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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel AS Level
In Politics (8PL0) Paper 01

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8PL01/01 – PE Report

Q1a

The best answers showed a very good understanding of the three main extensions of the franchise in 1918, 1928 and 1969, providing detail and being particularly discerning about the extension to both men and women in 1918. Many candidates focused primarily on women, forgetting that the vote had not been available to all men prior to 1918. A number of candidates focused heavily on the work of the suffragettes in delivering an extension of the franchise to women, some in considerable depth, however this often gained little credit. Weaker answers were unable to recall precise dates and detail or focused on developments in the nineteenth century, such as the 1832 Great Reform Act which was outside the remit of the question. Also material relating to the reduction of the franchise with the abolition of the university seats and plural voting was not creditable as this reduced the franchise. Sadly as the remit of the question was the 20th Century – voting in Scotland by 16-17 year olds in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum could not be credited.

Q1b

This was the more popular of the two questions. We were given a wide range of responses, but the best answers tended to identify how referendums have been used in recent years and then provided examples of referendums to support it. Weaker responses may have focussed on just one referendum and described the result and the outcome of it in detail, or listed a number of referendums that have taken place in recent years without any context to their uses. The core reasons being cited were for major constitutional change, internal party division or as part of the coalition agreement in 2010. The 2016 referendum on EU membership was particularly popular, however again some weaker students would analyse or evaluate how successful it has been, rather than focussing on how it was used. There are no marks for evaluation (AO3) nor making comparisons of differing referendums and their merits/demerits.

Q2

Many candidates successfully identified that party funding is uneven and were able to analyse this information in relation to the impact that this could potentially have on election campaigns. Many students were also able to recognise the impact of individuals on party funding, although not all were able to adequately analyse this information in relation to why this may be viewed as unfair by considering the potential influence that individual donors, large companies or trade unions may have on party policy. Many failed to connect party funding with membership fees and what was a ripe topic set up in the source itself was rarely analysed effectively. Some students considered the section of the source that states that details of party funding is only revealed after the election has taken place, but this aspect of the source was not covered as frequently as other aspects. The question posed at the end of the source about fairness which ties in with the question is a good illustration of a platform for analysis; however it was a minority that fully developed this.

Q3

In this response there was a distinct improvement on last year, however there still remains ground to cover. More and more, students are increasingly confident at teasing out differences and similarities in the sources. The AO2 skills not often shown on question 2 are more evident here. Similarities and differences are explained. There is a bigger issue with AO3. It appears some candidates think that all that is required to access higher levels is to develop similarities and differences. There is a need to be aware that AO3 skills need to be in evidence in order to

gain credit. Candidates need to reach a judgement on which source is the strongest and importantly why. This is the major fault line which permeates this question. We can see a side by side analysis but this rarely carries a verdict profile – AO3 – for which there are 50% of the marks. Weaker students often did this in a summative paragraph but more confident students could do this in the main body of their response.

Q4a

This was a relatively unpopular question compared to 4b. There were a small number of very good responses which provided a balanced view, referred to two human rights pressure groups and had given genuine thought to whether pressure groups or political parties are better able to protect human rights in the UK. Such answers demonstrated significant insight into the relative merits of pressure groups and political parties when it comes to protecting rights. Unfortunately even relatively good responses were hindered by an inappropriate choice of pressure groups as examples. It could have been argued that such groups do protect human rights, but rarely were such arguments made. In some cases candidates did offer a plausible reason why certain groups which are not obviously human rights pressure groups had been chosen. However the question demanded contemporary pressure groups. Many responses considered the influence and importance of pressure groups with respect to human rights, but scarcely mentioned the role of political parties as a comparison. Stronger responses were able to identify legislation such as the Human Rights Act and consider the influence of both political parties and human rights groups such as Liberty in this legislative process. Strong responses also recognised the power of political parties in the creation of legislation that protects human rights, but identified pressure groups as a guardian of these rights by ensuring that they are upheld. Weaker answers offered no such justification. Poor answers drifted into evaluations and/or comparisons of the methods used by pressure groups and political parties in very general terms.

Q4b

This was a very popular question and it was very well answered. Students have an impressive grasp of a full range of elections as well as a whole range of issues that influence voting. There was a marked improvement on the technique applied in answering this question. The responses were able to give good exemplification and provide a full range of supportive detail. The structure of the answers was good. There was good paragraphing and responses moved towards a judgment inside the body of the essay not just in a conclusion. It is clear that the advice to include elections and name parties is greatly welcomed by the candidates; it is successfully providing them with guidance in terms of what is required in the responses. Most candidates wrote about the 1979, 1997, 2010 and 2017 general elections. A few candidates wrote about other elections, like the 1964 general election, and they did so in a way that was precise and accurate.

Of course, there were some weaknesses. Class wasn't always linked to specific voting choice. Age and geographical location were well developed but there was some implausible digression into various forms of media which was more closely linked to last year's question. It must be said that this was only a problem in the weaker responses.