



General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Examination
January 2009

Government and Politics

GOVP2

Unit 2 Governing Modern Britain

Thursday 22 January 2009 9.00 am to 10.30 am

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed

- 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The **Examining Body** for this paper is AQA. The **Paper Reference** is GOVP2.
- Answer **two** questions.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work that you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The marks for part questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 80.
- You will be marked on your ability to:
 - use good English
 - organise information clearly
 - use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Answer **two** questions.

Each question carries 40 marks.

1 The British Constitution

Read the extract below and answer parts (a) to (c) which follow.

The Human Rights Act and a Written Constitution

The Human Rights Act (HRA) was passed by the Westminster Parliament in 1998. From the outset, however, politicians of all shades could be seen lining up to criticise it. For some, the problems with the Act are rooted in its very nature and status. The UK has a *flexible constitution* which – allied to the supremacy of parliamentary statute – creates a situation in which the courts can only issue a declaration of incompatibility if the rights of citizens protected under the HRA appear to have been affected.

For many critics, this makes the HRA a poor substitute for a properly entrenched and superior Bill of Rights or a codified written constitution. For others, the HRA goes too far, drawing senior judges into the political fray by encouraging them to challenge the very basis of parliamentary statutes.

Source: adapted from P FAIRCLOUGH *et al.*, *Annual Survey 2007 UK Government & Politics*, Philip Allan Updates, 2007

- (a) Explain the term *flexible constitution* used in the extract. (5 marks)
- (b) Using your own knowledge as well as the extract, explain why the Human Rights Act (HRA) may draw judges 'into the political fray'. (10 marks)
- (c) Discuss the view that the UK does not need a codified written constitution. (25 marks)

2 Parliament

Read the extract below and answer parts (a) to (c) which follow.

Extract is not reproduced here due to third-party copyright constraints

Source: adapted from J DEARLOVE and P SAUNDERS, *Introduction to British Politics*, Polity Press, 2000

- (a) Explain the term *parliamentary sovereignty* used in the extract. (5 marks)
- (b) Using your own knowledge as well as the extract, identify reasons why the House of Lords might be considered undemocratic. (10 marks)
- (c) ‘The House of Commons performs many roles, none of them very effectively.’ Discuss. (25 marks)

Turn over for the next question

Turn over ►

3 The Core Executive

Read the passage below and answer parts (a) to (c) which follow.

New Labour and the Civil Service

The issue of who holds most power within the *core executive* has long been debated. While, constitutionally, ministers have the authority to make decisions, many ministers themselves feel that the civil service has too much power. Margaret Thatcher, for example, was concerned when she was Prime Minister that some civil servants appeared to obstruct her radical policies.

Similarly, when New Labour entered government in 1997, the attitude of some Labour ministers towards the civil service was one of suspicion, especially towards those civil servants who had worked closely with the previous Conservative Government. They found it difficult to believe that civil servants would provide them with neutral policy advice. In their impatience to succeed, therefore, both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown resolved to reduce the influence of the civil service. New Labour would rely more on handpicked outsiders, labelled 'special advisers'.

- (a) Explain the term *core executive* used in the passage. (5 marks)
- (b) Using your own knowledge as well as the passage, explain why ministers might feel that special advisers are more likely to support government policies than the permanent civil service. (10 marks)
- (c) Analyse the relative influence of civil servants and ministers within government departments. (25 marks)

4 Multi-level Governance

Read the extract below and answer parts (a) to (c) which follow.

The European Commission

Whilst power is shared among various institutions within the European Union (EU), a number of observers have emphasised the role played in the policy-making process by *supranational* bodies such as the European Commission. Although frequently seen simply as the EU's civil service, in reality the Commission is very much more than that. Successive treaties have assigned to it quite considerable policy-making powers.

The position nowadays is that the Commission is centrally involved in almost all EU decision making. Its role is especially significant when favourable circumstances occur. For example, the existence of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers reduces the ability of one or two hostile member states to oppose the Commission's proposals. The Commission is, in fact, now central to the policy-making process of the European Union.

Source: adapted from N NUGENT, *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

- (a) Explain the term *supranational* used in the extract. (5 marks)
- (b) Using your own knowledge as well as the extract, explain why the use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers is criticised. (10 marks)
- (c) 'Power within the European Union rests with non-elected bureaucrats.' Discuss. (25 marks)

END OF QUESTIONS

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