

Government and Politics

Advanced GCE A2 7834

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3834

Report on the Units

June 2006

3834/7834/MS/R/06

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A-level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

The mark schemes are published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by Examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Mark schemes and Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this mark scheme or report.

© OCR 2006

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annersley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Government and Politics (7834) Advanced Subsidiary GCE Government and Politics (3834)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

Unit	Content	Page
*	Chief Examiner's Report	4
2595	Elections, Electoral Systems and Voting Behaviour in the UK	5
2596	Politics of the UK	7
2597	Government of the UK	10
2694	US Government & Politics	13
2695	Political Ideas and Concepts	15
2696	Research Essay	17
2698	Government & Politics (US Option)	20
2699	Government & Politics (Political Ideas and Concepts Option)	24
*	Grade Thresholds	27

Chief Examiner's Report

The overall performance of candidates was again pleasing, although there was evidence at AS that some Centres are still omitting required parts of the specifications; Europe fairly frequently, and parts of Politics of the UK appear to get left out as well.

One or two comments stand out from the reports of the Principal and Assistant Examiners. Many commented on the absence of much knowledge of recent political events, either in the UK or the US. They were surprised, for example, how few candidates who answered the question in 2698 on the role of parties in choosing leaders etc, were aware of how David Cameron was chosen. The Elections paper at AS showed more knowledge about the 1992/1997 elections than the 2005 one etc.

Please encourage candidates to read newspapers, to watch Newsnight etc, it does make a real difference when it comes to the AO1 marks. When looking at 2694 for example, it was striking how little reference there was to GW Bush; Nixon is still getting a better coverage.

Personally, having marked a fair number of scripts this session of both the synoptic papers 2698 and 2699, candidates should be proud of their achievements in Government and Politics as these are stretching papers and the vast majority of candidates performed well on this final unit.

2595: Elections, Electoral Systems and Voting Behaviour in the UK

General Comments

Again, the examination produced responses covering the full ability range.

The 'Centre effect' seemed more marked this year than last. Some Centres had clearly fully briefed their candidates in the best method of using Sources and some had clearly not.

Understanding of command words is very variable, for example the command 'discuss' occasionally produced lists. However, many candidates knew that being asked for a case 'for' something, meant just that, and that there was no requirement for the time and effort to be spent on the case 'against'.

Some candidates were well aware of how the AO3 marks were allocated, some clearly were not resulting in some were very poorly presented answers.

There was evidence that candidates had not been taught the full range of the specification which is disappointing. Some centres clearly had not taught how MEPs were elected, resulting in candidates not attempting this question.

The majority of candidates were fine, and it was good to be able to report continuing high standards. Given the amount of content in the specification and the skills needed for a good grade, high standards in centres have been maintained. Some candidates wrote too much; our expectations of what can be achieved in what can be little more than a two term course, are not unrealistic. Question 3 for example often produced a huge amount of detail, on Swiss referenda for example, which was not really needed.

Question 1

No serious problems here at all. Candidates either knew it or they did not. Heavy hints were given in the Source, such as 'age' and 'citizen' (a substantial majority of candidates ignored the 'citizen' hint). 'Jail' too tended often to be ignored. Advice to candidates should be that if in doubt scrutinize the Source. Some candidates did much more than expected and went into a longish debate about whether academic qualifications were needed for a vote etc. Many felt that local residence was a requirement for standing for Parliament and also felt that membership of a party was a requirement also. There was a frequent tendency to waste a lot of time on this question, and write as much as one side. This is simply not called for and is not expected for 10 marks. Two very brief paragraphs are quite enough.

Question 2

Intelligent use of the Source went a long way. However, many candidates ignored it. Some simply stated that as they had not studied 'Europe' they could not do this question. The better answers started with, and kept the focus on, the differences. The two paragraph approach, with one keeping an eye on the Source and the other making use of own knowledge did best. Inevitably there were long answers on the perils of PR, although what 'coalition governments' elections to the European Parliament produced was unclear. There are no AO2 marks available for this question. The trigger word of course is 'describe', so candidates who got involved in great arguments about the merits and demerits of PR wasted a lot of time and effort which they could have put to much better use on Question 4 (which of course has twice as many marks).

Question 3

Candidates who kept their answer to a case 'for' usually did well. There were a lot of very good answers. It is a familiar topic and it is good to see so many candidates noting the word 'democracy' and developing on it. Plenty of answers made it well into Level 4 because there was a clear case made and the underlying issues considered. Intelligent use of the Source was also in abundance. One or two excellent answers pointed out that this was a particularly good example of successful use as it was used to overrule the local politicians to gain peace. A significant minority could not resist the temptation to make out a case against as well, and again wasted time which could have been better used. Only relevant material is awarded marks. Sometimes a candidate can pick up the odd AO1 mark in the case 'against' but no AO2 or AO3 marks.

Question 4

On the whole candidates liked this question, but rushed at it rather uncritically. Some candidates were short of time, mainly because time had been wasted on earlier questions doing things they had not been asked to do. The best candidates clearly had been briefed about what was expected in a 'discuss' question. Some were unsure about what was needed and did little more than expand on the points made in the Source. Obviously there is no right or wrong answer to this sort of question. Some argued convincingly that 'other factors' such as economic competence, ethnic/regional/gender issues etc were more important. Others argued that felt that the campaign was critical given the large number of floating votes there now are. The good ones utilized the points made in the Source, such as identifying what the voters might feel are the key policies etc. Those candidates who start the examination with Question 4 never seem to do well, but those who are trained to leave sufficient time to do it properly do much better. Some balance is looked for in this sort of question. A 50:50 split is not always necessary. Some of the best candidates argued that the campaign was now critical, and made a good range of points backed up with data from 1997 onwards, yet took care to prevent 'other factors' being just a brief afterthought in the final couple of lines. We don't mind strong arguments, but showing awareness of the other side makes it so much easier to give Level 4 marks.

