

EDEXCEL

A Level Politics

Assessment Material

This booklet has questions from a variety of sources.

EDEXCEL Endorsed

Sample Assessment Material (SAMs) – www.pearson.com – 16/01/18

Colclough, A et al, *Edexcel AS & A Level Politics: New for 2017*, 2017, Pearson, London.

Unendorsed

McNaughton, N. & Kelly R, (Eds, Magee, E), *Political Ideals for A-level: Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, Feminism, Anarchism*, 2017. Hodder Education, London.

Cooper, T, (Eds: Magee E), *Edexcel AS/A Level Year 1 Workbook: Politics 1: UK Politics*, 2017, Hodder Education London.

Cooper, T, (Eds: Magee E), *Edexcel AS/A Level Year 1 Workbook: Politics 2: UK Government*, 2017, Hodder Education London.

Hardy, J & Stansfield, C, (Eds: Magee E), *Edexcel AS/A Level Year 1 Workbook: Politics 3: Political Ideas*, 2017, Hodder Education London.

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Component 2 – UK Government

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Component 1 – Core Political Ideas

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Component 2 – Non-core Political Ideas *feminism.*

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Component 1 – UK Politics

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ONE

This source is adapted from a report produced in 2014 by The University of London Constitutional unit, called 'Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?' The report was based on a four-year research project on this issue.

'On certain measures, Britain does, indeed, appear to be facing something of a participation crisis in its political system. Levels of trust in government and confidence in the political system are lower than they were little more than a decade ago. Electoral turnout has fallen sharply, most noticeably at the 2001 general election. Meanwhile, the introduction of new political institutions since 1997, designed in part to restore people's trust and confidence, appears to have had little impact.

On the other hand, people do not seem more disengaged from the political system. Participation outside the ballot box has increased somewhat over the last fifteen or so years. Levels of political interest have not fallen, and people remain confident in their own ability to engage with the political process and to believe in the importance of voting at elections.

Perhaps the most reassuring evidence from our research is that which suggests the decline in trust and turnout is not due to long-term social forces, but to short-term political ones. The most plausible explanation for the decline in trust is the public reaction to allegations of misconduct and 'sleaze' on the part of politicians.

These conclusions suggest that the remedies for any 'crisis' largely lie in the hands of politicians themselves. Trust is acquired when words and actions accord with one another. And only a closely fought and clear competition between the parties appears to prompt many citizens to cast their vote. Meanwhile constitutional change should not be regarded as a quick fix. However, it would be wise to look to measures to both reform and improve democracy in the UK. Hence, British democracy – and especially its politicians – certainly face a 'challenge'. But talk of a 'crisis' is premature.'

(Source: by Catherine Bromley, John Curtice, and Ben Seyd – <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/112.pdf>)

Using the source, evaluate the view that UK democracy is in crisis.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative view in a balanced way*
- *use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond the source to help you to analyse and evaluate.*

(30)

TWO

This source is adapted from information on the Parliament website about the party system and information on the 'Vice magazine' UK website focused on minority parties.

The party system

Political parties have existed in one form or another since at least the 18th century, they are an essential element of UK politics. Since the Second World War, all the Governments in the UK have been formed by either the Labour Party or the Conservative Party. This did differ in 2010 when the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government. The major parties capture the main issues of the day and present choice. Furthermore, the current electoral system favours few parties in the race to govern.

Minority parties

'Minority parties' are those that sit outside the traditional big three (Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties) and have had power over Parliament for over a century. A significant shift has taken place in politics in recent years, with more people questioning the 'Establishment of Westminster' and looking to parties like the SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Green Party and UKIP.

In 2015, UKIP and the Greens obtained 5 million votes between them, also the SNP reached 56 seats of the 59 available in Scotland, becoming the third largest party in the House of Commons. Minority parties are enjoying success and recognition.

A secure victory is now not the expected norm for either Labour or Conservative Parties, they now have much to fear and much to lose from a range of minority parties who are gaining ground.

