



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2012**

**Government and Politics**

**GOVP2**

**(Specification 2150)**

**Unit 2: Governing Modern Britain**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **Unit 2 (GOVP2): Governing Modern Britain**

### ***General***

Time management did not appear to be an issue, only one or two scripts failed to complete the correct number of questions. A feature, reported by one team leader, was a number of schools and colleges where common mistakes were repeated across the cohort. There was also a tendency in the case of some schools and colleges for all students to attempt the same two topics. As in previous sessions the multi-level governance question was rarely tackled, and where it was, the standard was not universally high.

### **TOPIC 1 – The British Constitution**

There were no general problems with answers on this topic. It was quite popular.

#### ***Question 1***

Most students understood the basic nature of entrenchment with respect to constitutions. Several made comparisons, usually with the USA. Stronger answers explained reasons for entrenchment. Some mentioned the rule of law.

#### ***Question 2***

While the majority of students were able to identify two sources some offered more detailed explanations than others. Some weaker students used the question as a basis for a general discussion of the role of the European Union, and also the Human Rights Act. The stronger answers included examples of their chosen sources. At the highest levels, answers discussed the relative centrality of their sources, eg the increasing importance of statutes.

#### ***Question 3***

Generally the standard of answers here was good. Students appeared well-prepared and could detail a good range of arguments for and against the proposition. More could have been made of recent constitutional changes, ie the Constitutional Reform Act and creation of the Supreme Court.

### **TOPIC 2 - Parliament**

No general problem arose with this topic. It was clearly popular.

#### ***Question 4***

There was some lack of precision in the explanations offered, but the general level of understanding was sound. Some did not stress that the majority in question must comprise over half the seats (not merely the largest party). More could have been made of the significance of the size of majorities. Stronger answers noted the distinction between parliamentary majorities and popular majorities. The position within the present Parliament was noted by the higher-level answers and the need for the coalition was addressed.

### **Question 5**

The question was generally well-addressed and appropriate references were made to the source material, although some students were somewhat over reliant on it. The most common explanations developed related to party discipline, the role of the whips, and MPs' career considerations. At higher-level answers discussed the significance of the size of a government's majority, often using the examples of the Callaghan and Major governments. Higher-level answers considered the question in relation to the coalition government.

### **Question 6**

A common weakness was revealed where answers tended to offer a general discussion on the roles of and power of backbench MPs, rather than an analysis of their role in the legislative process. Many answers were unable to offer an adequate account of the actual process. Such discussions dwelt on parliamentary instruments of scrutiny such as PQs and select committee enquiries. Some credit was given for this approach but could not usually reach top levels. High-scoring answers were able to detail and analyse the legislative process, noting the various opportunities offered to MPs, and giving examples of legislation being influenced (or not). Reference to private members' legislation was fairly frequent and, while not central to the analysis of the process, gained credit.

## **TOPIC THREE – The Core Executive**

Again, no significant problems were apparent. Also a popular topic.

### **Question 7**

This was generally well-answered with examples usually cited (Michael Gove being particularly frequent). High-level answers were able to detail a good range of characteristics of the office such as member of the cabinet, subject to individual responsibility, head of a team and so on.

### **Question 8**

Not amenable to a 'text book' treatment, this question required some thought on the part of students. However, the extract offered important steers such as the expansion of central government responsibilities and the 'limited portfolios' of ministers. Students also developed their own ideas such as the value of team membership, the sharing of responsibility and the pooling of expertise. Such points were rewarded.

### **Question 9**

Some students approached the question as a traditional 'power of the prime minister' discussion. These could gain some reward, but to access higher-levels answers required greater focus on the specific demands of the question. In some cases more examples were needed to support points made. However stronger answers were able to focus on the central issue of the powers and opportunities available to ministers in restraining prime ministers such as the formation of cabals, building support in the Commons, leaks to the media, bureaucratic support and resignation threats. Stronger answers provided a good range of supportive evidence such as the ultimate fall of Thatcher, notable resignations and threats of resignation, and personal relationships, such as that between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair.

## **TOPIC FOUR – MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE**

An unpopular topic with only a small take-up.

### **Question 10**

The question was reasonably well-done. The main example was Boris Johnson, who is not a typical elected mayor.

### **Question 11**

Students were not always well-armed with material to tackle this question. Most displayed some understanding that councils were composed of locally elected representatives who were often closer to the people than MPs. Better answers were able to note the limitations imposed by central government.

### **Question 12**

Generally little was made of the changing nature of the European Parliamentary power. Very few treaties were brought into the discussion. The role of the Parliament was only covered in very vague terms, ie a representative body. However, there were some very good answers displaying detailed understanding.

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

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Convert raw marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)