



Examiners' Report

June 2018

GCE Politics 8PL0 02

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Introduction

The overall standard of responses in Unit 8PL0_02 was broadly in line with expectations. Many candidates used up to date examples to illustrate points they made, showing high levels of knowledge and understanding, analytical and evaluative skills. However, there were some examples of candidates misunderstanding or misinterpreting questions, or not addressing the specific question set. A small minority of candidates opted not to answer all of the questions required, and this should be strongly discouraged.

An important discriminator was the extent to which candidates focused on the *specific* question set. It remains good advice to candidates preparing for exams to spend time in the exam thinking about the questions they intend to answer, identifying the key words or terms and, for essays, planning their answer *before* starting to answer the question.

Question 1 (a)

This was a less popular question in this section. Most responses successfully explained either the role or the composition of departmental select committees. Stronger responses were able to address both parts of the question. Many candidates successfully used the example of the Home Affairs select committee questioning Amber Rudd over the treatment of the 'Windrush generation', which contributed to her resignation.

Some responses evaluated the impact of select committees but this is not required for this question, and some responses focused on other types of parliamentary committees, which was also not creditable.

Departmental Select Committees (DSCs), are groups of MPs who meet to critique and evaluate the work of government departments, such as the treasury, the department for health and the department of education. DSCs usually have between 11 and 14 members, and there are currently 19 DSCs - one for each government department. The chair of a DSC can come from any party, but the positions on a DSC are awarded on a proportional basis to seats in the House of Commons so the governing party has the most members in every DSC. DSCs call ministers from their respective department to account and evaluate the effectiveness of the work of their department. They may

also suggest ways which said department could improve their effectiveness. They often bring witnesses up to testify to further prove their point of a matter they are discussing. Sometimes DSCs call public bodies to account, not just government departments, for example in 2016 the work (and pensions) Select Committee held an enquiry into the pensions of BHS (B&M) after the company collapsed.

DSCs are not whipped; this gives politicians more freedom in the way they express their views and concerns.

Members of DSCs are elected by Parliament and are usually chosen because they have expertise in an area. DSCs last the length of a parliament - usually 4-5 years.

or companies



This response addresses both parts of the question. It is clear and accurate on the role *and* the composition of departmental select committees, although it does not mention that they are composed of back bench MPs. This is an example of a high level three response.



Make sure that you address *both* parts of a 'role' and 'composition' question.

Question 1 (b)

This was a popular question. Stronger responses accurately explained the principle of parliamentary sovereignty and included several features.

Some weaker responses did not move beyond a general statement that parliament is the most powerful institution, without further explanation. Some responses went on to evaluate the impact of devolution on parliamentary sovereignty, but this is not required for this question.

Parliamentary sovereignty contains the principle that Parliament can legislate on any matter, and can form any laws it wishes. This was demonstrated in the ~~the~~ major social changes of the 1960's when parliament passed the legalization of abortion, homosexuality and abolished the death sentence.

Another concept of parliamentary sovereignty is that no parliament can bind its successor, as the UK constitution is unentrenched, all laws have equal status and so any laws passed by a parliament can be ~~never~~ undone by a later one. This was exhibited in 2003 when parliament repealed section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, which had made it illegal for schools and other institutions to intentionally promote homosexuality.

The final principle of parliamentary sovereignty is that legislation passed by parliament cannot be struck down by a higher body. For example, on laws that clash with the HRA 1998, judges cannot enforce that parliament amends the legislation, but only offer ~~amendments~~ ~~pressure~~ pressure on the government to

adapt the law. The 1990 Factortame case highlighted how the EU law took precedence over UK law, challenging parliamentary sovereignty, however parliament always always had the right to withdraw from the union, and after the 2016 EU referendum, the UK will exit.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This response explains three key features of parliamentary sovereignty, illustrating each point with an example. It is clear and accurate throughout and is an example of a high level three response.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When you are describing several features of parliamentary sovereignty it is a good idea to have one paragraph for each feature.

Question 2

Responses generally used the source as the basis for their answer with very few candidates simply just using their own knowledge. However, some candidates copied out or paraphrased sections of the source without relating this to the question. A minority of responses lost focus and either explained the role of the 'opposition' in general or the ways in which the Official opposition improves democracy.

Stronger responses used the source to clearly explain how the Official opposition *improves government*, using examples to develop the points made in the source. This focus on the question was a key discriminator.