The voter has little to choose between when looking to the major parties. In terms of policy, there is little that separates the major parties and all the policy they produce is similar, with battles over style as opposed to substance. By contrast, many of the minority parties present a fresh approach to politics.

Source: from www.parliament.uk – used under Open Parliament Licence v3.0 and adapted from: The New Wave: Minority Parties – SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party
http://www.vice.com/en_uk/video/the-new-wave-minority-parties

Using the source, evaluate the view that the major parties still remain the dominant force in UK politics.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative view in a balanced way*
- *use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond the source to help you to analyse and evaluate.*

(30)

THREE

Evaluate the extent to which general elections in the UK are lost by the government rather than won by the opposition.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FOUR

Evaluate the extent to which social factors determine voting behaviour.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FIVE

The source presents two different views of the social media group, 38 Degrees – one from David Babbs who welcomes the group's activities because it alerts citizens to a current issue and empowers them to express their views and to achieve change and another from Conservative MP, Guy Opperman, who believes that such social-based media platforms may hinder fair and open debate.

David Babbs states: People are not as apathetic as politicians often claim. 38 Degrees gives people a sense of purpose and ownership and gets them involved. Many people feel that conventional politics doesn't work: it does not change government policy. 38 Degrees changes all that, it brings politics to life and enables people to interact with politics in a way that has not been possible before. In its numerous campaigns 38 Degrees has shown that politicians change their minds if sufficiently large numbers of people express an alternative view. MPs get angry about 38 Degrees, often claiming our exposures of their activities are inaccurate. MPs have to realise that democracy is about more people participating. Furthermore 38 Degrees sees action move from the digital and social media platforms to face-to-face meetings. There are a lot of issues where ordinary people's participation makes for better decisions.

Guy Opperman, MP states: Being lobbied by pressure groups is a regular part of an MP's life. 38 Degrees has set itself up as a critic of the government on a number of issues. There is nothing wrong with this. But it is totally wrong to spin, as matters of fact, claims that are simply not correct. 38 Degrees has an agenda. So they have simply presented the opposite view as fact, ignoring reasoned debate. It is totally irresponsible, when trying to exercise influence as a pressure group, to twist the facts completely. Websites like 38 Degrees are not taking political debate any further, but hindering it by demanding alternative outcomes. Assertions by 38 Degrees are often riddled with errors, overstatement and simple inaccuracies. This is not a constructive way to conduct important debates about reforming and improving life in the UK.

(Sources: adapted from <http://blogs.ft.com/westminster/2016/02/interview-david-babbsfounder-38-degrees/> and <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2011/09/fromguyoppermanmp-the-falsehood-of-the-38-degrees-campaign-on-health.html>)

Using the source, evaluate the view that pressure group activity supports democracy and participation.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

SIX

The source involves comments on the 2016 EU referendum from the Constitution Unit of University College, London and statistical information concerning the referendum provided by Parliament.

In a parliamentary democracy, advisory referendums are potentially destabilising because they generate alternative, competing sources of democratic legitimacy. If a referendum demonstrates that a majority of the public hold the opposite view to elected representatives, which view of democratic legitimacy carries most authority? Some reasonably take the view that a referendum won by a very narrow margin is an insufficient mandate for major change. A 'Leave' vote, if implemented, is effectively irreversible: a 'Remain' vote leaves open the possibility of future referendums on the same issue. For this reason, many constitutional commentators believe that major referendums should require some form of super-majority – 60 per cent of votes cast is the threshold most commonly suggested.

