people as suffering from a democratic deficit. People participate in politics more casually now, by joining debates on Twitter, signing e-petitions, this change in democracy however, has been mistaken for a democratic deficit.



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**Examiner Comments**

Part (a) is restricted to 2 marks. The example of tradition is not a source of democratic legitimacy as required by the question. On (b) this cannot attain L3, e.g. the issue of representation could have been valid if a way to improve representative democracy had been made. After a weak start in (a) and (b) the response picks up in (c), making relevant and detailed points, and therefore merits L3.



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**Examiner Tip**

The majority of marks are in the C section and the overall mark and thus grade depends heavily on this element.



This response improves on (a) and (b) in comparison to the previous response.

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(a) Democratic legitimacy is the authority to govern and run a country from the consent of the people. Democratic legitimacy can be achieved by a absolute majority of seats in the Commons and it can be achieved when elections are held because people vote for the party they want to be in government. Through having a mandate the party with the majority can implement manifesto pledges. Democratic legitimacy can also be achieved when a government accepts the verdict of a referendum.

(b) Firstly, democracy in the UK could be improved electoral reform. Currently PR first past the post (FPTP) is very disproportional. In 2015 the Conservatives gained 36.9% of the vote, but only 52% of the seats. Systems like single transferable votes could help reduce the disproportionality of UK elections if they were introduced, because people would be able to get what they voted for. In 2015 12.7% of the electorate voted for UKIP, but they only got one seat; proportional representation would help stop this and make the UK more proportional.

furthermore, increased use of referendums would help representative democracy because it would be possible to gain the views of minority groups who don't vote. Recently voter turnout in the UK has declined. In 2010 only 65% of the electorate voted in the general election. If ~~voter turnout~~ <sup>compulsory voting</sup> was implemented then it would be easier to find out what people want from the government.

In addition, votes for 16-17 year olds would improve representative democracy because this age group is largely under represented in politics meaning that they are often forgotten by politicians. Cuts were (b) continued) implemented by conservatives for under 26 year olds. By allowing 16-17 year olds to vote they could be engaged by their parents into voting, this would increase voter turnout making the UK more democratic.

(c) Firstly, there is a democratic deficit in the UK because first past the post distorts what people vote for. pressure groups can also undermine UK democracy, as can the social representation of certain institutions. However, the UK is democratic because of pressure groups, regular elections and choice of votes that the voters have.

Firstly, there is a deficit in UK democracy because first past the post (FPTP) is largely un-democratic this is because of disproportionality. Since the 1980s there has been increasing disproportionality in FPTP system because of increased support for smaller parties such as Liberal Democrats, UKIP and Green Party. In 2010 the Liberal Democrats got 23% of the vote, but only 14% of the seats, meaning that they were largely under-represented in the Commons. FPTP tends to favour large parties like Labour and Conservatives and increase their seats in the Commons. In 2015 the Conservatives gained 36.9% of the vote and 52% of the seats. The UK is bad representative democracy because its people cannot get represented by who they voted for this destroys the mandate theory upon which the UK's representative democracy is built upon.

However, the UK is not in a democratic deficit because ((c) continued) there is much choice in elections for who to vote for. In 2010 133 parties stood to be elected and there is universal suffrage in the UK and because everyone can have a vote in an election this ensures that the UK is democratic. In FPTP MPs strive to represent all of their constituents. The SNP's Meri Black said 'I look forward to representing all my constituents regardless of who they voted for'. The UK is not a democratic deficit because people can vote for who they like and MPs strive to represent everyone.

In contrast, the UK ~~is~~ ~~dem.~~ had a democratic deficit because pressure groups can undermine UK democracy through illegal activity and violent direct action. Pressure groups can encourage people to ~~do~~ behave illegally and threaten other rights. The animal liberation front have threatened the rights of other people through putting letter bombs through their front door. This is very bad for democracy as it is restricting the rights and individual freedoms of others. Pressure groups also promote elitism through ~~too~~ allowing wealthy minorities such as ~~big~~ ~~business~~ ~~direct~~ ~~government~~ ~~policy~~. On the other hand, pressure groups are good for democracy because they represent the rights of minority groups who may be otherwise forgotten.