2596: Politics of the UK

General comments

Whilst there was a good spread of quality in the answers, it was clear that many candidates found this a challenging paper. Most notably, Question 3 (role of court in helping those seeking redress of grievance) proved troublesome for many. On this question in particular, candidates at times became over-reliant on the Source; unlike paper 2595 (Elections, etc), questions on this paper assume that candidates will answer based on their own knowledge rather than the Sources, which provide little more than a context for the questions. Question 4 proved to be a good discriminator with a wide range of marks scored.

Nearly all candidates attempted the range of questions and the majority of papers showed an appropriate balance of shorter answers to Question 1 and 3 with more time devoted to questions 3 and 4. Nonetheless, candidates should be reminded that question 1 on this paper is possible to complete in about 5/6 minutes and still score full marks. Understanding this, should enable candidates to spend more time on question 4 (about 22/23 minutes is recommended) where many more marks are available.

The instruction to use continuous prose was followed, but standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar were variable. Spelling errors for terms that appeared on the question paper (e.g. 'grievance' or 'Ombudsman') were surprisingly commonplace.

Finally, examiners understand that time available for each question is very limited and examiners are correspondingly sympathetic to candidates. However, candidates must use time profitably rather than repeating points. Essays are not required so introductions that re-state the question without making any progress are not advised. Get straight on to the questions!

1 Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman)

A straightforward question that saw many candidates score full marks. Examiners were looking for about four points on the role and work of the PCA (Ombudsman) and perhaps examples. Questions that require references to the Ombudsman have appeared regularly since 2000. The question proved to be an 'either-you-know-it-or-you-don't' question and where the latter was the case, candidates sometimes scored zero marks. Examiners were sympathetic to answers dealing with public sector Ombudsmen, given the specific mention of Parliamentary Commissioner in the question, but could not extend this sympathy to the various private sector Ombudsmen.

Full answers with accurate spelling / punctuation / grammar scored two marks for Assessment Objective 3. Answers that were undeveloped or had inaccuracies in presentation, scored 0 or 1.

2 New Labour's core beliefs

This question tended to produce the most successful answers on the paper. The question asked for four beliefs to be described and a similar question on the Conservative Party appeared in an earlier paper. Source B flagged up some possible areas and most candidates understandably chose to expand upon these (e.g. 'greater opportunity for all'). Four short paragraphs with perhaps three or four sentences (and an example) could have scored full marks and examiners sympathetically rewarded contrasts between 'old' and 'new' Labour.

Factual errors / inaccuracies were too commonplace and included:

New Labour simply abolished Clause iv rather than re-wrote the clause;

New Labour is committed to a codified UK constitution;

New Labour privatised the railway industry;

New Labour abolished Grammar schools.

Weaker answer approached the question merely by listing (with varying degrees of accuracy) New Labour policies. The question sought the development of four core beliefs and 'a random list' answers did not supply the required degree of detail.

3 Role of courts in providing redress of grievance

As indicated above, this proved to be a troublesome question for candidates, surprising inasmuch as it is a clear part of the specification. Given the high profile of some recent court cases over the last few years e.g. Belmarsh detainees and the prominent consideration over the efficacy of the Human Rights Act, it should be an accessible area for candidates.

Examiners hoped to see discussion of the courts in the area of judicial review or their elevated role arising from the Human Rights Act. Some reference to the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights plus some example cases (including miscarriage of justice decisions) might then have secured full marks.

Weaker answers suffered from one or more of the following;

- They picked up on the 'redress' aspect of the question and then described the various ways this can take place without focus on the courts. In previous sessions, a question of this nature has been asked but not on this occasion.
- Candidates merely *described the hierarchy / court structure* in England and Wales.
- Some chose to describe / discuss the difference between civil and criminal law.
- Description of role of courts in redress without much analysis

As is inevitably the case when rights questions appear, many candidates were confused as to the role and nature of the European Courts. Candidates might find the information below to be helpful.

European Court of Justice (see <http://www.curia.europa.eu/>) hears cases arising from EU law and as EU law is supreme over the national law of member states, its decisions override national courts. Whilst the EU (and its predecessors) was historically focused on trade / commerce areas, recent decades have seen extension of EU competence into new areas. Cases of note include the Factortame judgement (1991) and the recent Yvonne Watts case (2006) dealing with NHS payment for patients who go to another country for treatment. There are currently 25 EU nations with more to join shortly.

The European Court of Human Rights (see <http://www.echr.coe.int/echr>) is an institution of the Council of Europe organisation, a separate body from the EU, and deals with issues arising from the Convention which was formally in place in 1953. The Council of Europe currently has 46 members (with more in the pipeline) and all EU nations are expected to sign up to the Convention on Human Rights as a condition of EU membership. The Convention *had* no formal legal status in British law and therefore the rights were not enforceable in British courts until the passage of the Human Rights Act 1998. Nonetheless, UK governments have usually complied with judgements. The HRA incorporated most of the ECHR into UK law but UK courts are still unable to declare an Act of Parliament to be illegal if it appears to infringe the ECHR – courts merely indicate incompatibility. Notable cases include Diane Pretty 2003 (right to Euthanasia) or the John Hirst decision (2005) on UK law denying prisoners the right to vote.

4 Process for electing Labour / Conservative leaders.

Questions on the internal organisation of the major political parties have regularly appeared in the past. Given the election of David Cameron last autumn, candidates will have recently observed the process in practice in one of the major parties. As a result, there were many good, high scoring answers to this question and best answers had notable degrees of detail, appropriate to a question taking 22/23 minutes to answer. Again, as for Question 1, some candidates presented little or no relevant knowledge / awareness and scored very few marks.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

Where candidates scored more modestly, it was commonly due to one of the following reasons.

- Unbalanced answers – good on one party but less so on the second.
- Dated knowledge – aware of a process once used in the past (e.g. Conservative leaders ‘emerging’) but unaware of the process as currently used by the parties.
- A tendency to describe a voting *system* (often irrelevant such as STV) rather than the broad process as required by the question.
- A good *knowledge* (AO1) of selection process but limited *evaluation* (AO2).

