



Examiners' Report

June 2018

GCE Politics 8PL0 01

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June 2018

Publications Code 8PL0_01_1806_ER

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Introduction

Summer 2018 saw the first sitting of the new AS in Politics.

There was a great deal to commend centres on; namely the insight and application which candidates demonstrated on this paper and their ability to deal with different types of source questions and short responses coupled with effective handling of new Assessment Objectives (AOs).

As with all examinations there is now time to reflect and build on the lessons which we can learn for future cohorts and gain insight into the wider new Politics specification.

Question 1 (a)

A few candidates encountered major problems with this question but it was a minority which claimed Level 3 marks. Good performance was associated with a broad understanding of the practical operation of direct democracy – much more than simply referendums. Good answers made reference to Athenian democracy and how direct democracy entailed the continuous participation of all with no delineation between the government and the governed.

Under-performance had several traits. Firstly a reliance on referendums entirely – producing in effect a question on these alone. A few candidates confused direct democracy with direct action and many also wished to make comparisons between direct and representative democracy (the domain of AO2) when there are no marks for this.

As noted on these 10 mark questions with their sole reliance on AO1 marks, the process is to deliver correct facts and show a good understanding of them.

Chosen question number: **Question 1(a)** **Question 1(b)**

Direct democracy ~~in the UK~~ is the type of democracy which involves the people directly expressing their political views. For instance this type of political participation can be seen through the growing rate of online ~~participation~~ participation, especially ~~the~~ e-petitions. For instance e-petitions need to receive 100,000 signatures before being brought up with MPs in Parliament, and this shows that the public's opinions and concerns are being represented by them directly and not elected representatives.

Another feature of direct democracy is the use of referendums. For example in the UK this can be seen through the 2016 referendum over the UK's membership in the EU, which allowed the British people to make important constitutional decisions themselves. As a result this indicated the political sovereignty that direct democracy holds because even though the people voted to leave the EU 51% over 49% to stay. And that a ~~significant~~ significant

portion of Parliament supported remaining as well, the UK is still leaving the EU because referendum results are greatly listened to and followed by MPs or else they could be held accountable in the next general election.

Another feature of direct democracy is the use of initiatives, which are widely used in certain states in the US. These are a proposed reform or policy that individuals create and they collect a large number of signatures in order to have legitimacy and support when facing local or ~~national~~ federal government and asking for a negotiation or a introduction of their initiative. This is ~~an~~ an example of direct democracy because the people are voicing their political opinions themselves and are actively seeking out political change.



This response just attains Level 3 – all of the material is relevant and thus rewardable.



Examples help support a range of AO's here showing that knowledge is understood and set in context.

Question 1 (b)

Examiners were universal in their comment that this was the better answered of the two questions – borne out in the fact that it had a higher mean mark than 1(a). In terms of popularity there was little difference in the number of candidates choosing either 1(a) or 1(b). Examiners commented on the clarity provided regarding the functions of General Elections by candidates which demonstrated a clear confidence on the topic. Weakness as such came from candidates who drifted into making evaluative comments on the flaws in General Elections and criticisms of the first past the post electoral system. Again, with only AO1 for reward this effort was in vain.

Question 2

It was clear that both this question and question 3 presented a new challenge to candidates. The major problem was that many simply chose to repeat the source rather than to develop from it. This meant that there was little AO2 to reward. Good responses took from the source an AO1 topic and demonstrated their wider knowledge and understanding of this – then went on to analyse the theme and to offer criticism or praise. Good responses not only identified the controversy but analysed why the issue was controversial. Again high marks were achieved by those who used pertinent examples such as Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza.

However many candidates had no real appreciation of the Human Rights Act (HRA), many also confused the HRA with the EU and Euroscepticism of the body. Very few candidates appreciated the tension between rights and responsibilities identified in the source extract – which is a key aspect of the new Politics specification.

SECTION B

Answer BOTH Question 2 AND Question 3.

- 2 Source 1 is adapted from a report by Dr. Mike McCarthy; he reflects on the impact of the Human Rights Act and the response and reaction of governments to its introduction, including some of the criticisms that the Act has faced.

London Bridge Manchester ① Source 1 Belmarsh ②
The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) has not worked well for everyone in the UK. High profile cases involving terrorists and prisoners have been lost by UK governments, fostering the notion that it gave rights to the wrong type of people. These cases often made tabloid 'Europe bashing' headlines and the Conservatives promised in their 2015 manifesto to replace the HRA with a British-based Bill of Rights, firstly to satisfy Eurosceptics in their party and then secondly to symbolically kill off a key piece of New Labour's legislation. The HRA has caused controversy not only between parties but within them. Furthermore, many feel that rights outlined in the HRA such as the right to privacy, family life and education are all too vague and sometimes contradictory. Crucially the problem with the HRA is that it fundamentally stresses rights and it should also acknowledge that being a member of a democratic society also entails responsibilities. There are limits to a rights-based culture which the HRA does not address; but how strong is the demand from the public for change?

(Source: adapted from: <http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/TheProblemwithHumanRightsLaw.>)

Using the source, explain why the Human Rights Act has been controversial.

(10)

In your response you must use knowledge and understanding to analyse points that are only in the source. You will **not** be rewarded for introducing any additional points that are not in the source.