However, there are arguments that support the legitimacy of the EU referendum. It produced a turnout of 33 million voters, more than any other referendum. It was a very rare example of direct democracy for the whole of the UK. Clearly parliament only exists and MPs only function by and for the will of the people. Key factors endorse its legitimacy: holding it was a feature of the Conservative manifesto. World leaders regard the vote as being decisive, as Mrs May has stressed in meetings with EU leaders. In summary – the government is constitutionally mandated to implement this decisive vote by the people. Proportion of the vote across the UK in the EU Referendum June 2016

	Leave the EU %	Remain in the EU %
England	53.4%	46.6%
Wales	52.5%	47.5%
Scotland	38.0%	62.0%
Northern Ireland	44.2%	55.8%
United Kingdom (overall)	51.9%	48.1%

(Sources: adapted from <https://constitution-unit.com/2016/07/22/the-eu-referendum-and-some-paradoxes-of-democratic-legitimacy/> and <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7639>)

Using the source, evaluate the view that referendums create more problems than solutions.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

SEVEN

Evaluate the view that citizens can no longer feel confident that their rights in the UK are secure and established.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

EIGHT

Evaluate the view that, for the general public, the media is more significant than policy statements and manifestoes from political parties.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

NINE

'The influence of the media is the most important factor that determines the success or failure of a political party.'

How far do you agree with this view of what determines the success or failure of a political party?

In this answer you must refer to at least two political parties and consider the view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

TEN

Evaluate the extent to which the increased use of referendums would improve democracy in the UK.

You must consider this view and the alternative to the view in a balanced way.

(30)

ELEVEN

This source is adapted from a blog by Dr Andrew Defty of the University of Lincoln, entitled 'Press affiliation and the 2015 General Election', posted 19 November 2015.

At the 2015 general election five out of 11 national daily newspapers supported the Conservative Party. Only two supported Labour, The Mirror and the The Guardian, Conservative press share in 2015 was 71% compared to 15% for Labour and 5% for the Liberal Democrats. The overwhelming Conservative domination of the press would seem to reinforce the argument that press support is central to electoral reform.

However, it is hard to know exactly what influence, if any, the press has on voting behaviour. The newspaper one reads does not necessarily define political affiliation. There is clearly some link; polling data from 2015 clearly indicates that the majority of Guardian and Mirror readers vote Labour while the overwhelming majority of Telegraph and Daily Mail readers vote Conservative. However, a small proportion of Guardian readers vote Conservative (6%), and research shows that a large proportion of Labour MPs are avid readers of The Daily Mail, and not always to find out what the Conservative opposition thinks.

The circulation of daily newspapers in the UK is in seemingly terminal decline. Out of a total electorate in May 2015 of around 45 million, the total circulation of national newspapers in the UK was around 7 million, one in six voters. It is hard to attribute significant political influence to newspapers which are read by such a small proportion of the voting public. However, while print sales are in decline this has been at least partly offset by the online presence of Britain's daily newspapers, which has grown significantly in recent years.

Britain has a highly partisan press and in recent years political parties have spent a great deal of energy and money chasing the endorsement of various section of the print media. However, there are significant questions about whether this has a significant or indeed any impact on electoral fortunes.

(Source: whorunsbritain.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/2015/11/19/press-affiliation-and-the-2015-general-election)

Using the source, evaluate the view that the newspaper press does NOT have a major influence on voting behaviour.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative views in a balanced way*
- *use knowledge and understanding to help you to analyse and evaluate*

(30)

Unendorsed

TWELVE

Evaluate the extent to which reforms to the political system have improved the UK's system of representative democracy.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

THIRTEEN

Evaluate the extent to which democratic rights are protected in the British political system.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FOURTEEN

Evaluate the extent to which the Labour Party remains true to its traditional values and principles.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FIFTHTEEN

Evaluate the extent of internal divisions within the current UK political parties.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

SIXTEEN

Liberal democratic governments favour disproportionately the interests of well-funded, well-organised pro-capitalist pressure groups because governments depend for their very survival on the profitability and efficiency of private capitalism, on which in turn levels of employments, living standards and economic growth depend. Furthermore, most pressure groups, apart from trade unions, are joined mainly by relatively affluent middle-class people and most pressure group leaders [who may not be chosen by especially democratic methods] are even more likely to be middle class. It has also been argued that the existence of so many pressure groups persuades people to believe that they have influence when in fact they have very little. From the 1970s theorists influenced by New Right ideology argues in particular that the trade unions had excessive powers which they used to weaken the economy via damaging restrictive practices, inflationary wage demands and strikes, raised unrealistic expectations of increased spending which, when they were not met, served only to undermine confidence in government.

