



**General Certificate of Education**

**Government and Politics**  
**1151/2151**

**GOV3B Ideologies**

**Report on the Examination**  
*2010 examination – January series*

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## Government and Politics

### GOV3B – Ideologies

#### General

The new GOV3B specification on political ideologies has retained three elements of the legacy GOV7 option – liberalism, socialism and conservatism. The new element, ie fascism, was something of an unknown quantity in terms of student response. In the event it proved popular with the candidates, and the responses to the questions on it were largely impressive. No single ideology proved significantly more popular than the others and, on the evidence of the scripts viewed, most centres prepared their candidates for all four ideological themes. Nevertheless, a minority of centres appeared to prepare their entrants for just two ideologies. It is important to remind centres that this unit embraces a synoptic approach towards the study of ideologies; no single question is intended to operate within the parameters of one particular ideology. The best answers reveal parallels and contrasts across the ideas located on the ideological spectrum.

#### Question 1

In answer to part (a), there were very few poor responses. Virtually every candidate pointed out that equality is cherished by liberals. The majority of answers approached the concept from social, economic and legal angles. The best pointed out that liberals have tended to favour equality of opportunity over other variants of equality, usually contrasting this preference with the socialist championing of equality of outcome.

To score well on part (b), candidates were not only required to reveal a sound awareness and appreciation of the core beliefs and values associated with liberalism, but they were also expected to assess their influence on the Liberal Democratic Party's policies and programmes. The best candidates did this to extremely good effect, backing up their theoretical knowledge with excellent examples of the policies and programmes which had been influenced by both classical and progressive liberalism. A number of answers were excessively historical and descriptive, however, revealing only limited awareness of recent and contemporary Liberal Democratic policies and programmes. For some candidates, this question was very much a peg on which to hang prepared answers, usually on the theme that "all parties today are essentially liberal". Where this was the case, marks were acquired more by default than by design.

#### Question 2

Again, there were very few poor answers to part (a). Virtually all the candidates recognised that socialists view humans as social animals who maximise their potential through collective action, rather than through individual activity. The best answers supported such claims with excellent references to relevant socialist political philosophers. A few discussed collectivism beyond communal social action, pointing out that socialist economics is also essentially based on collective behaviour. Such claims were backed up by discussing the central characteristics of Labour's original Clause IV and the Party's roots in the Trade Union Movement.

Question (b) produced responses ranging from quite outstanding to rather poor. At the upper end of the scale, candidates were able to differentiate between the two schools referred to in

the question. In addition, they were also able to cite their influence on Labour Party debates and policies over the years, producing answers which clearly focused on the contest for ideological supremacy between the two factions. At the bottom end of the range, the answers produced were little more than general lists of Labour Party policies and programmes over the decades; such responses revealed little in the way of analysis and evaluation. The poorest answers were characterised by a complete lack of awareness or understanding of social democracy and democratic socialism. In such cases, it was impossible to produce arguments which could lead to reasoned conclusions.

### Question 3

The best answers to part (a) combined history and the contemporary situation to pleasing effect, pointing out, not only that the term is usually associated with Disraeli and the notion of paternalism, but also that this mode of thinking influenced both actions and behaviour for most of the post-war period up to Thatcher. Many candidates also pointed out how and where One Nation Conservatism has influenced Cameron's thinking and actions since becoming party leader.

For part (b), to gain high marks, candidates were required to define *both* pragmatism and ideology before going on to assess their impact on political thinking and action; otherwise, serious analysis and evaluation could not be undertaken. Some candidates found it difficult to provide an adequate time location for the term "modern". A minority focused almost exclusively on the current period. Most, however, worked within a broader time frame, usually comparing Thatcherism (perceived as largely ideologically driven) with the pragmatism often associated with the party under Cameron's leadership. The best discussions of the Cameron era rejected simplistic classifications, asserting that elements of Thatcherism continued to exist in the contemporary Conservative Party agenda. The most outstanding answers contended that Margaret Thatcher, too, could be pragmatic when the situation demanded, backing up such claims with impressive examples and factual illustrations.

### Question 4

There were very few poor answers to part (a). Virtually all of the candidates who attempted this question produced sound to extremely good explanations as to why fascists reject individualism in favour of strong totalitarian states. All too often, though, candidates deviated from "the State" to the "cult of leadership" in fascism. Sometimes this was done with accuracy and relevance, but in many cases the points made tended to be tangential rather than of direct significance.

In relation to part (b), the discriminator here was the claim that fascism essentially functioned as an "anti-ideology"; it is best understood more by what it opposes than what it actually stands for in its own right. Basically, the question produced three types of responses:

- descriptive accounts of fascist ideas and values which largely ignored the notion of fascism as an anti-ideology
- answers which focused totally on what fascism opposed/opposes. (Some answers here were very good and scored high marks.)
- responses which not only explained where, how and why fascism functioned essentially as an anti-ideology, but also which pointed out that it possessed features that were not just negative or reactionary, but which were also self-defining and even, arguably, original. (These responses were awarded the highest marks.)

It is gratifying to report that irrespective of the approach adopted, very few candidates scored marks in the bottom two levels.

The first exam would appear to bode well for the future, with the majority of scripts revealing both effective teaching and learning.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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