The Human Rights Act has been controversial as it is perceived to have given rights to people who members of the public believe do not deserve them, for example prisoners and terrorists. This is understandable after the Manchester attacks and London Bridge incident. However it has not necessarily given these people, who can be perceived as a threat to society, fully entrenched rights. The act can be suspended in this precise case, for example the detention of terror suspects at Belmarsh.

prison. Therefore, it is controversial as it seemingly protects these dangerous people in society, yet also because it appears to protect everyone else in society in an entrenched manner, when really it can be suspended from case to case.

Secondly the Human Rights Act is controversial as it has caused ideas for the introduction of a 'British Bill of Rights', & This could lead to even less entrenchment for individuals rights. While it may offer less protection to criminals it also means less protection for the common citizen. Therefore, it is controversial as it could put a lot more power in the hands of the government regarding citizen's rights if it were to be abolished.

Thirdly, the Human Rights Act is controversial as it only 'vaguely' describes rights and can be 'contradictory'. This means the job of the judiciary, who judge on cases regarding infringement of rights, can be misguided in their decision making. The vagueness of the ~~the~~ wording entitles judges to easily place their own judgement on each case individually. This can be seen as controversial as judges come from a typical middle class, oxford

educated background and only one out of twelve is female. Therefore, they may make judgement on a case that is not from a different perspective than that of the victim. Therefore, the fluidity of the act and power in the judiciary's hands show it to be controversial.



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Examiner Comments

This response is at the Level 2/Level 3 border. It does move to analyse the points in the source.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

The source has to be treated more as a stimulus, not an opportunity to merely repeat verbatim the content. Identify an AO1 point then amplify it to demonstrate a wider appreciation of the point – then move to analyse and probe the issue.

Question 3

Many examiners saw problems with candidates processing the source here on question 3 as in question 2. Candidates who repeated the source found no marks as there was no AO1 credit. Good answers showed the disciplined use of time and focus. Adhering to the central remit of the question was crucial and reaching judgements on the validity or otherwise of the points raised. A failure to cover similarities as demanded by the rubric meant many responses were limited to Level 2. Good answers used clear examples to expand on the source content – such as a judgement (AO3) that lowering the voting age may not necessarily increase turnout as the lower age cohorts have lower turnout figures. The task was to analyse the issues in the source and then reach a judgement on their worth. This does mean making a choice and explaining why that choice was made.

Question 4 (a)

This was by far the most popular of the two essay choices. However the mean score of each essay was nearly identical. What was pleasing about the preference expressed is that candidates and centres felt confident in teaching and delivering in a new area (the media) brought about by the specification change.

Examiners were impressed by the range of media types and how examples were used in defence or denial of the essay topic. What was core to success was linkage – in that reference was made to different types of media and how this translated into success for a political party. Many candidates mentioned the impact of media and Jeremy Corbyn and the difference between the tabloid and traditional press and social media, while others accurately referenced the 2017 election and the TV debates. Good and clear references were made to a range of elections. Again good answers drew attention to factors other than the media which impacts on party success.

Weaker responses lacked illustrative examples to base their judgments (AO3) upon and the crucial linkage to political party success was absent.

Question 4 (b)

In essence there was no new terrain in this question – at its core it is asking for an appreciation of two electoral systems and whether the results or outcomes of the two chosen makes a case for replacing the first past the post system as used at Westminster. The new specifications requires that candidates examine the FPTP system and another electoral system as used in a devolved assembly/parliament – so there is a clear linkage to the specification.

Good responses which scored well – made the linkage and provided accurate evidence of electoral systems in operation and their outcomes. It was common to see the injustices of FPTP evidenced to provide reasons that it should no longer be used – but it was good to see accurate reference to the use of AMS in Scotland and Wales and the use of STV in Northern Ireland and SV for the London Mayor. Hard evidence of actual outcomes is always good to see and helps provide both analysis (AO2) and evaluation (AO3) and centres need to be fully aware of this requirement on the specification.

Weaker responses relied on just stating the case for and against FPTP and scored at the margins. Others candidates did go on to describe the functions of different systems but had very little awareness of their recent outcomes – hence judgements were hard to make if the candidate simply gave facts about operation and left the outcomes.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Questions 1(a) and 1(b) are driven by and rewarded by only AO1 – hence focus on providing clear and accurate detail. It is of no benefit to provide analysis and make comparisons as that is the province of other AOs.
- The sources in both Question 2 and Question 3 have to be treated as platforms to advance from, not ultimate destinations where the candidate simply replicates the source in their response.
- Question 2 is based on AO1 and AO2. Hence a candidate who simply replicated the content of the source failed to advance in any meaningful sense. The task is to explore and enhance the AO1 content then provide an analysis of these facts to earn the AO2.
- Question 3 has no AO1 reward, hence source replication is really futile here. It is vital to mention both similarities and differences as demanded by the question. The balance does not have to be 'even' in terms of content but the comparison has to be made. The source will be contentious and it is acceptable that a candidate will take one side in the debate and argue the AO3 through one perspective and this is fine in the short time allocation for this question.
- Question 4(a) and 4(b) are essays set on the topic of a 'contestable' quote. Here a candidate is expected to address the contested issue and give account of at least a binary view (there may be more avenues dependent on the question) – a balance between views has to be covered. Note the equality of the AOs and the need not to make AO2 and AO3 points throughout the body of the essay. The style of the AS essays is good grounding for the full A level essays.

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>