2 Source 1 is adapted from 'What do you want from an opposition?' The Official Opposition is an important feature of parliament, in particular the House of Commons.

Source 1

The Official Opposition's role is to:

- Highlight inconsistencies or unfairness with proposed legislation. They also seek to make changes by forcing the government to explain itself more clearly and to justify its proposals. This can lead to amendments or even the withdrawal of original government proposals.
- Force votes in parliament on popular areas of their own policies in order to pressure the government to defend itself. This might be on Opposition days where they choose the topic of debate. In this way, they are able to challenge government actions they disagree with.
- Champion their own alternative vision for society and an alternative set of policies that they can present to the electorate in a manifesto at the next general election.
- Make sure that their leading members adopt a high profile in the media and present themselves as more credible than those in the present government. In this way, the opposition creates a government in waiting through an effective Shadow Cabinet of potential ministers.

higher quality legislation

plurality of views?

(Source: adapted from: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/03/what-do-you-want-opposition>)

Using the source, explain how government is improved by the existence of the Official Opposition.

(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.

One way in which the Official Opposition can improve government is by helping to scrutinise legislation plans, in order to create high quality legislation. The Opposition is able to "highlight inconsistencies or unfairness" within proposed legislation, perhaps through queries during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) or during debates during

the legislative process (for example during a bill's second reading or the report stage). By pointing out flaws in proposed legislation, the Opposition provides opportunities for bills to be amended in order to be more consistent or fair to the public and ensures that the government's legislation is at a high standard, rather than rushed or part of executive domination of Parliament.

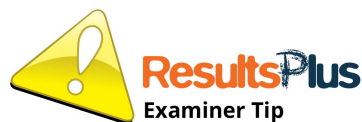
The Official Opposition also improves government by providing a plurality of views for the electorate. As the opposition is able to present their own "alternative vision" for the country and ~~policy~~ a policy direction with which to achieve this, they ensure that the electorate are able to see an alternate choice to vote for in the next general election, rather than there only being subject to the views of the government of the day. Equally, this plurality of views, often seen most clearly on the few opposition days of the parliamentary year or in the weekly PMQs, creates a strong adversarial nature to the UK political system, in turn improving government by creating competition in Parliament which encourages the government of the day to ensure their actions follow their manifesto promises and are in the national interest, as they can be held to account in the next elections if the opposition are seen

by the public as a more desirable government.
~~* for example Conservative and Labour's views on NHS funding which~~

Finally, the Opposition improve government by providing stability to the governmental system in UK politics. As the second largest party in the House of Commons forms the Official Opposition, they also form a Shadow ~~gover~~ Cabinet to act as a "government in waiting". This improves and stabilises UK government as it means that should the government of the day be defeated and replaced, the new government (most likely to be made of the Opposition) can quickly ~~resume~~ take office and ensure important business, for example current 'Brexit' negotiations made by David Davis, could be resumed promptly by the previous shadow 'Brexit' secretary, Kier Starmer.



This response uses the source well and for each point made it *explains* how this *improves* government. This focus on the source *and* on the question means that this is an example of a high level three response.



It is important to refer to the source in question 2, and not to introduce points that are not in the source. You also need to use the source to answer the *specific question* being asked. You will *not* be able to do this simply by repeating information from the source provided.

Question 3

This question requires an approach that is significantly different to the one candidates used for sources in 6GP02. Very few responses considered arguments for and against an English parliament without referring to the sources, which was not creditable.

Some responses included an evaluation of the provenance of the two sources. This is *not* a requirement and candidates are only expected to evaluate the strength of the arguments in the sources.

The best responses considered *similarities*, as well as differences between the arguments in the two sources. They evaluated the relative strength of these arguments and reached an overall judgement on the merits of establishing an English parliament.

Candidates should be encouraged to practice this type of question in centres and to signpost clearly the differences and similarities between the sources.

Source two suggests there is a support for an English parliament as the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland already have a devolved body and potentially view it as the next constitutional step. However source three takes a different view and believes there isn't a clamour for this development like there was in Scotland. By 1997 Scottish devolution was profoundly popular with a parliament established instead of a lower assembly due to support when Tony Blair put it to a referendum in 1997. In relation to source three suggesting there isn't a "demand" this may be true in the rejection of regional assemblies in 2004, there potentially isn't support for another tier of government in the view of source three.