There was much discussion of proportional representation in the analysis without recognising the inherent limitation where only one candidate is being elected.

Too many ascribed John Smith’s OMOV changes to the process for choosing the Labour leader to Blair (perhaps confused with the clause iv reform).

2597: Government of the UK

Changes to Specification and Assessment

Centres are again reminded that the specification and the form of assessment for this unit are changing. Details have been sent to all Centres but they can also be found on the OCR website - www.ocr.org - together with exemplar questions and associated marks scheme. First examination is in January 2007.

General Comments

A number of messages emerged from this summer's exam.

First, many candidates are now very adept at providing answers that are both focused, balanced and detailed and supported by contemporary examples. Clearly they have not only been well-taught, but also well-schooled in exam technique. In some centres virtually all the candidates reached Level 4 of the Assessment Matrix. At the same time, other candidates had a poor grasp of basic concepts, failed to answer the questions set or simply wrote all they knew about the topic.

Secondly, Section B, *Britain and the European Union*, continues to be the Achilles' heel of most candidates: no matter what question is set, marks for answers to Questions 7 and 8 are always much lower than those for Questions 1-6.

Thirdly, a small, but increasing, number of candidates answer only two questions. The most likely explanation for this is not that they have run out of ideas or time, but that they simply are unaware of, or forget, the rubric. The format of the exam is changing in January 2007 and centres are advised to ensure that candidates know exactly what they have to do.

Fourthly, the paper was marked by widespread, and often lengthy, misconceptions about the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), for example:

- that the ECHR is a convention in the sense that collective responsibility is a convention (Question 1);
- that judicial review is the power of judges to declare an act of parliament incompatible with the ECHR (Question 2);
- that the ECHR is part of EU law and has reduced parliamentary sovereignty (Question 7);
- that the ECHR formed part of the Amsterdam Treaty (Question 8)

Finally, if centres want to improve the performance of their students, the following advice, is worth repeating:

- **Focus.** Each question asks candidates to do something specific - to describe, to discuss etc. - but while answers to part (a) questions usually tend to do this, many answers to part (b) questions do not. If a question invites candidates to 'discuss the importance' of something, examiners expect them to focus on importance and not just write about the topic generally. A good example on this paper was Question 6.b which asked candidates to discuss the view that the House of Lords is of little importance in the British system of government. Candidates who began their answers along the lines that "*Some people think that the Lords is unimportant because ...*" and then, about half way through looked at reasons why the Lords might be important, often scored highly. Candidates who began "*There are four sorts of peers in the House of Lords...*" and continued in descriptive mode, often did not.

- **Introductions.** There is no need to write a general introduction. Candidates who in answer to Question 1.a. began by defining what a constitution was, or outlining the nature of the British constitution, even to the extent of discussing whether uncodified was a better description, added nothing to their answers and wasted both time and words.
- **Conclusions.** Conclusions are usually unnecessary. Conclusions that simply summarise what has already been said are completely unnecessary. Too many candidates ended their answer by writing '*In conclusion ...*' and then simply re-capping what they had already written.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1 Sources of the British constitution/would Britain be better off with a written constitution

A very popular question and usually very well answered. Good candidates knew their sources and could quote examples of each one, though, as noted above, a number felt that the ECHR was a convention in the sense that ministerial responsibility is. They were also aware of the arguments both for and against written constitutions. Those who wrote about the possible contents of a future written constitution, rather than its value *per se*, missed the point.

2 Main features of judicial review/effectiveness of judicial review

Few candidates attempted this question and even fewer did it well. Of those who did do it, many were confident about the general principle, but were unable to provide the necessary AO1 detail for part (a). In part (b), even those who clearly knew what judicial review was were unable to discuss its effectiveness in any depth. Most answers were highly generalised and many assumed that the power of judges to declare an act of parliament incompatible with the ECHR was a form of judicial review.

3 Main features of debates and questions in the Commons/their effectiveness as a check on the government

A popular question, but most candidates were much poorer on 'debates' than they were on 'questions'. 'Describe' and 'outline' questions require candidates to know some specifics, and without them that cannot access the higher levels of AO1 in part (a). Candidates who were unable to describe a range of features of both questions and debates in the Commons, and who had little idea how effective debates were in checking the executive, did badly.

4 Collective responsibility/importance of collective responsibility

Most candidates were able to outline the broad principle of collective responsibility, but many found it difficult to describe all its aspects, to elaborate on them or to provide current examples. Some candidates also confused collective responsibility with collective decision-making and with the individual ministerial responsibility of ministers. Discussing the importance of collective responsibility in part (b) proved a challenge for candidates who clearly knew what it was, but not how important it was (or was not). Further, although the question is clearly set in the present, many candidates did not know much beyond 1990 and the example Neville Chamberlain was certainly unexpected.

5 Role of the higher civil service/should it have a greater influence on policy-making

Good candidates knew exactly what the higher civil service did, but weaker ones confused role with traditional features such as permanence, anonymity and neutrality (and what 'neutrality' might mean in this context was also not fully understood either). An answer could be gleaned from such material but it had to be inferred, and such responses do not warrant the highest marks. Answers to part (b) were often very good, and candidates could see both the advantages and disadvantages of civil servants assuming a greater role in policy-making.

6 Functions of parliament/importance of the Lords

A popular question and most candidates were able to suggest a range of functions for part (a), though some did not fully understand the role of parliament in legitimising the government and the system. The best answers to part (b) were focused on the role and power of the Lords and its use of these powers. Some candidates were unaware of the Lord's revivification since 1997 and weaker candidates tended to ignore the request to discuss the importance of the Lords and simply wrote all they knew about its composition and recent reform.

Section B

7 Impact of EU membership on parliament

The best candidates wrote about a range of impacts and were able to provide examples of each one. Weaker candidates restricted themselves to sovereignty and often widened the focus of the answer to include the impact on the government, the economy and British culture. A large number of candidates spent time discussing the impact of the ECHR on parliament.