((c) continued) Action for Children which represents vulnerable children lobbied the government to introduce a report abuse button online to protect bullied children, this was successful in 2014. Furthermore, pressure groups can provide a check on the government through protesting if they ~~do not~~ feel their policies are un-democratic. In 2003 3 million people in London protested against the Iraq war. The fact that protests and checks are allowed on the government in the UK shows that the UK is not a democratic deficit.

parliament promotes UK democracy because it acts as a vehicle to represent the UK's electorate. parliament can veto and amend government bills. Mps in parliament will act to represent their constituents' interests by introducing private member bills. In 2011, Nicholas Blackwood (Conservative MP for Oxford West) called for better flood defences in Oxford after his constituency was flooded. parliament will also make sure that the government does not act in a corrupt or self-interested way through vetoing legislation, this is good for democracy.

However, the UK is democratically deficient because parliament is not socially representative. Many Mps were privately educated and many have been to Oxbridge.

((c) continued) 51% of the UK's population are women however, only 22% of Mps are women. This shows that parliament may act in the interest of men from privately educated backgrounds when making legislation. When government have a strong majority in parliament it can be difficult for parliament to reject their bills. Between 1997 and 2007 none of Tony Blair's new Labour bills were defeated in parliament because he had a strong majority. The last bill to be defeated in parliament was the 1986 Shops Bill. This shows that parliament can very rarely defeat bills they do not like. The whip system also influences Mps <sup>on</sup> how they vote, meaning they may not vote in their constituents' favour.

In conclusion, the UK has somewhat of a democratic deficit because of disproportionality, pressure groups, illegal activity and the problem of parliament. However, the UK is democratic because of universal suffrage, parliament and pressure group checks.



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Examiner Comments

Again an excellent (c) section which merits Level 3



(b) Proportional representation systems are not always simple for the electorate to understand and sometimes require depth knowledge of politics. An example is that AMS produces two classes of representative through the drop formula. To the electorate, this is easily misunderstood and as a result, could increase political apathy.

Proportional representation systems take longer to return a functioning government. Due to complex formulas \*and it takes longer to calculate the winner(s). It could also be considered easier for polling stations to make mistakes in calculating. In other PR systems, there are no constituencies per say and votes are taken in on a national level. This means, it would take longer for the vote to come in and be counted. Thus delaying a government being formed. Which prevents a legislative programme being executed.

\* Such as the D'Hondt Formula, used to establish the quota needed for candidates in STV.

Finally, PR systems often return coalitions or a power sharing executive. This is often considered a weak government which has more obstacles to overcome in order to pass legislation. Whilst this perhaps does stop radical change from occurring. It does prevent legislation from being passed.



((b) continued)

ably as there is no clear manifesto set out due to one or more parties forming a coalition. In Germany, there are 5 parties in parliament, of which some form a coalition government. It is unclear who what their manifesto is due to this.

(c) Westminster elections decide the members of parliament in Westminster, London. The current system is First Past the Post (FPTP). This is a single member constituency system in which voters have one vote for an individual candidate. It is a "winner takes all" system, with the Party(s) able to control a majority in the House of Commons (326 seats) forming government.

Reforming this system reaps many benefits. One such benefit is it would enable a move to a more proportional system. FPTP is the most majoritarian system currently in use in the UK. The percentage of votes cast for a party is not close to representing the ~~total~~ percentage of seats one party has. In the 2015 election, the Tories received over 50% of seats with just 36% of the vote.

Whilst it could be argued that FPTP provides a strong and stable government, with a large majority in some cases. The two party system under-represents the views of the voters for example, UKIP received 3.5 million votes for just one seat. Furthermore, although admittedly, the current system allows for a legislative programme to be pushed through the House of Commons, this is not necessarily an advantage to the current system. A center-

((c) continued) Criticism of this could be that radical change is not always good. Many democracies in the West have obstacles and obstructions to prevent serious changes from happening without the consent of the public.

Another ~~ex~~ advantage of ~~the~~ reforming the system to a plurality system would mean tactical voting would no longer be a problem. Electorate are free to vote on the positions of their preferential candidate ~~of~~ party. Tactical voting is voting for a party ~~would~~ that has potential to stop a party you really disagree with from getting into power. This further allows for multi-party politics to occur. In the EU elections, many more parties than Labour and Conservatives enjoy a MEP position. For example, UKIP also has more MEP seats.