Source two suggests politics would be less "London centric" if an English parliament was established as it would increase the representation of regions, removing the idea that all decisions occur in the Capital. Source three mentions this point but sees it in a different light that Westminster would be redundant and question the role of parliament and ultimately the prime minister and Cabinet if "devolved English parliament" was established. Source two however believes the English Parliament would be more proportional and represent political parties

More effectively as a PR system such as additional member system would be used, in turn solving areas of the country that are unbalanced in favour of one political party for example a proportional system for an English parliament may see more Labour MPs in the south of England traditionally Conservative territory.

A similarity of both sources may be that they both agree an English parliament will have a constitutional impact. Source ~~two~~ ^{two} believes it will positively answer the West Lothian question, a question that considers if MPs sitting in Westminster should not be able to vote on matters that affect England only whilst English MPs are unable to vote on devolved matters.

An English parliament would solve this problem as it would be an "English parliament". Source three similarly although portrayed differently believes the constitutional change would create a federal system where regional governments exist however there may be a lack of consensus as power devolved between the regions would have to be symmetrical for federalism and a whole change in the constitution.

Therefore I believe both sources have value, but I believe in recent political events such as the Scottish independence referendum 2014 and the EU referendum there is a lack of engagement for such an overhaul in potentially very uncertain times.



This response has a close focus on both sources and identifies similarities as well as differences between them. The response also comes to a conclusion, arguing against establishing an English parliament.



It is important to compare and contrast similarities as well as differences between the sources in question 3.

Question 4 (a)

This was the most popular question in this section. The vast majority of responses referred to both chambers and provided some balance. Stronger responses sustained a clear argument throughout the essay and usually evaluated as they went along, rather than only in the conclusion. They also focused on the ways in which parliament can limit the power of the prime minister in particular, rather than how it can limit the power of the executive.

A general area for development is the requirement to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of study from Component 1: UK Politics. This is a *synoptic assessment*, requiring candidates to work across different parts of the qualification. Many well-argued and analytical responses did not meet this requirement and so were unable to access the top of the mark scheme.

The prime minister has several powers such as the power to commit armed forces abroad, the power to call an election when they please and the power of patronage and although parliament can limit the powers of the prime minister to some extent it is dependent on the government majority, how united the opposition is ~~and in reality~~ ~~and recently~~ due to these factors, among others, overall it is not parliament ^{can} ~~is~~ ~~variable and not always~~ ~~weighty~~ ~~prime minister~~ ~~who~~ ~~dominates~~ ~~parliament~~ but his ~~is~~ ~~variable and not always~~ ~~weighty~~ ~~prime minister~~ ~~who~~ ~~dominates~~ ~~parliament~~.

📌 The rise of new conventions has increased parliament's ability to ~~dominate~~ ~~control~~ ~~limit~~ the Prime Minister's powers. For example in 2013 David Cameron consulted parliament before for permission for Syrian air strikes and since then ~~it~~ it was thought to be a convention to consult parliament before taking military action decreasing the power of the prime minister. This was a stark contrast to previous military action where in 1982 Thatcher, independently committed troops to the

Falkland Islands. This demonstrates how due to the
risk of new conventions parliament has
been able to limit prime ministerial power.
Saying this however in 2018 May ~~at~~
took action in Syria through air strikes
~~say~~ without consulting parliament demonstrating
how, although conventions do limit prime
ministerial power new conventions are delicate
and can easily be reverted. This suggests
that parliament therefore cannot limit the power
of the prime minister all the time through this
method decreasing parliament's ability to sufficiently
control prime ministerial power.

The opposition relative strength of the opposition
also limits prime ministerial power to varying
degrees suggesting that under some circumstances
parliament ~~can~~ limit is effective at limiting executive
power. This was evident in the 1990's when
Major was faced with the strong united
opposition of New Labour whilst the issues
were discussed over Europe ultimately leading to
compromise between the prime minister and
parliament limiting his power to early and
effectively push legislation through. ~~Steps~~ On the
other hand however when the opposition is

weak, such as that Thatcher faced in 1983 generally prime ministerial power is politically strong and legislation can be passed with minimal opposition. This strengthens prime ministerial power. This means that parliament is limited in its ability to limit prime ministerial power by its own internal decisions and decreasing the overall extent to which parliament can control the executive as it