8 Importance of Maastricht and Amsterdam

Inevitably candidates knew more about Maastricht than Amsterdam, but the best ones could describe both the contents of each treaty (AO1) and discuss their importance (AO2). There were numerous errors of fact as candidates attributed a rich and varied range of provisions to each treaty: as always, the blunderbuss was more in evidence than the sniper's rifle.

2694: US Government and Politics

General Comments

The overall standard was not distinctly different from previous sessions. Strengths and weaknesses were much the same as usual. Some candidates focused on the actual question asked, used relevant and up-to-date examples and presented analysis which was balanced and coherent. But there were again a significant number of candidates who virtually ignored the question, had no examples to offer – or only very dated ones – and present analysis which was generalised and simplistic. Some candidates had been good use of the up-to-date material available (updates, web sites, journals etc) whilst the scripts of many candidates showed little or no evidence of contemporary developments.

1 Strengths and weaknesses of the Electoral College

A very popular question and usually competently done. Some forgot to explain how the system works and therefore missed out on some of the A01 marks. Others just produced lists of strengths and weaknesses with little serious evaluation.

2 Reasons for continued failure of third party/independent candidates

This was another popular and generally well-answered question. Some candidates even discussed congressional and state races. Others were limited only to Perot whilst some got confused between Perot (1992) and Nader (2000). A lot of good discussion of the cooptation of policies by the major parties leading to “success” in the policy arena for third parties even when they fail electorally.

3 Effectiveness of pressure groups’ methods

This question proved to be a very good ‘sorter’ of candidates. Many completely ignored the word “effectiveness” and just talked about the “various methods used”. Some got way-laid on “functions” rather than “methods”. Weaker answers just talked about “pressure groups” in general with little or no specificity or examples. There were too many generalisations about “bribery” in some scripts.

4 Ineffectiveness of constitutional checks and balances between president and Congress

Not a hugely popular answer but mostly competent answers from those who did attempt it. Again, there were those who just rattled off the checks and balances but failed to discuss the issue of ineffectiveness. Good scripts discussed the link between effectiveness and divided government. Some weaker candidates failed to mention a number of important checks. Others strayed onto the judiciary.

5 Leadership in Congress

A number of candidates tried (unwisely) to turn this into a question about the relative power and prestige of the House and the Senate, which it was clearly not. Very few candidates considered the words “extent” or “leadership” at all. Many seemed ill-equipped to assess the leadership provided by, for example, the House Speaker, majority and minority leaders or those who chair committees.

6 Cabinet/EXOP

Candidates tended to be better on the theory than on the practice. They tended to know facts about both institutions but found it difficult to assess the help they respectively offered to the president. Few distinguished between the cabinet as a collectivity (the cabinet meeting) and cabinet officers as individuals – running important departments and meeting in small groups, or individually, with the president. A number of candidates dealt with EXOP only as a generalised term and failed to mention any specific offices such as OMB or NSC.

7 Role played by the Supreme Court in safeguarding rights and liberties

Whilst some scripts were exceedingly impressive with an impressive range of up-to-date cases involving rights and liberties, others just churned out things from the 19th century (!) along with *Brown v. Board* (1954) and a few other old chestnuts from the 60s and 70s. Reading the answers from some Centres, you might have thought the Supreme Court hadn't sat since 1973! Some indulged in lists and failed to evaluate.

8 The role of National Party Conventions

Not as popular as one might have expected, this produced generally sound answers. The key word was "still" which most spotted but others did not. More than most questions, this produced answers with a good deal of up-to-date material with some excellent assessments of the 2004 conventions.

2695: Political Ideas and Concepts

Most candidates are now displaying good signs of comprehending the demands of the question paper. Centres appear to have acquired copies of relevant text books including the Heywood series, Harrison and Boyd, and Goodwin. Definitions, examples and theorists used by candidates tended to reflect those used in the above text books. Centres are also encouraging students to use the ideas of specific theorists and/ or differing ideological perspectives. What is especially pleasing is the range of newer theorists featuring in a number of answers. Some candidates are using specific factual evidence as a means to analyse and evaluate the issues raised in their answers. This is fine as long as the answers do not become an imitation of the synoptic 2699 approach where candidates are expected to apply theory to modern politics. Such illustration should be kept to short sharp examples and must not replace the focus on ideas and concepts. With only 30 minutes to write each answer it is important that they remain focused, provide evidence of a good understanding of a range of theorists and be evaluative.

With approximately 120 candidates entered for the summer module the range of quality varied considerably. At the top answers were sophisticated in their understanding of the appropriate theory and were able to analyse a range of differing perspectives on the different question areas. Discriminating at the A/B boundary was the quality of analysis relating to the specific question set and the range of theories / interpretations used. Some candidates however appear to have learnt a great number of potted summaries of different theorists and were determined to use them at every appropriate opportunity. Whilst this is fine it often leads to a descriptive approach rather than actual analysis or evaluation. The weakest candidates displayed little effective comprehension of the relevant theory and often struggled to go beyond very superficial descriptions of the subject matter. It is not surprising that in a module focused upon abstract political ideas and concepts that the key discriminator for the E/U boundary is that of understanding. Centres have however improved the preparation of the large majority of their candidates with a significant proportion of candidates writing what almost amounted to centre prepared answers to various questions. This can cause problems when the focus of the question set is not necessarily what the candidates have been prepared for.

1 Discuss the main criticisms of direct democracy.

This was a popular question amongst candidates. Whilst some did try and answer it in more of a synoptic style, most were able to highlight theoretical as well as practical disadvantages of the system. The most able candidates were able to deploy a range of relevant theory in highlighting criticisms (ranging from Aristotle and Plato to modern elite theorists) as well as discussing their relevance. Those candidates who only addressed the question in a highly descriptive manner or wrote a standard advantages and disadvantages of the general concept of democracy did not access the higher end of the mark range.

