



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2021

Pearson Edexcel A Level

In Politics (9PL0) Paper 02

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Principal Examiner Feedback

Autumn 2021

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Level in Politics (9PL0/02) Paper 2: UK Government and Non-core Political Ideas

Introduction

In many ways, this was a unique exam series as the exams took place in the autumn rather than the summer, and came after two heavily disrupted academic years as the result of the pandemic. This has meant that a much smaller cohort than usual has sat the examination. With this in mind, it was pleasing to see that students were prepared for the requirements of the examination and impressively, students were able to use contemporary examples in the questions that focussed on UK government.

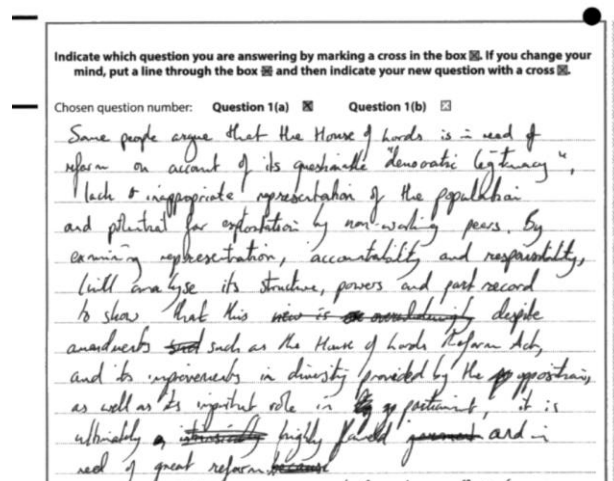
There are, as with any examination, however, a number of areas to reflect upon and lessons to be learned, which will enable future cohorts to address the examination effectively.

Question 1(a)

This was an optional question, and was much more popular with students as Q1(b). A majority of students were able to use the source to develop an analysis of the different opinions it contained in relation to the question. In particular, those answers which could clearly focus on both the roles and the membership of the House of Lords were able to access the higher ends of the mark scheme.

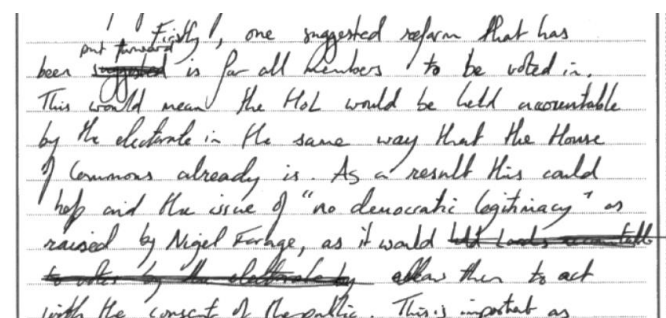
The strongest responses were able to focus in on the question by analysing whether the membership and roles of the House of Lords allowed the chamber to effectively contribute to UK democracy. This allowed students to develop a range of different arguments from the source about whether the membership of the Lords increased its functionality or not, and whether it performed its roles effectively. Where these arguments could be highlighted with examples, especially modern examples, a stronger level of debate and engagement with the question was achieved. In light of this debate, answers could argue that reform was needed or make suggestions of reforms that would correct existing issues. In particular, one very pleasing aspect was the ability of students to bring together competing argument from the source to create effective comparative analysis in order to build substantiated conclusions.

The most effective approach taken was to pair up naturally competing arguments from the source (A01), develop each point with wider knowledge in order to analyse comparatively (A02) the strength of the arguments to lead to substantiated conclusions throughout the essay (A03). Given that the marks are split evenly between the three A0s, then this approach enabled students to access the higher mark bands. This approach could be launched in a clear introduction, developed through the body of the essay and drawn to a clear judgement in the conclusion.



Examiner comment:

This is an introduction that set the nature of the debate and signposts the nature of the argument that the student will be building throughout the response.



Examiner comment:

This is an a paragraph, that looks at the issue of the membership of the House of Lords, a suggested reform and ties it to a key issue raised by the source about the 'democratic legitimacy' of the chamber.