~~Due to the fact that the executive and~~
~~parliament~~ Similar to the above issue parliament's ability to limit prime ministerial power is also limited by the size of the majority that is obtained in the House of Commons. For example when Blair won 416 seats in the 1997 general election he was able to pass laws ~~and~~ extremely early due to the fact that there was almost an election dictatorship. This meant that the prime minister faced almost no limitations to his power whilst popular within his own party. Seeing this how ~~due to~~ the House of Lords has no party majority within it means that a more critical view of legislation can be taken potentially decreasing prime ministerial power. Despite this how the House

of Lords is limited by its undemocratic nature which means it is constantly under threat of reform. Therefore, mainly, it is less likely to oppose the government, especially with a huge majority. On the other hand, when the government has no, or a small majority, the prime minister's powers are severely limited. For example, in 2010, the ^{coal} government essentially had no mandate and it was therefore essential to gain parliamentary support in its actions. Therefore, the prime minister's powers are severely limited. In addition to this, since 2010, there has been no decisive government majority which has meant that the House of Lords is more willing to challenge the prime minister's power. This demonstrates how dependent on the circumstances the prime minister's powers can be limited. However, this is variable. Therefore, limiting the extent to which the prime minister's powers are sufficiently clear.

Due to the fact that the executive and parliament are in effect fused, this means that the scrutiny of ^{government} legislation is often limited. The extent to which I agree with the statement is that, for example, legislative committees, which

are created for the specific purposes of
imposing upon specific parts of the
are ~~not~~ ~~whipped~~ ~~by~~ ~~it~~ and procedures
made up of government MPs by that the
prime minister ~~power~~ are ~~strengthened~~ as they are
likely to receive little opposition in this stage of
passing legislation. ~~In addition~~ This ~~shows~~ ~~how~~ ~~power~~
can struggle to effectively limit government power
when it has such a large part of
parliamentary support. In addition to this MPs
of the governing party are given loyalty
to the party due to the power of
patronage. This means that if they aspire
to high office they are unlikely to oppose
the prime minister in parliament. Strongly the
prime minister's position and power. This suggests
that overall parliament can ~~struggle~~
be limited by the prime minister's means
it cannot sufficiently limit prime minister's
power.

To conclude although the parliament can
sufficiently limit the power of the prime minister
this is often subject to circumstance and
the prime minister is able to exercise power
in full due to the executive, legislative ~~dominance~~ ~~power~~ and the

limited ^{on a whole} rate of new conventions. Overall the prime
ministers power is not limited by politics
but parliament is limited by the executive dominance and
adverse circumstances.



This response considers both chambers, although it is mostly focused on the Commons. There is a clear and sustained argument throughout, that it depends upon the circumstances in which prime ministers find themselves. The response contains evaluation at the end of each paragraph as well as in the conclusion. It also includes a reference to Component 1 when referring to the government's lack of a mandate in 2010, but there is more scope to draw on relevant knowledge from Component 1. This is an example of a level five response.



As part of the rubric for questions 4(a) and 4(b), candidates are required to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1: UK Politics.

Question 4 (b)

This was a much less popular question in this section.

The majority of responses referred to the 'four freedoms' and the single market and provided some balance. Stronger responses sustained a clear argument from start to finish and usually evaluated points throughout the essay, rather than only in the conclusion.

A general area for development is the requirement to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of study from Component 1: UK Politics. This is a *synoptic assessment*, requiring candidates to work across different parts of the qualification. Some well-argued and analytical responses did not meet this requirement and so were unable to access the top of the mark scheme.

The European Union was originally set up as the European Economic Community with the view of being an economic community of like-minded countries. These aims eventually developed into ~~4 freedoms (focus on goods, services, people & freedoms)~~ and a European Single Market. While one may argue that these aims conflict with the UK, I would argue that membership of the Single Market have brought benefits to the UK, in addition to the 4 freedoms, ^{which provide further benefit}

The Single Market provides a ^{vehicle} ~~mechanism~~ in which businesses can trade freely without tariffs. This is a benefit for businesses as it reduces the burden of trading and provides an opportunity to promote business, which brings economic benefit for the increased jobs created as a result and increased market for said business to sell its goods/services. This ties in heavily with the free movement of goods and capital, as it is able to move freely without

The need for checks.