However, a disadvantage of PR systems is that they are harder to understand than the current system. Due to ranking candidates in numerical order and multimember constituencies for example, like in STV. The government and other political access points could educate the public using PSAs and promotional videos to ensure that at election time, the electorate understand their system.

((c) continued) In conclusion, electoral reform would ensure that the views of the voters are represented in the translation of votes into number of seats. As well as further providing an obstacle to prevent radical change to policy by promoting consensus politics between leading parties.



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**Examiner Comments**

On (a) this response gains two marks for role of political party in a regional list system, one mark for proportionality, and one mark for electoral voting (not for an individual but a party). On (b) - this is a good answer and reaches L3 for AO1. However as we reach (c) we see a clear L2 response. There is not enough scope or depth to advance.

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(a) The regional Party list system as used in the European Parliamentary Elections is the most proportionally representative electoral system used in the UK. The electorate is given one vote on a party of their choice in a multi-member constituency. The proportion of the vote gained by the party is directly proportional to the amount of seats given to the party. Party Candidacy, in the closed system used in the UK, is decided by the individual party's hierarchy and a list of potential candidates is drawn up. In the ~~2004~~<sup>2009</sup> European elections the Conservatives won 27% of the vote and 26% of the seats and UKIP (a then minor party) won 16% of the vote and 13% of the seats.

(b) Firstly, proportionally representation will lead to the formation of coalition governments at a higher frequency rate than the current plurality system of First Past the Post. In some cases, such as Northern Ireland, the political co-operation necessitated by coalition government is essential to maintain a stable and strong government of the people. However, in ~~some~~<sup>some</sup> most cases coalition government slows down the processes of government as no one party can dominate parliament and force through legislation. The increased strength of opposition

inside the legislature due to coalition can create stagnation in legislation legitimisation by the parliament and thus, it will lead to an ineffective parliament over it's time in sitting. This is the case in Italy where the government rarely lasts its full term in office and the legislative processes are slow and laborious. So, ~~good~~ proportional representation can <sup>implement</sup> ~~produce~~ the negative aspects of coalitions into the UK political system at a higher frequency than the current system.

Secondarily, as Winston Churchill wrote: "proportional representation in a democracy can "give powerful weapons to any... politically motivated minority. Proportional representation increases the political influence of any minority that is at present silenced by the current plurality system. In the 2010 General

((b) continued) election, the BNP (British National Party) won over 1.2 million votes. In the current FPTP system they gained no votes and were unable to implement their arguably racist policies into our political system. However, as shown by the Nazi Party inbetween the two world wars, proportional systems can pave the way for any extreme party to gain political power. If such a system was used in the UK, there is a danger that parties such as the BNP would gain a voice the arguably should not be heard or listened to.

Lastly, proportional representation produces multi-member constituencies that reduces the accountability of parliament. In FPTP, one MP represents his/her constituency such as Thomas Pughmore (Corby and East Northants.) This MP can be directly held to account for his actions in the next 5 years and can be petitioned in electorate surgeries that happen across the constituency. However, proportional systems produce multi-member constituencies and thus, it is harder for the electorate to decide who is responsible for constituency negligence. Therefore, proportional representation will reduce accountability and as a result of this but, a key feature of democracy, it could undermine <sup>'liberal'</sup> democracy here in the UK.

(c) The Westminster Parliament uses the plurality system called First Past The Post. The system, <sup>(FPTP)</sup> arguably, has been effective at creating strong and stable majorities with 1974 being the last time a government did not last its full term of office. However, FPTP has many drawbacks and is in need of reform. It leads to a vast amount of wasted votes, a lack of third party representation (and political atrophy) and tactical voting. All of which would be removed by the implementation of a proportional system in elections.

Wasted votes  
3rd Party  
unfairness  
electoral  
system  
representation.

Firstly, FPTP produces an excessive amount of wasted votes. In the ~~last~~ 2010 election, 15.7 million votes were wasted across the UK. That is 15.7 million people whose political voice was not heard. In one constituency alone, Hampstead and Kilburn, 17,000 votes were wasted as the winning Labour candidate only won by 64 votes. In stark contrast, in the 2009 European parliamentary election that uses a closed Regional list system no votes were wasted ~~as it~~ <sup>as it</sup> is a directly proportional system. Therefore, to ~~change~~ <sup>rectify</sup> this problem that FPTP creates, electoral reform to a proportional system is imperative.

Next, FPTP leads to the centralisation of political parties who need to capture the 'center ground' and ignores minor parties creating political atrophy or stagnation. In the <sup>2005</sup> ~~2010~~ election, Labour and Conservatives shared around ~~3~~ 65% of the vote. However, Labour had 3% more than the Conservatives and gained 60 more seats. This seems highly controversial considering that in 2015, UKIP won 14% of the vote (4 million votes) and only won 1 seat. Therefore, the two party duopoly created by FPTP ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> impedes any hope of a third or minor party seeking power. This is political atrophy and it is this stagnation of two parties controlling power that is leading to political disillusionment, the public and an increased in partisan dealignment. FPTP is arguably unfair as the minor parties get the growing (if only in minority) votes such as UKIP.

in 2015) suggests that electoral reform is needed to satisfy the demands of a electorate that is calling for change. Although the 2011 AV referendum suggests the population is against electoral reform, its low turnout (42.2%) and proximity to the General Election so it was affected by voter fatigue effectively nullifies its result. FPTP needs to be reformed to modernise and get up to speed with the political situation of today and represent a wider portion of society.

Lastly, since 1951, no government has been elected by over 50% of the votes cast in the General Election. Therefore, the government's mandate given by the people is questionable and its use of such a mandate to implement its manifesto lacks legitimacy. In 2005, Tony Blair's Labour government won the election with only 35% of the vote. It can not be said that he had the full support of the people and as J.S. Mill's put it produced the 'Tyranny of the Majority'. Blair was given a weak mandate by the people by coming a slim majority and thus could disregard the minority and govern in his authoritarian style that used a soft government to control the country. FPTP no longer produces a democratic outcome and only a proportional system brought about by electoral reform will change this.



To conclude, the Westminster system is outdated and invalid. The age of two party dominance is over and electoral reform is needed to stem the tide of political disorientation (led by Russell Brand.) Electoral reform will reduce the amount of wasted votes, and end Political Atrophy which is rife in ~~our~~ our electoral system.



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**Examiner Comments**

On part (a) - full marks for this section and the same again on part (b) - an excellent response achieving full of accurate detail. On (c) - here the answer attains L3 - a good and clear response



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**Examiner Tip**

Many ask 'How much should be written?' and in truth there is no exact response. It is not about length it is about quality. A mark a minute should be a guide. Here the C section is not particularly long but it concise and all is relevant.



pressure group that focuses itself on helping and protecting rights and views of the older generation. Furthermore, promotional pressure groups are therefore able to be supported by a wider range of people as its not so exclusive, whereas sectional pressure groups gain merely support of just that section.

- (b) Pressure groups have been known to put across their cause in many ways. Insider pressure groups such as BMA and CBI tend to use lobbyists and economical influence whereas outsider pressure groups such as fathers for justice and ALF tend to use more direct action.

One way in which pressure groups attempt to achieve their aims is through lobbying.

This is where the pressure group would <sup>possibly</sup> hire professional lobbyists to go inside Parliament and exert pressure and influence on ministers.

This only tends to happen with insider and more financially equipt groups and it costs money and requires already Government supporting views. This is known to have been successful with groups such as BMA ~~and CBI as they~~ as they tend to exert views on medical policy and the NHS.

furthermore, pressure groups can use direct action. This is a more explicit and successful method as the group is actually carrying out what it's fighting for.

((b) continued)

for example, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is a highly successful animal rights group that actually break into facilities that are testing on animals and rescue them. It may give them a damaging reputation as it's against the law but it's effective in raising awareness and actually achieving something as opposed to waiting for Government to act.

Moreover, pressure groups are known to protest for their cause. This is a successful method that has been used for centuries and has been adopted by pressure groups such as ~~the~~ Stop the War (against the Iraq War) and even Green Peace. It has been successful as it allows anyone with a similar view to join and ~~heightens~~ raises dramatically public awareness.

~~the~~

Overall, pressure groups achieve their aims through lobbying, protest and direct

Pressure groups, in recent years, have been gaining significant amounts of power which I believe they distribute rather than concentrate. This is because of things such as protests, petitions and pluralism.

One reason why pressure groups distribute power is because of public protest. This allows everyone the right and ability to join in and have their say on political matters. It motivates the public and allows the group to exert its influence on the public and thus distribute its power to them as with groups such as Green Peace, it's the people that make the difference. In this way, pressure groups distribute their power to the people via protest.

Another <sup>way in which</sup> ~~reason why~~ pressure groups distribute power is through the concept of pluralism, having and including a range of different ideas and beliefs allows them to distribute

((c) continued)

their power to other sections of society and raise awareness for ~~them~~ them.

Furthermore, pressure groups distribute power as of funding. For example, groups like WWF use their power and influence (mainly chequebook memberships) to adopt and rescue animal, which suggests that they are not just concentrating their power and wealth within the group but they are actually exerting power and making an obvious difference.

Moreover, pressure groups can distribute power through petitions as they are passing their cause onto the public and not just centralising their power; they're gaining public participation which allows them to see that they are working within the interest of the public not just created by themselves for themselves.

((c) continued)

However, pressure groups such as BMA tend to concentrate their power on the Government and MPs as their economic influence already gives them that support, making public ~~support less important~~ support less important and they therefore do not have to protest or raise any awareness or distribute power.



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**Examiner Comments**

Part (a) obtains - 4 marks. Part (b) A good response here for the section and well into Level 3. However the (c) section does not present a convincing argument that the full remit of the question is understood. It follows a pattern noted by many assistant examiners who identified underperformance on this part of the question.



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**Examiner Tip**

Crucial to doing well on pressure groups is the need to fully understand ALL the key concepts in the specification, noting the importance for these not only on the shorter answers but on the longer sections too.

This is another example of a response which commences in Level 2 but when in part (C) raises its profile to enter Level 3

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(a) The main difference between promotional and sectional pressure groups is that sectional pressure groups look at a specific issue/group of people or a thin line of issues. For example, the NUT (National Union of Teachers) is a sectional pressure group because they are mainly involved with teachers. Another difference is that promotional pressure groups are temporary whereas sectional ones are usually permanent. This means that promotional groups usually have an aim and if they achieve this aim, they will stop campaigning and disappear. For example, the country side alliance is aiming to remove the fox hunting ban and will disappear when they achieve this.

(b) One way in which a pressure group may resort to achieve aims is by civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is when pressure groups usually break laws or use public stunts to gain publicity and achieve their aims. Examples of civil disobedience are such as graffiti, trespassing, public stunts and threats. For example, the pressure group 'Greenpeace' broke laws by climbing ships and graffitiing on them to get their message across. The PG 'Fathers 4 Justice' also has resorted to civil disobedience and has threatened



to kidnap Tony Blair's child. Another way in which pressure groups may try to achieve aims is by marching/protesting. Marching and protesting are forms of public demonstrations and are also used to gain support and publicity by pressure groups. For example, ~~The~~ the pressure group 'countryside Alliance' is well known for its mass demonstrations. Pressure groups may also resort to hiring lobbyists to achieve their aims. Lobbying is when a professional is paid up to £500 per half day to convince MPs/Lords to support the pressure groups' interests and ideas. An example of this was in the ~~new~~ firearms scandal where the ministry of defence was lobbied to convince and buy firearms from a specific company.

(c) Pressure groups are really important in a democratic environment because it can be argued that they promote pluralism. However, some people may argue that they in fact lead to elitism and this is what I will be looking at.

It could be argued that pressure groups increase political participation and this is a way of preventing elitism and concentrated power. Pressure groups inform the public about the government's decisions and how it affects them and this makes people more aware of the government's action. When people are aware of the government's

actions and its effects on them, inevitably some people will disagree with these actions and decisions and will go on to scrutinize government. Therefore it could be argued that pressure groups distribute power because they encourage ~~scrutiny~~ ~~scrutiny~~ scrutiny which keeps a check on the government and prevents unpopular decisions.

Another reason why it could be argued that pressure groups distribute power is because they scrutinize government legislation themselves.