Question 1(b)

This question was far less popular. The question focussed on the connections between the Supreme Court and parliamentary sovereignty. This is an example where a strong grasp of the key terms from the specification, such as parliamentary sovereignty, rule of law and judicial review, were important to develop an argument.

The stronger answers were able to develop a wide ranging argument from the political information in the source. The question saw students using the source, then evaluating the arguments using key topical examples that had been well selected and thought out. This question provided space to draw connections from across the course by focussing on the role of judicial review and the constitution, judicial review and executive and parliamentary relations and the role of the rule of law. Having a good clear grasp of recent cases, and being able to use those cases to develop points from the source was extremely valuable.

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box ☒. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen question number: Question 1(a) Question 1(b)

Parliamentary sovereignty is the idea that Parliament is the supreme source of legal and political authority in the UK. However the source argues that the Supreme Court has become 'too powerful' and that the increased use of judicial review means that 'Parliament as well as government is often challenged'. However the source also goes on to argue that 'judicial reviews are an essential component of the rule of law' and that the Court has 'helped to rebalance the relationship between Parliament and the executive'. Overall however, the Supreme Court has strengthened Parliamentary Sovereignty, including its legal sovereignty because of the use of judicial review and its upholding of the rule of law.

Examiner comment:

This is an introduction that set the nature of the debate, defines key terms and signposts the nature of the argument that the student will be building throughout the response.

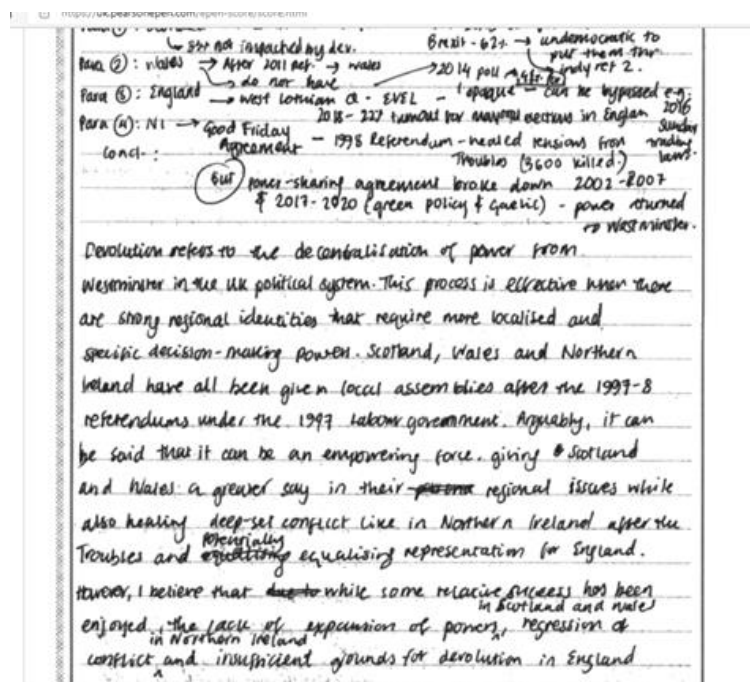
Question 2(a)

Both questions in this section were answered by a similar number of students. The key to success in this question was really the way in which students engaged with whether devolution has been good for Wales and Scotland but not for

England and Northern Ireland. Where this was the focus of the answers, students were able to measure the success of devolution for all four of the countries separately in order to reach a justified conclusion

The most effective answers had a clear understanding of the process of devolution and how it had impacted on England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This was then backed up by an accurate selection of topical evidence to illustrate the arguments. Without an accurate understanding of all four nations, it was difficult to develop the necessary analysis to make judgements. In particular, students were knowledgeable about Scottish and Welsh devolution, but there was less detailed discussion of elements such as Greater London Authority and/or Metro Mayors.

There was a clear engagement with the synoptic element; students were able to link the debate about devolution back to referenda and how they are used, emerging and minor political parties and democracy and participation.



Examiner Comment

This introduction starts to set out a clear view and also maintains a clear focus on the question. Planning an essay is important to maintaining focus on the question and creating a clear line of arguing that is seen from the start and developed through the answer. Synoptic connections to referenda, from Component One, are starting to be made here.

