



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
GOVERNMENT & POLITICS
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2019

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Unit	Page
Unit 1	1
Unit 2	3
Unit 3	5
Unit 4	8

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1

General Comments

This was the second time candidates had the opportunity to sit unit 1 of the reformed specification. The exam provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate their skill in applying their political knowledge and understanding to important questions relating to government and politics in Wales and the United Kingdom.

Most candidates were able to complete the correct number of questions in the time allowed. However, some candidates did not complete or attempt some questions. Candidates should be aware of the potential marks for each question, and use the time available accordingly, as the consequence of not completing or attempting questions has consequences on their overall mark.

It was noticeable that in section B, compared with 2018, candidates seemed better prepared in how to structure their answers to ensure that they were accessing AO2 as well as AO1. The mean mark, this year for Q3 and Q4, was 13.8 and 12.3 respectively.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Many candidates were able to answer this question well by considering the importance of Statute Law within the British Constitution by suggesting that it was the most important part of the Constitution, because it originated in parliament and supporting this with relevant examples of statute law. However, some candidates took the question as an opportunity to discuss the nature of the constitution and the arguments around a written or unwritten constitution. Others listed all the sources of the constitution. The mean mark for this question was 3.2.
- Q.2** This question was not answered as well as Q1. Candidates who described the main features of the plenary session, (e.g. its purpose, when it is held, the power it has, did well), but some candidates seemed unsure about it and described other aspect of Welsh devolution. The mean mark for this question was 3.0 which suggests that Q1 was better answered, and the lower facility factor of 49.5, compared to 54.7 on Q1 suggests that candidates performed better on Q1 than Q2.
- Q.3** Many candidates were able to compare and contrast the roles of cabinet ministers and civil servants. There was clear understanding of the similarities and differences with issues around serving the government being the most popular example of similarity and anonymity, permanence and neutrality being the most popular example of difference. Some candidates had good examples to offer as support, and some were able to suggest that the lines between ministers and civil servants were sometimes blurred. Candidates who did not organise their response scored less well. The mean mark for this question was 13.9 which suggests that many candidates were able to access AO2 marks.

- Q.4** This was not as well answered Q3 as indicated by a lower mean score of 12.3. The need to be clear about the main features of the judiciary was paramount to then being able to consider how they connect with political independence. Some took the question as an opportunity to focus on the Supreme Court and while there was some credit here, the answer required further connections to be explored. Other candidates considered the changed role of the Lord Chancellor and judicial independence. Other candidates became bogged down in a discussion about separation of the powers and this limited their access to AO2.
- Q.5** This was a popular question and answered at all levels with a mean mark of 12.0. Some candidates saw it as an opportunity to write all they knew about devolved power, particularly in Wales, with reference also to Scotland and Northern Ireland, and even England, but never got to considering if it improved governance of the UK or not. This, consequently limited access to AO3. The more focused responses did consider aspects of governance and then used examples of devolved power to explore improvement or not.
- Q.6** This was also a popular question, but again, some candidates saw it as an opportunity to write all they knew about the British Constitution and, as a consequence focussed on 'features' rather than 'principles', and consequently, this limited their access to AO3 marks. Candidates who identified 'principles' and then judged them against 'parliamentary sovereignty' scored much better. The mean mark was 10.8 for this question.
- Q.7** This question was answered by many candidates, with a mean mark of 12.0. A lot of candidates were able to use a range of Prime Ministers in their exploration of their power in relation to that of the Cabinet. Many were keenly aware of how Thatcher had managed her Cabinet, compared to John Major, and similarly how Blair had done. Some were knowledgeable about how Teresa May had been frustrated by her Cabinet over the Brexit issue. Weaker candidates listed the text book definition of prime ministerial power and ignored the focus of the question other than concluding that the Prime Minister 'as first amongst equals' had the most power and this limited their access to AO3.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to ensure they are answering the actual set question rather than writing all they know about the topic.
- Candidates need to understand the difference between the assessment objects so that when they are answering questions they are using and accessing the marks available, particularly for, AO2 and AO3.
- Candidates need to be more aware of up to date examples that help support their answers and help make them more relevant.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 2

General Comments

This was the second time candidates had the opportunity to sit unit 2 of the reformed specification. The exam provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate real skill in applying their political knowledge and understanding to important questions relating to Living and Participating in a Democracy.