In the theoretical framework of democratic pluralism states are assumed to be neutral arbiters [or impartial referees] evaluating the claims of a vast number of possibly competing pressure groups in accordance with the national interest. Whereas political parties represent the general interests of voters across a range of issues, pressure groups provide for the representation of citizens' views on particular issues relating to their own personal well-being [sectional groups] and/or to their particular causes for concern [promotional or cause groups]. As a result of the resources at their disposal pressure groups can represent individuals more effectively than they could do themselves, a point which may be especially relevant to more disadvantaged individuals such as the poor or the disabled and to minority groupings such as immigrants. It is possible that pressure groups can address controversial issues which political parties might initially seek to avoid and likely also that as new issues reach the political agenda new pressure groups can be formed to address these issues. Pressure groups enable their members and supporters to participate more fully in the political process on a continuing basis between general elections and this is likely to enhance political understanding and thereby to strengthen support for the liberal democratic system as a whole.

(Source: an academic report on pressure group influence)

Using the source, evaluate the view that group activity undermines democracy in the UK.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative views in a balanced way*
- *use knowledge and understanding to help you to analyse and evaluate*

(30)

SEVENTEEN

Conservative manifesto policies, 2015
Make migrants wait four years before they can claim certain benefits
Stop migrants from claiming child benefit from dependents living outside the UK, and remove those that have failed to find work after six months
Eradicate the deficit by 2018 and secure an overall budget surplus by 2019-20
Achieve the above by spending cuts, not tax rises, while raising NHS spending
Extra £2 billion into frontline health services across the UK
In England, everyone would be able to see a GP seven days a week by 2020
An income tax cut for 30 million people by 2020
No increases in VAT
Hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU by 2017
Protect foreign aid budget
Replace Trident
Create 3 million apprenticeships to be paid for by benefit cuts

Labour manifesto policies, 2015
Stronger border controls to tackle illegal immigration with 'proper' entry and exit checks
'Smarter' targets to reduce low-skilled migration but ensure students and high-skilled worker are not deterred
Employment agencies to be stopped from only recruiting abroad: higher fines for employing illegal immigrants
Get the current budget onto surplus and the national debt falling 'as soon as possible in the next Parliament'; no additional borrowing for new spending
An extra £2.5 billion a year above the Conservative plan for the NHS
Patients in England would get a GP appointment within 48 hours and wait no longer than a week for cancer tests and results
Scrap the Health and Social Care Act and end 'creeping privatisation' of the NHS
Reintroduce the 50p top tax rate of income tax for earnings over £150,000
Cut income tax for 24 million people by bringing back the 10p rate, paid for by scrapping the married couples' tax allowance
Bring in a 'mansion tax' on properties worth over "2million to raise £1.2 billion
A tax on bankers' bonuses
Push for reform of the EU and prevent Britain from 'sleepwalking towards exit'
Guarantee a job for under 25s unemployed for over a year and adults unemployed for more than two years
Commit to holding a strategic defence and security review every five years

(SOURCE: the 2015 general election manifestos)

Using the source, evaluate the view that there is little in common between Conservative and Labour Party policies and ideas.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative views in a balanced way*
- *use knowledge and understanding to help you to analyse and evaluate*

(30)

EIGHTEEN

Evaluate how far the use of referendums undermines representative democracy in the UK.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

NINETEEN

Evaluate the extent to which the use of alternative electoral systems has improved democracy in the UK