However, in England there is no extra layer of representation of for the English people. This strikes the West Lothian Question in which asks whether there should be an England Parliament to discuss English matters only concerning England, because currently, English MPs can't vote on matters devolved to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales however ~~not~~ English MPs not representing English constituencies can vote on matters only involving England. This was clearly seen on the vote of tuition fees. However, England has ~~had~~ had a bit of devolution of

giving areas elected mayors and police commissioners. As we can see that the voter turnout is low we can assume that it is not the will of the people to create further devolution within England. By doing so may create democratic overload, or and disengagement as many people associate themselves only with Westminster Parliament.

Examiner Comment

This paragraph shows a developing argument around the process of devolution and England, and clearly links synoptically back to Component One, representative democracy and voter turnout.

Question 2(b)

This question focussed on whether the executive had dominated Parliament post 2010. The question allowed the development of synoptic links back to component one, in particular elections, the media and the key terms coalition government and minority government.

The strongest answers were able to develop an effective approach either by analysing the different governments since 2010 or by developing themes to analyse the relationship over this time period. One highlight was the ability for students to draw comparisons between the government post 2010 with government pre 2010, with good examples in particular drawn with both the governments of Tony Blair, John Major and Margaret Thatcher.

The framing of the debate was all important in this question; the key as to really focus on analysing whether the executive had dominated Parliament rather than recounting a history of the various governments since 2010. This was important

to maintain an analytical answer rather than approach which focussed more on A01 at the expense of the other A0s by simply describing what has happened since 2010. Pleasingly, students were able to answer this question using a good array of examples, and in particular how the 2019 election result and subsequent events had changed the relationship between the branches.

Chosen question number: Question 2(a) Question 2(b)

If the question were to be asked prior to 2019, when Boris Johnson won an 80 seat Parliamentary majority, it could be easily said that Parliament had dominated the executive. However, in recent years, especially since the coronavirus pandemic, the executive has dominated both the House of Lords and Commons, including its Parliamentary affairs.

Examiner Comment

This introduction focusses on the question and frames the debate, clearly laying out the main thrust of the argument that will be put forward throughout.

Since Parliamentary majority, the House of Commons has held government ministers accountable for their actions. For example, former Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab was scrutinised by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee for his failure to act decisively at the news that the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan. This showed that in comparison, Johnson's former senior advisor, Dominic Cummings was questioned for 7 hours about the failures and mis-handlings over the executive's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. This shows a willingness for Parliament to act decisively in times of emergency, while holding the government to account for its actions.

Examiner Comment

Here the paragraph is focussing in on the role of parliamentary committees in holding the government to account, using well selected modern examples to illustrate the point and develop the analysis.

Non-core Political Ideas

Given the small size of the overall cohort, and the number of different non-core ideas and the optional questions, questions were answered by very few students however there are still a number of areas that are useful to reflect on. This section of the paper was the area that was most impacted by the unusual circumstances on 2020 and 2021. As a result, there are number of key points which are worth re-emphasising in terms of the overall skills required by the paper:

- The importance of timing so that students can complete the paper.
- The importance of using key thinkers and their ideas from the specification for that non-core idea.
- The importance of the core ideas and principles of each political idea, as well as the key terminology.
- The focus of the question is on the extent of the agreements and tensions within that political idea.

Question 3(a)

Effective strategies for answering the question were based on a clear understanding of why anarchism rejects the state, its approach to removing the state and view about what society would look like without the state. With this understanding in place, students were able to develop the debate around the agreements and tensions within anarchism over whether anarchists are united in their reasons for opposing the state. Better answers were able to clearly deploy the ideas of key thinkers to illustrate the debate between the different types of anarchism.

Anarchism is an ideology built around the fundamental belief that freedom is the *Summa Bonum* (ultimate good), their views on human nature as rationalistic, co-operative and influence their hostility toward the state. While there is some difference amongst anarchists pertaining to their reasons for opposing the state, they ~~are~~ all deeper ubiquitous notions of authority and associated which suggest, as this essay will conclude, that anarchists are united in their reasons for opposing the state to great extent.

