

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/01
Concepts and Institutions

This is the third time that this examination has been taken and it was pleasing to see a significant rise in the number of candidates from 14 last year to 54 this year.

The candidates who took this examination answered the questions generally well and in the top levels there were some excellent answers, but there was a wider range of ability than previously seen. There were no major problems in terms of the candidates being able to answer the questions in the time allowed.

The vast majority of the candidates answered UK questions and, as a result, there are few scripts concerning US politics on which to base specific comments.

Comments on short essay questions

The aim of these questions (whether for the UK or USA sections) is to assess the candidates' ability to provide a clear, detailed and concise answer for the question set. The focus is on the ability to **explain** the answer. As a general rule the following criteria will help explain the general principles that will guide Examiners in the awarding of marks.

The main features expected for the short essay answers for the different levels are:

- Distinction: A number of key reasons, which are well explained and supported with relevant and concise examples
- Merit: A number of key reasons, which are not so well explained, possibly some imbalance in the quality of explanation and limited specific examples.
- Pass: Some key reasons, with some explanation, focused on the question.

UK section

In this section most candidates answered **Questions 1** and **2**, with a few doing **Question 3** usually in preference to **Question 1**.

Question 1

There was a range in the quality of answers to this question. The key differentiating factor was the candidate's understanding of the term 'Parliament'. A significant number of candidates only wrote about the House of Commons and, therefore, only partly answered the question.

Question 2

This was the most popular question on the whole paper and was generally well answered with candidates showing a sound or good understanding of a range of sources of the UK constitution.

Question 3

Again, as with **Question 1**, there was a range of quality in the answers to this question. The differentiating factor was whether candidates appreciated that there were two aspects that needed to be included in their answers. The first part of the answer concerns the fact that a Prime Minister usually becomes a leader of a political party, which requires that candidates demonstrate an understanding of the various processes that exist for different political parties to choose their leader. Secondly, there is the need for a political party to win a General Election. The second part of the answer was generally well answered. It was the first part that was less well answered, if at all.

US section

In the light of the comments for the UK questions, there are similarities in some of the questions of which candidates should be aware. The understanding of the key terms would have been crucial for a good answer.

Question 7 would require a range of knowledge of the lengthy process for electing a president, not just an understanding of the election process in the presidential election.

Question 9 would require an explanation of the functions of Congress, which would include references to both houses.

Comments on full essay questions

Whereas short essay questions are focused on an explanation, full essay questions are focused on a discussion and evaluation. The aim of this type of question is to assess the candidates' ability to provide to provide a well argued and balanced discussion that arrives at a clear and substantiated judgement for the question set.

The main features expected for the full essay answers for the different levels are:

- Distinction: A well argued and balanced argument focused on the key issues in the question. There will be evaluation/prioritising, which is fully supported with evidence.
- Merit: Will have the features of a 'distinction' but the quality of explanation/analysis and evaluation will be more patchy and imbalanced. A common feature will be that candidates will identify which is the most important aspect but not provide adequate support for their statement.
- Pass: Candidates will attempt to address the question but there will be imbalance in the argument and the quality of the supporting evidence will be limited. There will be limited evaluation.

UK section

In this section there was a relatively even spread of answers across the three questions. In all three questions the main concern was the quality of the evaluation.

Question 4

A significant number of candidates did not fully evaluate 'how far' the Supreme Court had increased judicial independence; rather they gave evidence and examples of how it increased.

Question 5

Many candidates provided evidence for the various relationships between central government and devolved institutions. However, in order to reach the high level of attainment there is a need to provide evaluation concerning which aspects of the relationships were more important.

Question 6

In this question, evaluation of 'how far' media and modern communications influenced politics was needed. Also candidates would have benefited from attempting to provide a balanced arguments showing evidence of both positive and negative influences. There was a tendency for candidates to focus on one or the other.