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

TWENTY

Advantages of FPTP
It's simple to understand
It doesn't cost much to administer
It is fairly quick to count the votes and work out who has won
It enables voters to clearly express a view on which party they think should form the next government
It is ideally suited to a two-party system and generally produces single-party governments, which tend not to have to rely on support from other parties to pass legislation
Some argue that FPTP encourages board-church centralists policies and keeps out extremists

Disadvantages of FPTP
Representatives can get elected with low levels of public support
It encourages tactical voting
It is regarded as wasteful, as votes cast in a constituency for losing candidates, or for the winning candidate above the level they need to win the seat, count for nothing
It can severely restrict voter choice. Parties are not homogenous and do not speak with one unified voice
Rather than allocating seats in line with actual support, FPTP rewards parties with what is often termed 'lumpy' support. Third parties with significant support may be greatly disadvantaged
With relatively small constituency sizes, the way boundaries are drawn can have important effects on the election result
Having small constituencies often leads to a proliferation of safe seats, where the same party is all but guaranteed re-election
If large areas are effectively electoral deserts for a particular party, those areas may be ignored by the party. Ambitious local politicians may have to move away if they aspire to influence within their party

Using the source, evaluate the view that FPTP is no longer suitable for UK general elections.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative views in a balanced way*
- *use knowledge and understanding to help you to analyse and evaluate*

(30)

TWENTY-ONE

Why did the Conservatives lose the 1997 election, especially at a time of economic recovery?
Britain's forced withdrawal from the ERM in 1992 (which, paradoxically, helped recovery)
The government had driven forward unpopular policies, for example, rail privatisation and an increase in VAT.
The government had an air of arrogance and hubris despite issues such as sleaze, cheating on pairing, on fishing quotas (1996), arms to Iraq, IRA prison escapes, BSE, judicial reviews. Ministers were reluctant to take responsibility and resign.
John Major had a minority government by the end of 1996, dependent on Unionists in the Commons.
Manifest and bitter party disunity over Europe
Sniping from the wings by James Goldsmith's Referendum Party and Alan Sked's Independence Party.
Unpopularity of Major when compared to Blair.
Inept campaigning, for example, the 'demon eyes' and weeping lion' posters which were ridiculed.
The Conservative press largely turned against them, especially the <i>Sun</i>
Longest post-war electoral campaign, which backfired.
It was time for a change – a widely held public sentiment

Why did Labour win?
John Smith's death in 1994 allowed creation of a New Labour by the more modernising Tony Blair - notably, abandonment of Clause IV in 1995.
Rapid centralisation of the party, increased focus on the leader, the work of spin-doctors at Millbank election headquarters and a highly polished election campaign.
Abandonment of traditional socialist – or even social democratic - principles and acceptance of market economics, low inflation and interest rates, cuts to taxation, spending and welfare.
Pre-election commitment to maintain existing tax levels for a five-year term and existing spending levels for two years; 'welfare to work'; tough law and order, especially for juvenile offenders.
Difficult for the Conservatives to criticise what were, largely their own policies.
Desire for power, combined with growing party discipline, largely silenced left-wing dissidents.
Internal reforms, for example, some reduction in trade union power; introduction of one member one vote.
Europe was not an obviously contentious issue as it was for the Tories.
Introduced new, radical proposals for constitutional reform.

Using the source, evaluate the view that governments lose elections rather than the opposition winning them.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative views in a balanced way*
- *use knowledge and understanding to help you to analyse and evaluate*

(30)

TWENTY-TWO

Evaluate how far class voting remains the most important factor in determining the results of general elections in the UK. You should refer to at least three general elections, one pre-1997 that of 1997 and on post-1997.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

TWENTY-THREE

Evaluate the extent to which voting behaviour had changes in the UK. You should refer to at least three general elections, one pre-1997 that of 1997 and on post-1997.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

Component 2 – UK Government

Edexcel endorsed

TWENTY-FOUR

This source contains adapted extracts from a Political and Constitutional Reform Committee report called 'Do we need a constitutional convention for the UK?' and adapted data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The report considered the implications of devolution on the UK, and in particular on England, while the data relates to the number of representatives in each part of the UK.