2 Compare and contrast the different models of representation.

Candidates who answered this question tended to display a good understanding of the trustee and delegatory models, with only the better prepared candidates also including others such as the mandate and resemblance models. Weaker candidates often confused the four models and tended only to write descriptive answers. To access the top mark bands candidates were required to directly compare and contrast the different models highlighting issues such as extent of similarities and practical relevance.

3 Evaluate the justifications for state intervention.

Whilst a number of candidates attempted to answer this question a significant proportion failed to focus on the key word justification, thus writing highly descriptive answers on the different types of state. The better answers did link the justifications to ideological perspectives, discussing a range of differing theories from totalitarian through to minimalist intervention advocated by classical liberal theorists.

4 Assess the extent of the similarities between New Right and classical liberal ideas.

Candidates who answered this question had mostly good ideas on the economic similarities between the two concepts, but fewer were able to identify the differences relating to morality thus ignoring the social conservative strand of New Right thought. Most candidates however were able to identify and discuss a range of relevant political theorists linked to the two ideologies.

5 Assess the extent of the difference between contractual obligation and natural duty theories.

This was a very popular question amongst the candidates with most having a reasonably good understanding of in particular social contract theory. Many answers unfortunately focused very heavily upon the social contract aspect of the question leaving little time to assess the degree of difference with natural order theory. Often answers made only passing reference to the latter concept thus not fully answering the question set. The better answers were able to make direct comparisons (i.e. differences and similarities) between the range of contract theories (Hobbes through to Rawls) and natural duty ideas (Socrates, Burke through to Oakshott).

6 Discuss the view that there should be limits on political toleration.

This question proved to be a less popular choice and of those that attempted it many failed to pick up on the perspective highlighted in the question. Many candidates tended to focus upon the alternative view as advocated by JS Mill etc. that very few limits should be placed upon political toleration. Some of the better answers were able to highlight conservative perspectives on the need to limit toleration, making some useful links to modern dilemmas relating to national security and personal freedoms.

7 Assess the extent to which power stems from the use or threat of coercion.

Whilst this question proved to be a very popular, unfortunately many candidates wanted to write their pre-prepared answers on the relationship between power and authority, making only passing reference to the concept of coercive power. Better answers did tend to focus more upon the different typologies of power and those who explicitly highlighted the extent aspect of the question secured marks at the top end of the mark range.

8 Discuss the nature and extent of difference between legal and political sovereignty.

As with previous years, the sovereignty aspect of the syllabus remains unpopular and those that did attempt the question tended to write very broad answers on aspects of internal and external sovereignty, or were very descriptive in the coverage of the legal and political sovereignty. The better answers were able to compare and contrast legal and political sovereignty highlighting their mutual compatibility in a range of different scenarios.

2696: The Research Essay

It seems to be the case that if Centres have read previous reports and followed the instructions as outlined at INSET meetings over the years, they should be well on the way to producing good research essays. Unfortunately this was not always the case and as a consequence there was a great variety in the quality of the essays submitted. In order to further assist Centres there are guidelines and a checklist that Centres may wish to use with their students at the end of this report. It provides an indication of some of the bases that need to be covered in order to write a good research essay. More detailed guidance is available to download from the OCR website.

Better essays had an interesting question that was accessible and relevant. Good titles invite political analysis and evaluation and therefore considerable thought should be put into this particular process. The title should always be a question and be manageable. "Describe..." will not allow easy access to AO2 marks. If the question asks "To what extent..." this needs to be addressed. If the title focuses on environmental pressure groups, so should the rest of the essay and not merely be a general discussion of pressure groups. Sometimes it is not possible to effectively quantify "the effectiveness" or the "impact of " a one particular factor upon a process and this should be recognised and the title amended accordingly. Please note that if you would like advice about the suitability of a title, title approval can be sought from the Principal Examiner via e mail to MPS@bradfordgrammar.com

The question can evolve as a candidate writes their essay, however, it is absolutely imperative that they answer the question set. The inability to adhere to this specific task was frequently a cause restricted AO2 marks. Indeed, it would appear candidates were handicapped right from the outset if their question and topic choice was poor.

This unit is worth 30% of the A2 marks and this should be reflected in the time devoted to its completion. Research needs to be thorough and extensive. Research can be clearly illustrated by the use of footnotes and a bibliography. These were sometimes not evident. It is expected that students will go beyond the standard texts. There was some intelligent use of the internet but candidates should not be over reliant thereon. Wikipedia has become something of a mixed blessing in this regard. Students would do well not to neglect the more traditional (and academic) sources. Bibliographies should be detailed and not vague references to sources used.

Centres should not be using the long abandoned template and should be aware of the strict 2500 word limit. Similarly Centres are reminded that the essays should be submitted unmarked. Essays should be proof read before they are submitted. Candidates need to think about the focus and structure of their essays. The length of introductions, balance and conclusions should be central to this process.

Tips for Writing the Research Essay

When the research essay is marked, the examiners are looking for various things.

AO1, 24 marks, 4 levels

- These are for knowledge and understanding.
- This is factual knowledge, detail etc.
- One way to ensure that you have done a lot of research is to have around 20 footnotes from a range of sources.
- Footnotes can be easily inserted into an essay. Just go to insert in Word and follow the instructions. Put the footnotes at the bottom of the page rather than at the end of the document.
- Try and quote from sources such as internet sites, newspapers, journals rather than standard textbooks which are not so impressive.

AO2, 48 marks, 4 levels

- What might be striking here right from the start is that there are twice as many marks for this objective than for AO1. Clearly this where you can gain (or not access) a lot of marks.
- AO2 marks are awarded for analysis and evaluation. This is in effect, recognition of argument. If AO1 marks are for describing, AO2 marks are for explaining why.
- In order to gain marks here then, try and include a lot of argument. That is why the title should always be a question and a good title might invite arguments both for and against.
- Credit is given for "independent thought" and students are expected to go beyond the standard textbooks. So if you focus on a topic such as electoral reform, you can show independent thought, by using a standard text book you can come up with the main arguments and by focusing on 2005 election, you can show independent thought and research / go beyond standard texts.
- You might try and use the arguments for and against as a template for an essay.