Candidates were able to complete the correct number of questions in the time allowed. However, a few candidates did not complete all the required questions. This may have been through lack of knowledge or understanding, or a timing issues. Candidates should be aware of the impact this can have on their overall mark.

It was noticeable that in section B, compared with 2018, candidates seemed better prepared in how to structure their answers to ensure that they were accessing AO2 as well as AO1. The mean mark this year, for Q3 and Q4, was 13.5 and 14.5 respectively. Also, the performance generally, across the paper, was up on last year.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** This question was particularly well answered by many candidates with a mean mark of 3.4. Candidates were clear about what type of democracy it was, where the idea originated, and how it was exercised by people, and that, in our current system, a referendum was an example of it. Some candidates wanted to compare it with 'indirect democracy' which they were not required to do, and some candidates confused it with 'indirect democracy'.
- Q.2** This was not as well answered as Q1 with a lower mean mark of 3.1. Higher scoring candidates realised it was about their role in protecting human rights and gave examples of how they did this e.g. role of Supreme Court, judicial review and review of the actions of the executive and legislature. However, some candidates discussed the role of the judiciary per se and ignored the focus on the protection of human rights.
- Q.3** This was not as popular as Q4 with significantly less students attempting it than Q4. However, many candidates who answered it, were able to compare and contrast the differing ideologies of the main parties, with many focusing on the traditional ideology of the main parties and who they seemed to represent as the main difference, with similarity discussed around management of the economy and the welfare state. This resulted in a mean mark of 13.5. Many were keen to show that, while at times parties appeared similar, recently the ideological divided has become greater, e.g. Labour under Corbyn. Weaker answers described party ideology rather than comparing it.

- Q.4** This was very popular question. The mean mark was 14.8. Many candidates were well versed in the similarities and differences, and many used topical and up to date examples, e.g. extinction rebellion, students striking from school. Candidates were keenly aware of the different ways in which both sought to make change happen and used these as their points of similarity and difference, and, therefore, were able to access AO2 marks.
- Q.5** A popular question with a mean mark of 11.2. However, some candidates saw it as an opportunity to write all they knew about pressure groups, (e.g. insider/outsider, cause/promotional) and did not consider if they forced governments to respond – taking it for granted in their conclusion that they did. As a consequence of this, access to AO3 was limited. Higher scoring candidates considered aspects of government action that had come as a consequence of pressure group activity and explored the extent to which they had ‘forced’ government. Many candidates concluded that pressure groups played a part but sometimes it was other factors that ‘forced’ government to respond.
- Q.6** A popular question with a mean mark of 13.6. However, some candidates saw it as an opportunity to write all they knew about FPTP, ignoring the issue of whether it should continue to be used. Also, some candidates constructed a purely one sided argument – either yes it should or no it shouldn’t with no balance. That restricted them in terms of the mark scheme and the AO3 marks which could be awarded. Higher scoring candidates fully engaged with and explored the issue and came up with some interesting judgements.
- Q.7** This was not a popular question, and surprising not particularly well done which was confirmed by a mean mark of 9.8. Some candidates just listed and described the rights of citizens and ignored the role of government in restriction or not. Some took a more personal approach and argued that their own personal rights and choices should not be restricted. This consequently restricted their access to marks in both AO1 and AO3. Those candidates that fully engaged with the issue, with many considering the impact of terrorism on government and rights, scored more highly in the mark scheme.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to ensure they are answering the actual set question rather than writing all they know about the topic.
- Candidates need to understand the difference between the assessment objects so that when they are answering questions they are using and accessing the marks available, particularly for, AO2 and AO3.
- Candidates need to be more aware of up to date examples that help support their answers and help make them more relevant.

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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 3 POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

General Comments

This is the first examination series for this new unit. The content, style of some questions and length of the examination are all new to candidates and teachers. Despite this, the examination produced an expected range of responses, and overall the standard was maintained from Legacy. There was an overall increase in the number of scripts where candidates had completed all the required questions fully, and a decline in the number of scripts where candidates had not attempted all questions required.