- Many witnesses stated that a key issue with a UK-wide constitutional convention was that the people of England, outside of London, are governed by Westminster, with little authority to propose local solutions that benefit their own communities.
- Some argued that regional government was rejected because the English do not want devolution. However, evidence suggested that the failure of regional government was less because the English do not want devolution but in part because the Government of the day had imposed an arbitrary regional structure, with few or no law-making powers. There is clearly still disagreement on what form devolution would take.
- Dr Robin Wilson, an academic, suggested that an English Parliament would still not solve the tensions caused by the asymmetrical nature of devolution:
- I don't think you can solve the English question without regional devolution. If you had an English Parliament it would hugely dominate UK governance, and that doesn't seem to me to be a feasible prospect. However, he added that it may be possible to find a model that allowed English local authorities to devolve a range of powers, or not, according to local wishes:
- It is our view that allowing councils to choose, or not choose, devolved powers from a menu of options agreed between Councils in England and Government, would be the preferred option for English devolution.

Part of UK	Electors	MPs	Devolved	Total Representatives	Population per Rep (total inc MPs + devolved)
England	37,399,9000	533	25 (London Assembly)	558	67,025
Wales	2,181,800	40	60	100	21,818
Scotland	3,896,900	59	129	188	20,729
Northern Ireland	1,243,400	18	108	126	9,799

(Source: from www.publications.parliament.uk and www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/elections/electoralregistration/bulletins/electoralstatisticsforuk/2015 – both used under Open Parliament Licence v3.0)

Using the source, evaluate the view that the logical next step after devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is the devolution of further power to England.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative view in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

TWENTY-FIVE

This source contains adapted extracts from a report by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee called 'The UK Constitution: a summary, with options for reforms'. The report considered a variety of options for future constitutional reform. Also included is a critical commentary on the report, which is an expert viewpoint on the effectiveness of the report.

CHAIR'S FOREWORD - The Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee of the House of Commons, has spent the 2010-2015 Parliament looking at the path to possible codification of the United Kingdom's constitution.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS - Possible alternative 1: The Second Chamber shall be subordinate to the First Chamber. It shall have [500] voting members, directly elected to represent in proportion the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. Members shall be elected for a period of [fifteen] years and [shall/shall not] be re-elected.

DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT OF THE NATIONS, REGIONS AND LOCALITIES - Possible alternative: The United Kingdom shall operate on the joint basis of union and devolution. Devolution in England shall be to independent local government, which shall be assigned a proportion of national income tax.

THE JUDICIARY - Possible alternative: The judiciary shall have the power to strike down laws that are inconsistent with the Constitution.

BILL OF RIGHTS

Possible alternatives

- 1: There shall be a Bill of Rights which sets out the rights to be protected and enforced within the United Kingdom.
- 2: The following rights shall be available to all persons within the United Kingdom. These rights may not be enforced by the courts, but instead shall be principles to guide the work of the Governments and Parliaments of the United Kingdom and of the devolved assemblies.

Critical commentary

The report focuses on options for change without giving sufficient weight to the arguments that significant reform has already been completed, providing a balance between change and continuity. For example, the Human Rights Act allows for a declaration of incompatibility without harming parliamentary sovereignty, whilst the reformed House of Lords retains its traditional non-elected role but with a substantially reduced hereditary element. To argue that more should be done, simply because it could be, fails to respect this appropriate balance.