AO3, 18 marks, 4 levels

- This is for how you structure and present your arguments.
- A major problem for students is that sometimes they do not answer the question they have set themselves. This is critical to AO2 marks as well. You should always think about the question and refer to it directly as often as possible during the course of the essay.
- **The introduction.** It might be a good idea if you start the essay with reference to a recent event or quote. It is a nice touch.
- **Lay out your methodology.** Say how you are going to attempt to answer your question. What areas are you going to look at? Set yourself four or five objectives or questions that you will address during the course of the essay.
- **The conclusion.** This will be the last thing the examiner reads before putting a mark on the paper so try and use it! Make sure that you have answered your question. If you have argued for and against, try and decide which side of the fence you sit on. Can you say something else about the topic? Say something about the future for example.

CHECK LIST FOR THE RESEARCH ESSAY

- 1 Have you read and noted the chapter in the basic textbook as a starting point?
- 2 Have you looked on the following websites and done searches?
 - BBC news
 - Guardian (especially special reports)
 - Wikipedia
 - General google search
- 3 Try and keep an eye on contemporary developments in your field. Anything from 2006 will be well received for example.
- 4 Start the essay with a quote or recent event
- 5 In the introduction or second paragraph, outline what you are going to do in your essay. Say how you will answer your question. This might mean you outline four or five parts or mini questions that you want to answer during the course of the essay.
- 6 Include as many footnotes as possible from as wide a range of sources as possible. 20 footnotes as rough rule of thumb.
- 7 Maintain a sharp focus on your question throughout the essay. You might do this by using the words in the question at the start or end of a paragraph e.g. *Another reason why Labour won the 2005 election was.....* or *.....thus the economy was a major factor in Labour's victory.*
- 8 Make each paragraph self-contained with an argument and the evidence therein. You might separate each paragraph with a line and a change in the line of argument with a few lines. The same might be done for the introduction and the conclusion.
- 9 Make sure your conclusion provides a clear and effective answer to your question.
- 10 The font should be Arial size 11.
- 11 Include a bibliography. This can be cut and pasted from the footnotes in part. Remember research is a key element of the essay. Like the footnotes, the bibliography can show the evidence of the amount you have done. Do not exaggerate though! 10- 15 sources might be used.
- 12 The word limit should be stated and this should not exceed 2500 words.

2698: Government and Politics (US Option)

The overall standard of entry for this paper remains, on balance, good – it is our supposition that the weaker candidates have deserted the field by the time that this paper is sat. On the other hand, there are two general points which may usefully be made.

Firstly, many – even the majority of – answers tend to be reliant on standard texts only: it is a fraction of candidates that show they have kept up to date with events by reading newspapers, or who have the courage to apply their knowledge when the chance is offered. When candidates did deploy their understanding and knowledge of recent events – even if their application was a little wide of the mark, they were rewarded. This should underline a fact with which all teachers of Politics will agree – as a subject of study, politics is emergent: the first port of call will always be the standard texts and theories, but these need to find fresh evidence, be updated, and if necessary, modified or abandoned as events overtake them. For the duration of their study, candidates should regard their hypotheses and models as provisional, and assess them as they go along.

A second general point is this: there are many candidates that approach the synoptic paper and its questions by outlining the relevant situation as it applies, first to Britain, and then in America. Most synoptic questions, however, invite more over-arching analysis and understanding. It is the better candidates that interpret the questions as being about developments and trends in Politics with a capital 'P'.

This point is perhaps best made with an example. Let us anticipate Question 5: this question invited candidates first to construct a set of functions which elections perform wherever they are held. This may already have been new territory for some candidates. These functions may include: giving governments a mandate; allowing people chance to endorse a party or candidate, or hold them to account; representing the electorate's point of view, or providing an occasion for political participation. It is these ideas that will form the framework of analysis, not: first, elections in Britain, then America.

Once these general points are established, it becomes very easy to slot in recent material, and to ask some searching questions about whether elections are becoming less popular, less efficient, or whether they are somehow past their sell-by date. These are developments in a number of western countries, and seem to be part of a wider political picture.

Thus, elections with governments winning unclear mandates seem, for what ever reason, presently quite common: Italy, Germany, and a case can be made for the last two elections in the USA. Holding politicians to account is problematic in certain contexts – the many uncompetitive seats in the USA, for example. Public participation in elections, in many places where voting is not compulsory, seems to be declining, despite all the attempts by governments to resuscitate it. Representation with some electoral systems is often at the price of a working majority for governments.

This is a difficult point to make, but perhaps it can be summed up by Forster's epigraph and injunction: *Only Connect*.

Some final comments: The weaker scripts tended to be formulaic, or committed to material and ideas which bore little obvious relevance to the question. This was usually a sign and product of over-reliance on past papers and inflexibility in thought. Of course, weaker candidates will always tend to deploy poorly relevant material – it is often a helpful discriminator for examiners. Such candidates might be encouraged to think more flexibly, or taught to focus on the question asked, not another.

Spelling errors were again intrusive: in particular the words *there/their/they're* seemed interchangeable. More encouragingly, there were some good scripts which deployed some fine examples from political systems around the globe. Centres might take some credit for this.

As ever, some questions were more popular than others.

1 Discuss the importance of judicial independence from other branches of government.

The better candidates answered this within a framework of the rule of law, and argued why judicial independence was important rather than that courts/judges are or are not independent. The question tended to be well done from an American perspective, but the British or ECHR/ECJ angle was poorly done. If the practice of candidates/centres at AS level is to overlook these important areas, candidates will be disadvantaged when it comes to such comparative questions. Recent cases such as that concerning Terri Schiavo, in the USA, and the rulings on control orders in Britain populated the best answers. There were answers which mentioned the role of the Ukrainian Supreme Court in forcing a reconsideration of the election in 2004.

2 Discuss whether the activity of interest groups helps or hinders representative democracy.

This was a very popular question. It was not always well done, however, and many candidates used it as an opportunity to unveil pre-prepared material on pressure groups which had a slightly different focus – taxonomies of groups, their methods, and the conditions which make for their success. The better candidates were those that began from a development of the idea of representative democracy, and then identified a series of ways in which groups complement or undermine it – representing minorities, providing outlets for expression which are not met by the party system etc.

3 Contrast the importance of parties in the selection of presidential candidates and party leaders.

Given the salience of the Conservative party's election of Cameron as leader earlier this academic year, more knowledge and detail of the selection processes in Britain might have been expected. However, knowledge of British parties' methods tended to be woefully thin. The better candidates were those who were able to draw contrasts between the selection processes, and then go on to discuss what implications this might have for the way in which government is carried on in different contexts. Very much weaker candidates discussed what was required to win elections. These failed to focus on selection of candidates and focused on election to government. Although it was not strictly relevant, examiners agreed to reward mention of Cameron's recent idea of holding an open primary for the Conservative candidate for the London Mayor. We looked in vain, however.

4 Discuss the merits of presidential forms of government over prime ministerial forms of government.

The better candidates began with careful definitions of the two forms. Most answers managed to do reasonably well with this question, though many were not well organised, or were rather chaotic in form. Better answers covered most of the relevant territory, but then made the point that recent prime ministers have been very presidential in style and that, in some respects, on closer examination, the difference between the forms begins to shrink.

5 Analyse the claim that elections no longer fulfil their functions.

This was a reasonably popular question. To make a coherent or well-controlled start, it was necessary to know what the functions of elections are. Many candidates fell at this first hurdle. Once past it, the answers were quite well informed and interesting.

Some excellent answers were aware of electoral developments in a number of countries and referred to the election of Merkel and Prodi governments as well as analysis of elections in the UK and USA. To reach the higher mark bands, candidates should ideally have balanced their answers with arguments suggesting that elections still fulfil some of their functions.

6 Discuss the benefits of a shift in power away from the centre in modern political systems.

A small number of candidates read this question as being one about the movement towards the political centre in ideological terms – parties becoming less ideological etc. It was difficult to be sympathetic to these answers, as the question is specifically about power. Other candidates discussed the differences between federalism and devolution, rather than regarding them as two variants of a single idea in this context. Again, there would seem to be a fairly widespread trend away from the centre in many political systems – there had been a well-publicised referendum on this question in Catalunya a few days before the exam; well-documented ‘new federalism’ in the USA, some centrifugal features to the European constitution, and recently, a domestic recrudescence of the ‘West Lothian question’. There is a context for the question. The question asks for discussion about the merits of such shifts; those candidates did best who discussed whether benefits exist, or are as real as the theories might suggest, within a well-informed awareness of the context of the question. Some answers were very good indeed.

7 Discuss the view that the most important role of legislatures today is to check executives.

This was a popular question, but it was not well done in the main. The weakest answers tended to give little time to the primary focus – checking executives – and to move straight onto other functions with which the candidate was more familiar, or more generalised accounts of functions. Detailed accounts of the mechanisms, which legislatures use to check executives, were frequently absent. The better answers began from an awareness of the role of legislatures in the modern age as being, for the most part, reactive institutions, responding to the initiatives taken by executives. Even the US Congress has something of these features. In consequence, their roles are increasingly to respond to, invigilate and check executive initiatives. If candidates began from this premise, they had the synoptic framework within which to analyse their checking roles, and assess their other roles too. Such answers invariably illustrated their arguments with up to date examples – such as the recent anti-terror laws and the 90 day detention issue in Britain, and the sale of ports authorities in the US. The best examples mentioned the European Parliament’s counter to the appointment of Rocco Buttiglione as Commissioner within the present Commission.

8 Evaluate the contribution of different institutions to the defence of rights and liberties in modern political systems.

This was a popular, and well-done question. The better answers spent a proportionate amount of time on different institutions and their roles. A good many answers began their analysis with constitutions, and some mentioned the role of public opinion, and though strictly speaking neither of these are institutions as such, analysis of these was regarded as legitimate. The extent to which candidates really did evaluate the different roles, and weighed up the different institutions (rather than just listing them and describing their roles) was a discriminator on this question. Most candidates are now beginning to recognise the increasing importance of the EConventionHR, although there was often some confusion between the ECourtHR and the ECJ.

2699: Government and Politics (Political Ideas and Concepts Option)

General Comments

Candidates performed largely in accordance with recent years with nearly all able to answer two questions with some degree of understanding based upon knowledge of democratic theory and contemporary politics. The quality of answers varied greatly with those achieving better marks adopting an appropriate synoptic style, integrating effectively knowledge of political theory alongside evaluation of contemporary British and EU politics. Centres are reminded that in order to achieve the highest marks it is essential that candidates adopt this appropriate synoptic style. A good guide when preparing students is to use the phrase, 'in theory and in practice'. Increasingly this phrase will be used in the wording of the questions set for this paper. Weaker answers tended to either focus on answering questions from either purely a political theory perspective or relying solely upon knowledge acquired from their AS Units. A large number of candidates were unfortunately unable to deploy any specific contemporary examples to illustrate their arguments, instead adopting often only generalised evidence. Some centres encourage their candidates to use evidence beyond the UK, either to other EU countries or other modern regimes. This can be beneficial to a number of questions although it is not essential to securing the top marks. The best answers however, do tend to provide specific factual illustrative evidence drawn from a range of modern democratic states.