The overall quality of knowledge and understanding, given the specification changes, was encouraging, with the majority of candidates having both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding across the ideologies, concepts and theories on this paper. There were some excellent scripts that demonstrated admirable competence in holistically integrating knowledge and skills and showed independent thinking. These were well-rewarded. The majority of candidates answered the questions in an academic way and there was a decrease in the number of candidates who clearly had not revised and were producing an answer from what they could remember on the day. However, very little planning of answers was observed in the scripts, and often where plans were made, they were very simplistic and brief (no more than a list). There is more time for this examination than there used to be for the Legacy specification, and the intention is to give candidates time to think and plan effectively especially for their answer to the heavily-weighted essay in Section C.

Unfortunately, there was little evidence that the majority of candidates did this. The 'new' essay in Section C is demanding and carries 40 marks; candidates are advised to plan well before beginning it in the examination, and to avoid answering it in a mechanistic way. The assessment objectives are not equally weighted for the questions in this examination, and there is a premium on skills which attract more marks than knowledge. Therefore, candidates and teachers are advised to practice the different sorts of questions enough in advance of the examination and pay attention to what the marks will be awarded for.

Unapplied knowledge – however thorough and accurate the long list of examples might be – on its own does not score well. However, unsupported assertions with no 'proof' will not score top band marks either. Candidates should avoid lengthy description that is not made overtly relevant to the question set and avoid 'drift' and 'stream of consciousness' answers that are little more than a candidate's personal opinions. Candidates are advised not to write the questions out as this wastes valuable time. They should ensure all their responses are numbered accurately. The length of answers needs to take into account the number of marks available for each question type – there were some over-long answers to Section A questions which meant answers to Section C were shorter (time) and yet each question in Section A is worth 16 marks and the Section C essay is worth 40.

Most candidates structured their answers well. There were some where no paragraphing was obvious, but these were in the minority. Many candidates, however, struggled to write an introduction that scored them marks, with many defining terms in the question or rephrasing the question and asking it again. In general, introductions were poor. It is also worth reminding candidates and teachers that the examination is a test of the candidates' knowledge and understanding of the published specification. It is not expected that answers will be, essentially, history essays. The questions allow candidates to select material from that which they have learned and been taught, primarily.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Many answers to this question were good, with most candidates able to explain the reasons why property and public ownership are important to socialists, in terms of the impact these have on a socialist society such as redistribution of wealth and equality, or of their importance in securing key socialist principles such as the end of capitalism and class.
- Q.2** Answers to this question tended to be more general, with insufficient attention paid to the 'differing views within Conservatism' part. The mean mark was slightly lower than that for Q1. There were a lot of answers that described the 'views of Conservatives' on the issues in the question, and which drifted into other issues not in the question. Most focused on immigration but were less secure on the rights of minorities.
- Q.3** This was the least popular of the Section B questions, with just over 50% of candidates attempting it, and was answered less well than 4 and 5. The mean mark was 2 marks lower than for Q4. The majority of candidates struggled with what 'government promotion' of nationalist values might be, and many ignored the citizenship aspect of the question. Most answers discussed devolution in Wales and Scotland (some mentioned Northern Ireland), the uses made of nationalist symbols such as flags and events such as the Olympics, the America First policies of Donald Trump and government promotion of the Welsh language and Welsh history and culture in Wales. On the whole, the range of arguments made and evidence used was not wide, with some answers being little more than a list of one or two examples from the UK and the US, struggling to evaluate 'success', as in the question. Some candidates lost focus and wrote generally about the pros and cons of nationalism detailing all sorts of examples that had nothing to do with government promotion of it, such as pressure group activity. Some candidates over-concentrated on historical examples such as Fascist Italy and Germany in the 1930s, which scored poorly. There were examples of very good scripts, where candidates discussed the successes or not of policies in Canada, France and other nations than the USA or the UK, and where candidates showed originality and engagement, e.g. arguing and supporting the idea that where governments promote civic nationalism it is often successful whereas other types of nationalism when pursued by governments often are not successful.
- Q.4** Most answers to this question demonstrated genuine engagement and interest by candidates, and it was a popular question attempted by 63.7% of the candidates. The mean mark was 12.7. Many were able to argue effectively that traditional socialism – that of Marx and Engels – is in retreat with even committed Communist states such as China and Cuba now pursuing very mixed economic and trade policies for example. However, revisionist and more modern socialism was judged to be alive and well, as evidenced by the campaigns and successes of Bernie Sanders and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez in the USA and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK.