(Source: taken from www.publications.parliament.uk – used under Open Parliament Licence v3.0 and critical commentary adapted by Adam Killeya)

Using the source, evaluate the view that Constitutional reforms in the UK since 1997 have been weak, incomplete and require further change.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative view in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

TWENTY-SIX

Evaluate how far Parliament retains sole sovereignty within the UK political system.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

TWENTY-SEVEN

Evaluate the extent to which the UK government's control over Parliament has reduced in recent years.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

TWENTY-EIGHT

This source is adapted from an article 'It's good theatre, but what's the point?' in the Guardian newspaper which examines the pros and cons of prime minister's questions (PMQs). The source considers the arguments for and against PMQs.

Nick Clegg told BBC Radio 5 Live that prime minister's questions (PMQs) were '... ridiculous and should be scrapped. They are an absolute farce.' PMQs began life in 1961 as two weekly 15-minute sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, before Tony Blair replaced them with one 30-minute session on a Wednesday in 1997. This provides the scrutiny which is an essential part of democracy. The main exchange between Corbyn and May lasts 10 minutes or so, as the leader of the opposition only gets to ask six questions.

Even those 10 minutes are rarely enlightening, as the art of PMQs is to avoid embarrassment. Frequently, this means answering a completely different question from the one asked, or providing some accomplished waffle. Getting straight answers is almost impossible. More effective scrutiny would arise from greater reliance on select committees, the liaison committee, Westminster Hall debates and the greater use of parliamentary petitions

PMQs could be improved. Banning backbenchers from shouting out would be a start. Individually, MPs all say that the heckling is a bad thing, but put them in the House of Commons together and they don't seem to be able to help themselves. Bizarrely, having the TV cameras in the Commons only encourages them to behave worse: so much for the surveillance society.

Yet even in its current, deeply flawed format, PMQs are worth preserving. PMQs ensure that the prime minister of the day has some command of all areas of policy and is held accountable, at least partially, for them. There is nothing any prime minister would like more than to get rid of PMQs. Even the most accomplished performers have dreaded them; that alone should be reason enough for them to be retained. Without them, we lose a fragment of our parliamentary democracy which makes us so distinct from other democracies.

(Source: adapted from John Crace, The Guardian, 19 Jan 2015 at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/shortcuts/2015/jan/19/are-primeministers-questions-past-sell-by-date-as-nick-clegg-argues>)

Using the source, evaluate the view that Prime Ministers Questions should be abolished and replaced by other forms of parliamentary scrutiny of the executive.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

TWENTY-NINE

These sources are adapted from newspaper articles following the High Court decision that the executive does not have the power to trigger Article 50 (the process of leaving the European Union) without the agreement of Parliament.

The press, MPs and public have every right to criticise the judges. This judicial decision is wrong. This country is governed by the rule of law which is not the same as the rule of judges; the judiciary interprets the law passed by Parliament, which is sovereign.

No one is challenging the independence of judges, but they made the wrong judgement in this particular case, since the government was within its rights to use the Royal Prerogative.

In recent years, the advance of 'judicial activism' has made rulings against ministers commonplace. If it is fine for the courts to reject unlawful executive action, criticising ministers, they cannot expect to be immune from criticism themselves.

The decision to leave was made by voters in a referendum following an Act of Parliament. It is therefore for the Government to fulfil their wishes. This is upholding parliamentary sovereignty and it is not appropriate for judges to interfere.

(Source: adapted from 'Judges should have stayed out of the Brexit process. It's up to the Supreme Court to fix their mistake.' Telegraph View. 6 November 2016 • 10:00pm)

The criticisms of judges in this case are wrong and dangerous and an attempt to influence their judicial independence through public pressure.

After the referendum the Brexiteers talked about using the Royal Prerogative, an ancient right that kings and queens once used to by-pass Parliament.

Even Michael Gove, a leading Brexiteer, agreed that it was a good thing for Gina Miller to contest in the High Court the constitutional pillar of parliamentary sovereignty. She claimed only Parliament could take away rights that Parliament had itself granted in the 1972 Act that took Britain into what is now the EU. The Supreme Court agreed.