US section

In this section the emphasis, again, is on the quality of the evaluation. The comments for **Question 12** would be exactly the same as the comments for **Question 6**.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/02
Parties and Ideas

Key Messages

- Candidates need to make a number of points that are explained in detail for the short essays backed up by detailed and current examples where appropriate.
- Candidates must address both sides of the argument in the full essays.
- Aim for four to five sides for long essays.

General Comments

The overall standard with a larger cohort was pleasing but generally not of the standard of the previous summer. For the most part candidates understood the requirements of the examination but did not back up their assertions with enough detailed examples to illustrate their answers. Some excellent short and long answers were produced and some high marks were awarded accordingly, but equally there were a few candidates who did not reach the higher levels for the reasons stated above. A variety of questions were attempted. The paper allows the option to go down either the British or American route and it was pleasing to see that both options were followed in question choice. There is still a tendency to rely on the British option more, although one Centre followed the US option which was pleasing to note

Last year's report and comments on both the short and long essay are still as pertinent this year and at the risk of repeating this advice candidates still need to adopt what seems to be a very simple approach: namely on the short essay a number of points are required to be explained in detail in order to achieve the highest bands, and these points need to be supported with examples to illustrate the assertions. As stated above the observation this year was that the supporting exemplar material had not reached the standard of the previous year. There may be some allowance for partial misinterpretations but Examiners are looking for the concept to be addressed and explained head on.

For the full essays Examiners are looking for a detailed approach. The general impression this year was that the essays were good but not as many outstanding examples were identified as previously. Once again the candidate needs to adopt a simple but effective strategy by answering the issue raised in the question in a direct way. The devil really is in the detail! Achieving a balance is an essential prerequisite of a top answer; if the candidate decides that they have agreed wholeheartedly with the assertion in the question then they must re-examine their approach. Generally, four to five sides of writing will hold the key to success. Candidates who ignore the question or make up their own whilst writing in a one-sided way are not likely to succeed on this component of the paper. Contemporary examples are always welcome as they reveal candidates with up-to-date thinking who are able to relate concepts to some of the theories. All full essay questions are evaluative in nature and candidates need to look at both sides of the argument before coming to a conclusion.

Comments on Specific Questions.

Section A: *Parties and Ideas in the UK*

Short essays

The numbers relate to the question as they appeared on the examination

Question 1

This proved to be a popular question which was well covered by most candidates. A pleasing understanding of the key issues emerged and candidates cited freedom of speech, an emphasis on the rule of law, and free and fair elections as examples of what a definition of liberal democracy might constitute. Supporting examples were appropriately covered and added to a successful overall response.

Question 2

This proved to be less popular but those candidates who covered it understood the issues raised by the question. Some candidates were too reliant on an analysis of New Labour policy but the better candidates were able to identify issues such as property redistribution, economic egalitarianism, equal justice and human rights as key issues associated with the topic.

Question 3

No candidates attempted this question.

Long Essays

Question 4

This proved to be a popular question and on the whole the paradox in the question was successfully addressed by the majority of candidates. Those that agreed with the question pointed to the rise of the British National Party and the English Defence League, whilst others pointed to the rise of Welsh and particularly Scottish nationalism as a potentially divisive force undermining the union. On the other side of the answer positive views of nationalism included the success of devolution in constituent parts of the United Kingdom and the positive cultural aspects of nationalist identity. Some candidates went on for far too long about the federalism debate and did not address the issues in the question.

Question 5

This was a popular question where candidates were invited to assess the role of the leader in determining the ideological direction of the party. The obvious examples of Thatcher and Blair were used and the majority of candidates handled the material on these important figures well. The evaluation of other factors however proved less successful and candidates need to be aware of non-personal factors such as economic and global trends, the concept of partisan dealignment and the way in which party leaders are responsible to their parties for their fall as well as their rise.