A good proportion of candidates were able to integrate into their answers the work of a wide range of political theorists, utilising their knowledge of unit 2695. Candidates unfortunately had a tendency towards listing potted summaries of the ideas of a number of theorists without any attempt to evaluate these. Still a significant number of candidates were relying upon 17th, 18th and 19th century political thinkers (Hobbes, Locke, Burke, Rousseau, Mill and Marx) and describing them as advocates of various forms of modern democracy. Whilst each of the above are highly influential in framing modern political ideas it is somewhat spurious to refer to Hobbes and Burke as advocates of modern democracy. It was good to see the use of a wider range of theorists with in particular, Rawls, Beetham, Dahl and Fukuyama all receiving widespread usage. Another worrying trend was the apparent number of pre-prepared style answers based upon topics similar to those asked, but lacking direct correlation to the questions set. This was particularly true in relation to the questions on participatory democracy and the triumph of liberal democracy.

Question Specific Comments

1 Analyse the appeal of democracy both in theory and practice.

Whilst many candidates answered this question, they often did so in a manner that displayed many of the pitfalls of this synoptic paper. A proportion of candidates used this question as an opportunity to write descriptions of the different models of democracy. A second common error was to analyse the appeal only in theory, ignoring the application to modern politics. Whilst better answers did tend to attempt to address the appeal often answers were based on the pre-prepared focus of the advantages and disadvantages of democracy. Candidates who did access the top mark bands displayed good understanding of the common aspects of democracy (e.g. legitimate and accountable government, political equality and participation), as well as analysis of the diversity of its appeal in modern political regimes.

2 Examine the extent to which participatory democracy is still possible in modern politics.

Candidates often had a loose understanding of the term participatory democracy, with many using it to describe any aspect of modern politics where the citizenship can influence decision making. Better answers tended to link the concept with the Athenian model of direct democracy and/ or developmental or radical theories relating to expanding democratic input and accountability. Those candidates who accessed the higher mark bands were able to combine knowledge and understanding of the theory behind participatory democracy with practical suggestions relating to its feasibility. For the latter there was some good use of evidence relating to referendums and initiatives, 'e'thenian democracy, citizens' juries and deliberative polls, as well as pressure groups and community action projects.

3 Examine what, if anything, makes Britain a liberal democracy.

This proved to be a very popular question and one that centres have obviously prepared their candidates for. Most candidates used effective criteria for assessing the basis of liberal democracy, with particularly the most effective centring on the institutional, procedural and cultural aspects of the system. Nearly all did show signs of synopticity through combining aspects of liberal democratic theory with practical application to the operation of UK politics. It was very pleasing to note the often very contemporary use of evidence particularly in relation to David Cameron's announcement favouring a UK Bill of Rights to replace the Human Rights Act. This announcement was only made a day before the exam was sat! However, unfortunately other aspects displayed more outdated knowledge particularly in relation to the role of the Lord Chancellor (Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs) and the 'fusion' of UK powers.

4 Discuss the importance of parliamentary accountability in modern politics.

Those candidates that attempted this question tended to focus more upon the practical aspects of parliamentary accountability rather than the theoretical importance to democratic systems of accountability. Weaker answers tended to show little more than AS style answers on varying aspects of parliamentary systems of accountability, ranging from committees, ministerial responsibility and parliamentary questions. Better answers tended to combine theory on the importance of accountability (Locke et. al) with broader methods of holding parliament and indirectly the executive to account.

5 Examine the view that liberal democracy has triumphed.

Whilst this question produced some very good answers on the debate surrounding the Fukuyama thesis it unfortunately produced a series of answers that had only the most implicit relevance to the question. Some candidates attempted to answer the question by describing liberal democracy and comparing it with other forms of democracy. This restricted them to only the bottom mark bands. The other common error was to substitute the triumph of liberal democracy debate with the end of ideology debate. Whilst there are overlaps between the two, they are not the same. The best answers were able to outline the Fukuyama's thesis, examine the validity of the arguments and raise potential rivals to liberal democracy.

6 Discuss the extent to which differing views of human nature shape party ideologies and policies.

Despite including in the title the command to apply human nature to ideology and policy, many candidates wrote very theoretical essays relating human nature to the mainstream ideologies only, adopting very much a unit 2695 approach. Most candidates did make relevant observations with regards to ideological standpoints on human nature, although a significant proportion made the mistake of arguing that liberals had a negative view of human nature. Those that did attempt to apply human nature to policies used a range of examples ranging from law and order, education, social security and other welfare and rights issues. The very best answers also attempted to focus on the extent aspect of the question introducing other potential influences on ideology and policy.

7 Discuss the view that elections no longer fulfil their functions.

Whilst a significant proportion of candidates attempted this question, relatively few had a full understanding of what the functions of elections are. Many candidates focused on only a few of the accepted functions, mainly relating to the degree of fairness in UK elections. The weakest answers tended to almost be an AS style discuss the advantages and disadvantages of First Past the Post. Better answers did expand the functions to issues relating to mandate, legitimacy, education, and accountability, providing appropriate theory and illustrative evidence to back up their arguments.

8 Discuss the importance of international human rights legislation in protecting the rights of citizens.

This question proved to be the least popular on the exam paper and in many ways the least well done. Few of those that attempted the question had any real idea of the different notions of rights, particularly the distinction between legal and moral rights, with the latter providing the basis for the concept of human rights. Often answers tended to be a general discussion on the relative success of the Human Rights Act (ignoring other international human rights legislation e.g. UN Charter of Human Rights). Even on this limited approach it was frustrating the number of candidates who still believe the European Convention on Human Rights is an EU initiative. Some candidates were able to provide contemporary examples of how the UK courts have used the Human Rights Act to challenge the legality of government actions especially in relation to anti-terrorism measures.

**Advanced GCE Government and Politics (3834/7834)
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2595	Raw	100	73	64	56	48	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2596	Raw	100	69	59	49	40	31	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2597	Raw	100	70	60	51	42	33	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2694	Raw	90	69	61	54	47	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2695	Raw	90	68	60	53	46	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2696	Raw	90	72	64	56	49	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2698	Raw	120	89	78	68	58	48	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2699	Raw	120	89	80	71	62	53	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3834	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7834	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3834	26.0	47.0	65.1	78.4	89.5	100	1169
7834	29.3	57.0	77.4	91.7	98.5	100	849

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Information Bureau

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