((c) continued) For example, the pressure group 'countryside alliance' looks into the fox hunting ban and works to get rid of it. This prevents concentrated power because it was an unpopular decision therefore getting rid of it would mean no space for elitism.

Another way in which pressure groups ~~pre~~ distribute power is by preventing Tyranny of the majority by working for minority rights. Tyranny of the majority is when minorities are ignored and ideas are not listened to. For example, the NUT (Union of Teachers) works to protect teacher rights as they are minority. They do these ~~by~~ by boycotting such as not attending work and so on. Therefore it could be argued that ~~PGs~~ PGs distribute power as they do not leave anyone out and prevents from a large group of people being the only ones listened to.

However, it could also be argued that PG (pressure groups) concentrate power. This could be argued because pressure groups are not democratic as they are not elected. Thus making them undemocratic. Therefore, it could be said that it is impossible for an undemocratic pressure group to promote a

((c) continued) pluralists, power distributed, country because they are undemocratic themselves. They ~~can~~ cannot work to distribute power if they are themselves.

Another reason why it could be argued pressure groups concentrate power is because of the unfair advantages some pressure groups have. For example, the pressure group CBI has insider status and is a very wealthy pressure group giving them the advantages of a dietitian and so on where as the PG NUS (Union of Students) is not as privileged therefore is less likely to get their message across. This means that Pressure groups ~~do not~~ concentrate power because there are rich and poor pressure groups which is a form of concentrated power and it is concentrated on the rich.

As a conclusion it could be argued that pressure groups distribute power because they prevent tyranny of the majority and protect minority rights. They also increase political participation and scrutinize the government. However, they could also be concentrating power because they are undemocratic (and elitist) and



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

On (a) it is not precise in all detail here and thus it gains 3 marks. Moving to (b) the response achieves L2 for AO1, just, but does not possess full clarity and detail. Then on (c) - after an average start to this response it raises its game and comes to terms with the demands of the question. A good example of L3.



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**Examiner Tip**

This (c) section is fully aware of the remit of the question and uses the key concepts from the outset. This major point has been repeated several times in the report - only to emphasise its importance.

## Question 4

4a) Most answers identified that consensus related to widespread agreement between parties but very few were able to discuss the nature of consensus as being a fundamental ideological agreement about British politics. Those that were able to do so clearly then explained post-war, modern, or 'third way'/post-Thatcherite consensus. Less good answers talked very briefly about agreements between parties on specific policies, or confused consensus with coalition politics. A differentiation using adversary politics (not adversarial) served to gain credit for many.

4b) A good number of candidates were able to identify at least two similarities between political parties and pressure groups. In a number of cases, candidates argued for a third similarity – e.g. political parties and pressure groups are both covered by the media. Such responses tended to be weak. Better answers evidenced analysis of political parties and pressure groups working on the same agenda or as part of a broader movement – for example, distinguishing between the aims and methods of the Green Party and Friends of the Earth or the Labour Party and trade unions. On the whole, this question was answered well.

4c) This question was better addressed generally than in most recent series, perhaps prompted by the obvious wealth of material arising from the general election. Most candidates chose not to risk falling foul of any definition of 'major parties' and focused on Labour and the Conservatives, which was a perfectly acceptable route to the full range of marks. A pleasingly small minority opted for a generalised New Labour/post-Thatcherite consensus style answer, and there was much relevant and balanced discussion over a range of issues, mostly commonly concerning the economy, the NHS and Europe. A few candidates did suffer from accuracy issues. Others creditably discussed developments *since* the election, such as Labour's new found support for an EU referendum.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates should:

- Define concepts. Key concepts are a central part of the specification and will always be relevant.
- This is so apparent on the section relating to pressure groups where the understanding of all the key concepts often permeates the entire question.
- Make good use of examples – these are the frameworks to gain both AO1 knowledge and understanding but also AO2 analysis and evaluation.
- At times examples are explicitly required in the set question but often in the longer responses they can serve to advance the responses to a higher level.
- Work to the maxim of one minute per mark allocation to even performance across all sections of the paper
- Promote and raise the profile of answers with reference to key data and facts - on elections this can be trends in turnout and the percentage of the vote gained by the main parties
- On elections it is crucial to know the mechanics or workings of electoral systems as opposed to where they operate- the how not the where.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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