Question 6

No candidates attempted this question

Section B: *Parties and Ideas in the US*

Short answers

Question 7

This concept was well explained by the few who attempted it. The candidates were able to place the issue of the third party politics in context and a number cited the importance of Ron Paul in the Republican primary process. The difficulties third parties endure was also explained in the context of a two party system

Question 8

The term libertarian was well covered and candidates were able to identify the key libertarian principles which included smaller government; individual liberty and the defence of the free market. Candidates were also able to identify the growing importance of the movement within the Republican party

Question 9

A small number attempted a definition of a lame duck presidency and succeeded in their explanation. They were able to identify the timescale and the sense of paralysis engendered when this situation has occurred. The best candidates were able to support their answers with current examples and most pointed to the Presidency of George W Bush.

Long Essays

Question 10

No candidates answered this question.

Question 11

No candidates answered this question.

Question 12

The few candidates who answered on the issue of money in the United States Presidential campaign did so in an accomplished manner. Those that agreed with the assertion pointed to the importance of money in the last presidential campaign and the extraordinary amounts raised by Obama in particular, and most candidates drew the conclusion that candidates who raise the most money tend to be the most successful. On the other hand candidates perceptively noticed the limits on campaign finance as shown by the 2002 McCain-Feingold Act and pointed to the fact that for the most part money is wisely spent addressing the key issues of the campaign.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/03
Ideologies and Philosophies

Key Messages

- In order to score well on **(a)** questions candidates do need to compare the extracts.
- Candidates do need to read the extracts carefully as many misunderstood at least one extract and this had serious implications when the comparison was made.
- Candidates do not have to place the extracts in their historical context unless it helps to explain the key points of the extract.
- When answering **Question (b)** Candidates should be reminded that this is a Politics examination and not a History paper.
- In answering **Question (b)** Candidates do need to provide an answer to the question set and not simply write about the topic.
- When answering **Question (b)** candidates do need to refer to a range of political theorists to support their ideas and argument, but they should avoid simply describing their views.
- Candidates should be encouraged to consider the different types of liberalism, conservatism, socialism etc.

General Comments

There was evidence to suggest that candidates had been well prepared for the paper and that there was a good understanding of the different demands of this paper. At the top end candidates were making direct comparisons about the issues in the question when answering **Question (a)** and were providing an answer to the question set and not simply describing when answering **Question (b)**. It was pleasing to see that candidates were willing to offer their own opinions and use other theorists to support their ideas rather than simply describing the views of other theorists. Candidates also showed a much greater understanding of the different types of liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism and feminism than has been apparent in previous examination sessions and this allowed them to bring in a greater range of ideas and approaches to their answers.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1a

Candidates who recognised that the two extracts from Berlin offered the negative and positive view of liberty were usually able to make valid comparisons. However, there were a significant number who argued that both extracts concerned negative liberty, or, when they brought in other thinkers to support their arguments were confused about their views; for example a number credited Mill with having a positive view about liberty. These confusions obviously limit the level that candidates can achieve. Those who correctly explained the two types of liberty often went on to suggest that Berlin suggested in extract B that citizens were not merely motivated by self-interest but also a desire to promote the common good. There were others who suggested that A also represented the view of 'true freedom' as espoused by Mill and these links helped take responses into the higher levels.

Question 1b

This question was often well answered as most candidates were able to put forward a number of reasons why liberals supported constitutionalism and consent. However, what was important was the quality of analysis and not simply a long list of reasons. Weaker answers tended to focus on one element, whereas better answers often linked the two concepts together. Most candidates were able to support their answers with reference to specific thinkers; Locke was often the basis of the response as candidates explained that as people were free they would have to consent to government if it was to have legitimacy. Candidates also made reference to Hobbes, although there were a number who were confused as to his views. Many answers considered the boundaries within which government must operate and linked this to the limits that must be imposed so that it did not encroach upon the freedom and private lives of the citizens. This led some to consider the issue of separation of powers, which was often well linked to the importance of a constitution in preventing the growth of state power and the jurisdiction of the government.

Question 2a

As with **Question 1a**, there were a significant number of candidates who struggled to understand the extracts and suggested, erroneously, that the extracts offered very different views. The question of ideology and its role within the Conservative party is an issue with which candidates should be familiar. Stronger answers recognised that extract A argued that conservatives were sceptical of fixed principles and went on to suggest that this would make them sceptical of ideologies and then linked this to extract B which considered the flexible nature of conservatism. Candidates who were unable to identify the similarities were limited in the level they could achieve, but did receive credit for the extract that was correctly explained.

Question 2b

Candidates approached this in two ways: some wrote solely about the role and importance of tradition within Conservative ideology, whilst others weighed up tradition against other factors. Even where candidates argued that tradition was not important, a difficult view to sustain, they needed to explain why it was not important and not simply dismiss it as a feature and write about other themes. There was a wide range of issues that could be considered, but once again, what was important was the quality of analysis. Candidates did consider themes such as human nature, inequality and individualism. However, there were a number of weaker answers that became little more than a survey of historical developments or focused solely on Conservative ideology in the last few years; that approach is more suitable for Paper 2 on Parties and Ideas. However, more recent developments that appear to have ignored the importance of tradition and compared this with earlier periods were more successful. Most candidates were aware of the importance of Burke and this provided a considerable number with their starting point.

Question 3a

Candidates struggled to see the differences between the two passages. They did not recognise that the two extracts represented the different traditions and developments within socialist thought. Some were unable to explain that Marx was arguing for absolute economic equality, whilst others were confused by extract B with its emphasis on equality of opportunity. These candidates simply argued that both extracts wanted complete equality and did not note that extract B suggested that inequality was acceptable if it benefited large sections of society. However, those who did note this scored well and produced some very convincing arguments and were able to comment on the different types of equality and place the extracts in context.

Question 3b

At the lower level a number of candidates provided a historical survey of the role of the state since the Second World War, emphasising the importance of Beveridge and nationalisation in seeing an expansion. There were very few candidates who considered the different types of socialism and the role that the state played in each, yet this provided a structured approach to achieve the higher levels and allowed candidates to consider how far socialists have disagreed. There were few answers that focused on the issue of 'how far' and instead explained the views of different groups within the socialist movement; once again missing the opportunity to reach the higher levels. It was very surprising that a large number failed to consider the role of the state under Marxist-style regimes and there were even fewer who seemed to be aware that Marx's ultimate goal was the disappearance of the state.

Question 4a

This is the least popular of the five topics on the paper. Most candidates were able to explain the basic view put forward by Hitler, but few were able to link this to the ideas of Rousseau who saw democracy as an expression of the dominant self-interests. Most did see that extract A attempted to justify the rule of one man who claimed to understand the needs of the people. However, extract B provided a greater challenge as many did not pick up on the idea that fascist rulers can have some claim to be considered democratic as they might embrace the collective will and may serve the people. Where candidates did note this they were able to link the two passages and develop the similarities in greater detail.

Question 4b

The question did not attract high level responses and many candidates limited their answers to whether groups such as the SNP or PC were anti-democratic or simply provided an historical argument based largely on Hitler and the Nazis or Mussolini and the Fascists. It was particularly disappointing that candidates appeared to be unaware of the different types of nationalism. There were very few who were aware of nationalism's original link with liberalism and therefore democracy. Candidates did not consider issues such as cultural nationalism and this could have been used to support and challenge the proposition. They could have suggested that the need to create unity in new countries has limited democracy. However, most were able to write logically about racialism and its anti-democratic tendencies with its exclusivity and sense of superiority.

Question 5a

Most candidates were able to explain the reasons why the extracts argued for the abolition of the state, but a significant number treated the two extracts sequentially and did not make direct comparisons and this limited the level that could be achieved. There were some who did confuse the views in the passages and suggested that the extracts offered similar reasons and once again this limited the level that could be achieved as candidates could be credited only where their understanding was not flawed. Most were able to explain that extract A argued that the state represented the few who were the oppressors of the masses. However, extract B takes a different view and suggests the state leads to a loss of liberty and prevents humankind from developing. Better answers went on to argue that extract B suggests that private enterprise can provide all the services needed and therefore offers an anarcho-capitalist perspective.

Question 5b

Candidates displayed a great deal of knowledge about the feminist movement, but this was not always used to answer the question. There were a number of answers that simply described some different elements of feminist thought without linking it to the question of whether it was anything more than a collection of doctrines and beliefs, rather than a coherent ideology. Some answers simply provided a chronological run through of the different strands of feminist thought and then suggested in the conclusion that because there were so many strands it was no more than a collection of doctrines and beliefs. Better answers adopted a thematic approach and considered how certain themes, such as patriarchy and gender difference, have dominated feminist thought.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/04

**Contemporary International Debates:
Contexts and Comparisons**

This was the third sitting of the Pre-U examination in Comparative Government and Politics, Contemporary International Debates: Contexts and Comparisons. Candidates are required to answer two essays worth fifty marks each from a choice of five. They have one hour and forty minutes to answer the paper, devoting fifty minutes to each essay. The questions are deliberately broad and intended to allow candidates to bring their knowledge and understanding from other areas of the specification to bear in answering these questions.

Some general advice regarding answering the questions remains. It is good practice to very clearly define all the specific terms used in the question in the opening paragraph or paragraphs. This is an excellent way of setting up the debate and the highest level responses do this to great effect. Indeed, to reach the highest level on the mark scheme, candidates must address the key words in the question. Examples of this will be given later. Candidates who did not clearly specify the exact nature of the debate they were undertaking scored less well in this examination and their arguments and analyses are inevitably thinner and less developed. Candidates should also be reminded of the necessity for balance in their essays, though this was less of a problem than in past years. Those responses with one-sided or weaker arguments for one element of the debate also struggled to achieve the higher levels. Some candidates had developed arguments for half an essay but significantly weaker and less convincing arguments towards the latter stages, though again, this was less evident this year. One way of differentiating between candidates is their ability to remain focused on the question throughout the essay. Responses that lose focus or have thinner arguments are going to remain in Level 3. Candidates are also reminded to bring as much theoretical and contemporary knowledge to their answers as possible. Knowledge must be of course shown in answers, but it should be stressed to candidates to add their own analysis and views in order to score in the higher levels.

Question 1

This was a popular question that enabled candidates to bring in their contemporary knowledge regarding the Arab Spring and Burma (Myanmar). This is exactly what candidates should be doing, but it is worth noting that events in the Middle East and Burma are not in themselves evidence of the inevitability of democracy. Better candidates were able to argue that the growth of democracy in Egypt and Syria is very much in doubt and events continue to unfold. This is the type of analysis that enables candidates to reach the highest of levels. This question allowed candidates to discuss a number of countries, but they need to draw explicit conclusions from those examples. Appropriate theoretical knowledge will always be rewarded as will definitions such as those of democracy.

Question 2

Candidates for the most part struggled to deal with both necessity and desirability of regional bodies, often tying themselves in knots over the necessity but not the desirability, or the desirability but not the necessity. Planning an essay is vital, and marshalling of thoughts is a vital aspect of that planning process. Many candidates failed to take into account the wording of the question sufficiently, often talking about global bodies such as the UN or IMF rather than appreciating that the question was on 'regional bodies'. Candidates who wrote about these global institutions therefore limited their marks.

Question 3

For most candidates who attempted this question it was an accessible question that was done well. Candidates were largely able to remain focused on the question and provide some interesting arguments both for and against the premise of the question. A key discriminator, as in all questions, is the ability of the candidate to not only assert an argument but provide evidence that backs up and indeed develops the point. Candidates are reminded that they should not over-rely on historical evidence for a contemporary politics exam.

Question 4

Only a very small number of candidates answered this question and it was hard to draw any broad conclusions from their responses. Suffice to say, there was a need to address apathy as a threat to liberal democracies but also consider other threats. This was not done that successfully.

Question 5

Candidates were able to access this question quite well, and to provide some good arguments both ways. However, candidates on the whole did not provide an adequate definition of what a superpower was, thus limiting their analysis. Furthermore, whilst China was an obvious choice for debate, very few candidates brought in more of the BRIC countries for discussion.