Where candidates did not score well, it was often either because answers were entirely historical narrative and did not address the present day as demanded by the question, or because they were lists of events, places and people that really did not address whether socialism – the ideology, ideas and concepts – are in retreat, as asked in the question. Virtually no candidates struggled to address two global regions, with Europe and the USA being (unsurprisingly) the most popular choices.

- Q.5** This was the most popular choice, attempted by 82.6% of candidates, and presented them with a clear opportunity to focus their response around an ideology mainly rather than how it applies in the modern world. There were many good answers, and this is reflected in the mean mark of 14.5, higher than that for Q3 or Q4. Some argued mainly that these concepts in the question are more important to some liberals such as Classical Liberals with their view of a minimalist state and limited government than to other Liberals who view the state as having a more enabling role in the modern day. These answers in general only went so far in answering the question, however, which asks for an evaluation of these compared to the importance of other aspects of the ideology (candidates chose rights, or tolerance for example). Weaker responses were mainly descriptive, stronger answers clearly weighed up importance.
- Q.6** This question performed well overall. The mean mark was 19.6, which is consistent with the mean for Q6 on Unit 4. Many candidates could argue across the range of the political theories on this specification and their knowledge of them and understanding were generally good. This Section C question is very demanding in its wide scope and the fact that candidates are expected to demonstrate all three Assessment Objectives. Many candidates took a mechanical approach to this – basically listing one ideology after another and weighing up its successes and failures. However, the really good responses evaluated several ideologies by comparing and contrasting their contemporary relevance and influence in a particular aspect, then another, and integrated the discussion so that range, depth and all three Assessment Objectives were demonstrated holistically and fluently, and this was sustained in a discussion that was individual and highly focused. This is very difficult to perfect, but the number of very good answers in this first series suggests it is entirely within the reach of candidates.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to practice the demands of the examination under test conditions enough times to be confident with timings and producing their best debates in the actual examination.
- Centres need to focus candidates' attention on the Assessment Objectives for each question.
- Independent research and reading are essential to give candidates the best chance, especially with the Section C essay. Model answers will not be a very useful preparation.
- Candidates need to understand that the examination is essentially a test of their understanding of the concepts and issues in the specification. Long historical narratives are rarely relevant. They need to strike a balance between the theoretical ideas and concepts, and their practical, contemporary application in the world today.
- Candidates need to pay attention to the key words in the question and ensure that their answer addresses these.

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UNIT 4

General Comments

This was the first time the Unit 4 Government and Politics paper was attempted and a broad range of responses were seen in the paper. The standard was encouraging and candidates in the main were able to show an effective combination of skills and knowledge throughout the paper. This was particularly pleasing given that teachers and students now had to meet the demands of a new specification. Responses in Section B in particular showed that centres and candidates were able to meet this challenge and answers that offered both breadth and depth on a specific enquiry were often seen in this section.

AO1 is the least rewarded AO in all sections of this paper and centres and candidates are reminded that, as a consequence, students must do more in the paper than simply demonstrate knowledge. This knowledge must be used and animated in an effective manner in order to meet the demands of the other well-rewarded Assessment Objectives. It is therefore advised that centres continue to emphasise this point to students and spend time highlighting the other AO requirements that belong to each question apart from AO1.

The overwhelming majority of candidates made a genuine and creditable attempt to answer all the questions in the paper. Very few candidates failed to complete the paper and there was little evidence that students had issues with timing in the examination. There was some planning seen for the Section B and C questions and this is to be further encouraged.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Both questions in Section A are compulsory and there is a clear emphasis in the mark scheme on AO2 which represents 12 of the 16 marks in both questions. Effective answers were the ones that prioritised and emphasised the 'influenced' or 'connections' aspect of the question and were able to explain the influence of the topic mentioned on another feature/factor that was also mentioned.