Examiner Comment

This introduction engages with the sense of the extent to which anarchism is united in its reasons for opposing the state.

anything at all. All anarchists reflect on the detrimental effects the state has on human nature. famously, prouder a thinker much associated with mutualism - a symbiosis of collectivist and individualist theories - wrote in what is properly an assemblage of debilitating ills of the state on human nature, principally a belief that shared between all anarchists is that the state is commanding, controlling and corrupting. It betrays the belief that humans are

Examiner Comment

This paragraph is exploring the nature of agreement within anarchism, using Proudhon's ideas to develop the analysis. It is vital that students use at least two key thinkers from the specification in their answer.

Question 3(b)

The most effective strategies looked to shape the essay in terms of areas of agreement over the anarchist view on an ideal society before exploring the disagreements. Within this, the most effective answers were able to explore the differences between individualist and collectivist anarchism, as well as the tensions within both. A good example of this was the ability to discuss the tensions within collectivist anarchism between the mutualism of Proudhon and the anarcho-communism of Kropotkin. The very best answers were able to make

substantiated judgements about the depth of the agreement or disagreement within anarchism over their view of the ideal society.

Question 4(a)

This question was focussed on the key term, anthropocentrism. Stronger answers were able to clearly highlight areas of agreement and disagreement both between and within the different types of ecologism, supported by a strong use of key thinker and their ideas. In particular, answers focussed on why ecologism rejects the anthropocentric view associated with mainstream ideologies before focussing on debates around enlightened anthropocentrism, ecocentrism and the rejection of both positions by social ecology. It was very positive to see that students used deep greens, shallow greens and social ecology in framing their answer. It is worth noting that answers should focus on not simply stating the areas of agreement and disagreement, but on really exploring whether ecologism is more united than divided in its rejection of anthropocentrism to get to the higher levels, particularly of A03, in the mark scheme.

Question 4(b)

The question allowed students to explore whether ecologism rejects existing social structures, based around concepts such as materialism and consumerism, industrialism, the mechanistic world view and anthropocentrism. In terms of disagreements, the key debate drawn out was between the shallow greens on one hand who take a more reformist approach and the deep greens and social ecology, which take a more radical approach, on the other hand. The debate could be strongly informed by the ideas of the key thinkers, in particular Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold and Murray Bookchin.

Question 5(a)

Stronger answers clearly structured their essay around the agreements and disagreements between the different types of feminism, and argued to substantiated conclusions about whether the agreements outweighed the disagreements or not. A popular approach was to focus on the similarities and differences over the role of the state between liberal feminists and other types of feminism, as well between radical and socialist feminists. Higher levels of analysis and evaluation were achieved by exploring the agreements and

disagreement both within and between the different types of feminism, supported by key thinkers and their ideas.

Key thinkers need to be used effectively, by using their main ideas to open up an avenue for analysis. However it is important to note that more than one key thinker from the feminism specification should be used in the answers. Thinkers from other areas in the specification, such as Wollstonecraft, Friedan and Luxemburg, can be used to enhance answers but should not be used as a substitute for the key thinkers from the feminism specification.

Question 5(b)

The most effective strategies adopted for this question were to draw out the nature of the debate between the different types of feminism over the criticisms of the existing economy and the nature of the economy in a future society. In analysing the extent to which feminism agrees over whether capitalism is the main issue, and whether it needs to be overthrown, students were able to develop their analysis. Answers that were able to meet the requirements of the higher level mark bands were able to really focus on the question of extent, utilising key terminology to effectively develop the positions of the different types of feminism using the ideas of key thinkers from this part of the specification. Answers that use the structure of taking each strand of feminism in turn, focussing on its view struggle to develop the necessary A02 comparative analysis of the different views in order to reach A03 judgements.