However, one may argue that the regulatory framework that exists within the Single Market (that allows goods to move freely) places a huge burden on small business, who find these EU regulations burdensome and expensive. They may point to the example on the regulations of on vacuum cleaners for example as an area where smaller companies developers such products find it hard to compete with larger players within this field. This argument however fails to acknowledge that the point of the European Single Market is to as well as provide a level playing field, but to encourage competition. Ultimately to compete with one another, companies will have to lower prices. This is actually a benefit to the UK, as consumers will benefit from lower prices. While one may say that this 'race to the bottom' will result in lower quality, the EU maintains regulations that ensure products traded are of the highest quality. We can therefore conclude that the free market that operates within the European Single Market is of benefit to the UK, as it provides consumers with competitively priced goods that are have been met to high regulators.

One ~~of the 4 freedoms~~ is the aspect of the 4 freedoms is free movement of people.

This allows anyone within the EU the right to live and work in another EU country freely.

In the UK, there has been a benefit to us as it has allowed skill shortages in certain areas e.g. construction to be met, providing a net economic benefit.

However, one may argue that increased migration to the UK has caused problems due to the increased amount of financial pressure of having to accompany an increased population.

This argument is one that is frequently reinforced by media such as newspapers like The Sun and The Daily Mail. These are theories that suggest that voter behaviour is affected by the media. The Prominent Ideology Model implies that media elites like Rupert Murdoch, who are often unobjective, force their views through such a medium.

It is this that may cause people to argue that somehow an increased population causes

Financial problems. e.g. the Daily Mail often using the term "stranger" to discuss immigrants.

This argument is one that is weak, as an increase in the working population, also means an increased tax base. As these migrants work and pay tax, this tax revenue could be spent on services such as schools/NHS.

Therefore we can argue that the argument that free movement to the UK has meant an additional cost to our economy, is wrong.

Given that freedom of movement has meant that skill shortages can be met providing an economic net gain as a Civitas report found, one could therefore conclude that free movement of people (and the 4 freedoms) have been ~~a~~ a positive benefit to the UK.

Allowing services to easily move within the EU has been an overwhelming benefit to the UK, as it has allowed London to be a hub and centre for services such as banking, which has created economic benefit for the economy, as well as create jobs. One may argue that while a benefit, it isn't one that is strong as it doesn't particularly relate to ordinary

people in the UK. Indeed this apathy to the EU is reflected in the low turnout at MEP elections. I would argue that this is more of an issue of wider participation. In all recent UK elections turnout has dropped and lower than in the past. ~~One~~ Arguably ~~on~~ it would be wrong to blame this on the EU directly - perhaps to improve democracy and participation the UK would benefit from votes at 18

In conclusion, I would argue that the 4 Freedoms and Single Market have been of benefit to the UK. Economically it has allowed the UK to be part of a trading zone which makes up for a significant part of global trade and indeed our trade.

Tariff free trade has allowed our businesses to do better thereby ~~pro~~ providing economic benefit. While one could argue that its burdensome regulatory nature prevents small business from growing, I'd argue that this regulation provides assurance that consumers benefit from safe goods, which ~~can~~ The 4 freedoms mean that ~~labour can reach~~ skill shortages in the UK have been filled, ensuring that qualified people

core to the UK, providing an economic benefit



This response is strong on evaluation and covers both the 'four freedoms' and the single market. There is a sustained argument from start to finish and the response contains evaluation throughout, as well as in the conclusion. The response also draws on relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1, referring to media reporting of free movement of people and the low turn-out in European Union elections, in the context of low participation rates in general. This is an example of a high level five response.



It is a good idea to evaluate points as you go along rather than waiting until the end of your answer.

Paper Summary

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

- Time themselves carefully on each question so as to avoid having to rush any answers and to ensure that they answer all of the questions required.
- Ensure that answers remain focused on the specific question that has been set. Read the question carefully before you start your answer.
- Avoid analysis or evaluation when answering Section A questions, as this is not required.
- When answering question 2, ensure that they only use points from the source to answer the question set. Candidates will not be able to do this by simply copying out or paraphrasing parts of the source.
- Ensure that they compare and contrast similarities as well as differences in question 3 and that they analyse and evaluate the competing points, leading to a conclusion. Candidates should be encouraged to evaluate throughout their answers, rather than only at the conclusion.
- Ensure that they follow the rubric in Section C, including the requirement to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of study from Component 1: UK Politics. This is a synoptic assessment, requiring candidates to work across different parts of the qualification. Candidates should be encouraged to evaluate throughout their answers, rather than only at the conclusion.
- Where candidates' answers are longer than the space provided, they should ensure that they use additional answer sheets and clearly signpost this for examiners.

Grade Boundaries

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