Q.1 This question identified a topic (federalism) and asked how it influenced the content of the Constitution. Responses that did just this and explained the influence of federalism upon the content of the Constitution were well rewarded. Responses that provided knowledge of federalism, its evolution in American politics, its influence on American society today, were not meeting the AO2 demands of the question as they were not discussing the content of the Constitution. For AO2 it was necessary that they were bringing their response back, in some way, to the content of the US Constitution.

Q.2 In the same way Question 2 asked about the influence of money on US elections. Responses that explained and illustrated the potential influence of money on US elections were rewarded at AO2 whilst responses that offered knowledge on money but an inability to explain its influence on elections struggled to attain marks at AO2. Generally, responses to this question accessed the AO2 marks with greater regularity than Q1 as shown by the fact that the mean mark for this question was 1.1 mark higher than for Q1.

Section B

Q.3 This question on voting behaviour was answered well and was an extremely popular choice with candidates. Candidates choose 2 from 3 essays in this Section and 88.6% of students answered this question. Many responses were able to evaluate the influence of region against a range of other factors. Most responses evaluated region effectively against other long-term factors such as race, gender and religion. Very few candidates discussed shorter term factors such as candidates and issues in their responses which was surprising. Some candidates misread 'region' for 'Religion' and, whilst there was some crossover with factors such as the 'Bible Belt,' candidates are advised to read the question with due care and attention to avoid this happening in the future. Students are also reminded that examples and statistics of voting behaviour need to be explained and developed in order to emerge as analysis and evolution. Some students here offered statistics on how certain groups of people voted but failed to develop this knowledge into a coherent argument. The mean mark for this question was 14.5, slightly higher than the other 2 questions in Section B.

Q.4 This was the least popular choice of question in Section B but the quality of the responses was generally comparable to the other questions in Section B. This question was answered by only 26% of candidates and the mean mark was 14.0. Candidates showed a contemporary awareness of the extent of unity and division within the Republican Party and many were able to offer detailed examples in support of their arguments. The current presidency was discussed by many and it was pleasing to see this question answered with a combination of the historic divisions and factions within the party and also a full understanding of the current state of the Republican Party.

Q.5 Again, this proved a popular choice of question in Section B with 85.1% taking on this particular question and the mean mark was 14.4. Some responses lacked breadth and focused exclusively on arguments for and against the Electoral College. This didn't allow for a development of a range of arguments evaluating the entire electoral process and the successful students were those that evaluated the process as a whole extending their attention beyond the Electoral College to discuss the invisible primaries, primaries, caucuses, conventions.

In all 3 questions there was a clear attempt to analyse and evaluate the specific question and with AO3 being worth 16 of the 24 marks this is something that is to be further encouraged in future years.

Section C

The compulsory question in Section C took a principle (limited government) and invited the students to assess and evaluate whether the three branches of government were ignoring that principle in today's America. The best responses were the ones that took on this challenge and assessed each branch in turn against the principle of limited government.

There were many students that evaluated the branches, both individually and collectively, against the principle of limited government and managed to offer quite wide-ranging and far-reaching responses. These were well-rewarded. Some responses discussed which branches of government were the most powerful or described the checks and balances of the US constitution with little attention given to the principle of limited government and consequently, these responses were not fully engaging with the demands of the question. Centres are reminded that the intention of Section C is to be a broad enquiry and whilst the mention of 'three branches of government' was intended as a steer to students, the ones that focused on the branches of government without discussing and evaluating the principle of limited government and its relevance in today's America, were inhibited in their range. The word 'today' also asked for a contemporary focus which was seen by some students whilst equally some offered historical examples lacking a modern focus.

Summary of key points

- **Section A** – AO2 has to be emphasised here. Responses that focus relentlessly on explaining the influence/connection rather than just offering knowledge will be well rewarded.
- **Section B** – The focus on AO3 in this section was clear and to be encouraged. Candidates should look to explain and develop their arguments not simply stating an example and taking it for granted that the example in and of itself explains the argument for them.
- **Section C** – Candidates are encouraged to offer as broad a response as possible and are asked to evaluate the question in detail. This is a question that will require them to show independence of thought and will require a wider scope and range than the essays seen in Section B.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk