

AS POLITICS

Government and Politics of the UK

Time allowed: 3 hours

Materials

For this paper you must have:

- an AQA 12-page answer book.

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
- Answer questions from both sections:
 - in Section A, answer questions 1, 2, 3 and **either** question 4 **or** question 5
 - in Section B, answer questions 6, 7, 8 and **either** question 9 **or** question 10.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work that you do not want to be marked.
- Do **not** tear out any part of the book. All work must be handed in.
- If you use more than one book, check that you have written the information required on each book.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
 - The maximum mark for this paper is 98
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Section A – The Government of the UK

Answer questions 1 and 2

0 1

Explain, with examples, the convention of collective cabinet responsibility.

[6 marks]

0 2

Explain, with examples, the principle of judicial independence.

[6 marks]

Read the extracts below and answer question 3 that follows.

Extract 1

This extract is adapted from a 2013 report by Democratic Audit, an independent research organisation based at the LSE. Its objective is to advance the effectiveness of UK democracy.

Britain's bloated payroll vote hampers Parliament in keeping a check on the executive

Parliamentary business is largely determined by agreements between the whips. Among MPs of the governing party (or parties), the possibility of promotion to minister disciplines those on the backbenches; while ministers (drawn predominantly from the Commons) provide the government with a guaranteed bloc of support (the payroll vote), they must either vote with the government or resign. While the increase in rebellions, or threats to rebel, by MPs on the government side might be said to suggest an increased independence of parliamentarians, the act of defying the whip does not in itself amount to meaningful influence.

Extract 2

This extract is adapted from a summary by the UCL Constitutional Unit of a 2016 article published in the journal Governance. The role of the Constitutional Unit is to conduct research into constitutional change and the reform of political institutions.

The policy power of the Westminster Parliament: the empirical evidence

Writers wishing to downplay the influence of majority party dissidents emphasise that Commons defeats remain extremely rare. However, this discounts the impact of rebelliousness on parliamentary anticipated reactions. Deals are done with backbenchers to avoid defeat and to minimise discontent. Rebellions therefore lead not only to defeats but also to retreats, and the impact of the latter is often significantly greater. Retreats take three forms – the withdrawal of legislation in response to backbench dissent, the amendment of legislation in response to backbench pressure, and making an issue subject to a 'free vote'. This increases Parliament's influence – requiring backbench opinion to be taken into account during policy formulation.

0	3
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Analyse, evaluate and compare the arguments presented in both of the above extracts in order to reach a conclusion on the extent to which backbench MPs are able to influence government policy.

[12 marks]

Answer **either** question 4 **or** question 5

In your answer you should draw on material from across the whole range of your course of study in politics.

Either

0 4

'A prime minister's power to hire and fire government members is unlimited.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]

Or

0 5

'There is a strong case for Britain retaining its uncodified constitution.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]

Section B - The Politics of the UK

Answer questions 6, 7 and 8 below.

0	6
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Explain, with examples, the concept of direct democracy.

[6 marks]

0	7
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Explain, with examples, the process of partisan dealignment.

[6 marks]

Read the extracts below and answer question 8 that follows.

Leading academics have offered contrasting views on the value of pressure groups in Britain.

Extract 1

Pressure groups: bulwarks of democracy

Pluralism sees pressure groups as a defining feature of democracy and of a free society. Without freedom of assembly and speech they couldn't exist. Elections allow people to participate only at specific times, group membership permits continuous engagement in politics. Large groups have greater power, but that is in accordance with majoritarian principles. Pressure groups also provide a voice for minorities. Sectional groups allow people to protect their rights while promotional groups can work on environmental issues. The groups are indispensable to the political system; governments need them. They provide knowledge and expertise in specific policy areas such as business, health care and education. Public policies emerge from a process of discussion and bargaining between government and a range of interested groups. This avoids extremism by producing compromises, and the dependence of government on groups acts as a check on government power.

Extract 2

Pressure groups: a tyranny of the minorities?

Pluralism's view that the role of groups in politics is intrinsically democratic can be challenged. Groups can even be seen as *undermining* democracy; Rousseau believed they subverted the General Will. Moreover, the largest groups are not necessarily the winners, tightly knit associations (the City, the BMA) often having a degree of influence out of proportion to their numbers, while groups with vast memberships (teachers, nurses and miners) have suffered successive defeats. Some groups, 'insiders' with wealth and connections, are able to enjoy special access to those in power, While 'outsiders' have little voice or influence. In the late 1970s some politicians were arguing that government had reached a state of 'pluralist stagnation', as a result of government bargaining with the unions. Such involvement can lead to cautious government that avoids tough decisions. In 1997, Tony Blair remarked: 'We should resist the tyranny of pressure groups'.

0 8

Analyse, evaluate and compare the arguments presented in both of the above extracts concerning the value of pressure groups in Britain.

[12 marks]

Answer **either** question 9 **or** question 10

In your answer you should draw on material from across the whole range of your course of study in politics.

Either

0 9

'In the battle for Westminster, Britain's political parties have become vote maximising machines rather than promoters of ideology.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]

Or

1 0

'Proportional electoral systems create as many problems as they solve.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]