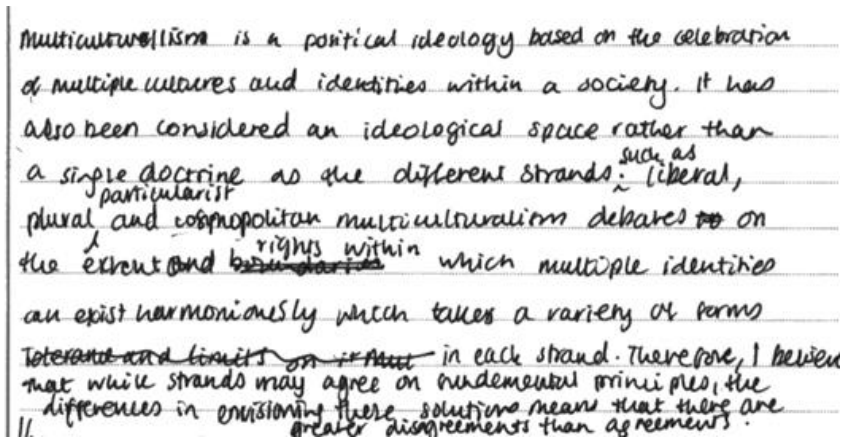
Question 6(a)

There were a small number of answers for both questions on multiculturalism in this exam series. In response to this question, stronger answers were able to identify clearly highlight the conservative criticisms of multiculturalism. Answers were then able to focus on the agreements between the different types of multiculturalism in how to promote integration through recognising difference, support a tolerant and diverse society and creating a space for cross cultural dialogue. The key thinkers that were more commonly used to support the arguments were Kymlicka, Taylor and Parekh.

Question 6(b)

There were a small number of answers for both questions on multiculturalism in this exam series. In this question, the most effective strategy was to structure

the essay around the agreements and disagreements between the different types of multiculturalism in order to build an argument about whether multiculturalists are more united than divided. Successful answers did this by approaching each paragraph in a thematic way – for example a paragraph focussing on what unites and what divides multiculturalists over the concept of diversity.



Multiculturalism is a political ideology based on the celebration of multiple cultures and identities within a society. It has also been considered an ideological space rather than a single doctrine as the different strands: ^{such as} liberal, plural and ^{particularist} cosmopolitan multiculturalism debates ~~to~~ on the extent ~~and boundaries~~ ^{rights within} which multiple identities can exist harmoniously which takes a variety of forms. Tolerance and limits ~~on it~~ in each strand. Therefore, I believe that while strands may agree on fundamental principles, the differences in envisioning these solutions means that there are ~~greater disagreements than agreements~~.

Examiner Comment

This introduction engages identifies the different strands within multiculturalism, and indicates the main thrust of the argument that will be followed throughout the essay.

Question 7(a)

This a question that was focussed on whether the different types of nationalism agree on the core ideas and principles of the state. The most effective strategy was to structure the essay around areas of clear agreement between the types of nationalism and the areas where there was strong disagreement. This allowed for analysis to be developed through the essay to reach substantiated conclusions about whether nationalism is more united than divided.

Some of the main areas of focus were on the basis for the state is, the role of the state and how the state relates to others states. Answers that could really use the key terminology of nationalism effectively were able really target the higher end of the mark scheme.

Question 7(b)

The most effective strategy was to structure the essay around areas of agreement between the strands of nationalism that reject expansionist and chauvinistic views and their differences with expansionist nationalism. A strong knowledge of key terminology, and the ability to use that terminology to develop a more focussed answer were the keys to success. Stronger answers were built on developing the arguments of different types of nationalism using the ideas of key thinkers and a clear focus on the question of extent.

Paper Summary

The following key points should be taken away from this exam series:

- This was an extraordinary exam series given what happened in 2020 and 2021; students and centres should be congratulated for the readiness to sit this unique exam series.
- The importance of exam timing.
- The need to plan answers so that responses have a clear structure that focusses on the demands of the question.
- In source questions, the importance of contrasting competing arguments from the source; this is done by developing the arguments included in the source using own knowledge to create analysis and reach substantiated conclusions throughout.
- The questions are on the big debates in politics, so answers should read like a debate where competing views are considered to reach a clear judgement on the question.
- The use of contemporary examples can really strengthen analysis in answers to the questions in Section A.
- The effective use of key terms from the specification helps lift the quality of responses.
- In non-core ideas, the higher level mark bands are achieved by focussing in on “extent” and the debate needs to be developed using the ideas of key thinkers from within that section of the specification.