Politicians and the media should support judges when they uphold the rule of law which is an essential part of our unwritten constitution. This judgement also demonstrates the principle of judicial independence, which is another important restraint on arbitrary government.

(Source: adapted from Yes-Brexit-not-mob-rule-GINA-MILLER-triggered-article-50-challenge-says-democracy-respected-legal-certainty, by Gina Miller For The Mail On Sunday, published 4 December 2016)

Using the source, evaluate the view that judges should not exercise control over the power of government

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

THIRTY

Evaluate the argument that there are more advantages to having a codified constitution than remaining with an uncodified constitution.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK politics and core political ideas. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

THIRTY-ONE

Evaluate the view that the conventions of ministerial responsibility no longer adequately account for the actions of ministers.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK politics and core political ideas. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

THIRTY-TWO

This source contains extracts from a briefing document entitled 'Parliamentary Scrutiny of Government', published in 2015 by the Institute of Government. This is an independent research body concerned with the way in which government works.

Parliament has long played a central role in our system of government as the forum in which government must explain itself and be held to account. The two House of Parliament fulfil their scrutiny role through three key mechanisms: debate, questions and committees ... politicians have real opportunities to influence the government's agenda. However, the fact that parliamentary scrutiny is undertaken by politicians means that it is shaped by many compromise the effectiveness of scrutiny. For example, a backbench government-party MP might treat a minister gently in a select committee hearing or ask a helpful question at Prime Minister's Questions in order to enhance their own career prospects. More seriously, they might ask a question to serve outside interests for personal gain ...

The MPs who undertake scrutiny do so in their capacity as the democratically elected representatives of the taxpayer and citizen. An awareness of this contributes legitimacy and importance to the process. Parliamentary scrutiny is bolstered by certain powers (including the power to send for 'persons, papers and records', which facilitates the gathering of evidence) available by virtue of parliament's role within the constitution (as a check on the executive) ...

Parliamentary scrutiny involves an accountability relationship: parliament can 'require' a explanation from ministers of their performance, decisions and actions in relation to the expenditure, administration o policy of government ... however, the enforceability o the 'right to ask questions', which is generally understood as a key power of parliamentary committees, is uncertain in practice.

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Parliamentary%20scrutiny%20briefing%20note%20final.pdf> [pp. 15-16]

Using the source, evaluate the view that parliament is effective in carrying out its work of scrutinising the Government.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

THIRTY-THREE

Evaluate the extent to which the balance of power has shifted from the executive to parliament in recent years.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

Unendorsed

THIRTY-FOUR

If the UK constitution were codified, it would create a better understanding of the laws and bodies that govern the country and the people in it. The confusion created by having many different sources would be simplified and made much easier for ordinary people to understand. Such a codified constitution would ensure rights and protections are entrenched, unlike the current system which allows governments to make constitutional reforms to suit them rather than the national interest. The process of creating a codified constitution could well engage and enthuse the public, just as the issues over Scottish independence and Brexit have done, boosting popular engagement and interest as well as bringing the UK into line with nearly all other modern democracies.

However, there is little popular desire for major constitutional change and the flexibility of modern constitution has allowed the UK to modernise its systems much more easily than other entrenched systems. The simple fact that British democracy continues to work without major constitutional crisis show the strength of the system and that there is no need to fix it. Furthermore, it is more democratic, allowing an elected body to adapt to public ideas and get things done without being restrained by an over-powerful and unaccountable judiciary. This makes the UK constitution something unique and for which many are proud. The case against a written constitution is that it is unnecessary, undesirable and un-British.

Using the source, evaluate the view that the UK needs a codified constitution.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

THIRTY-FIVE

Evaluate how far constitutional reforms since 1997 have undermined the power of Parliament.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

THIRTY-SIX

Do we want representatives or delegates? Elections may hold figures accountable, but it means they are subject to popular whims, reacting to the latest opinion polls, Twitter tsunamis and even voters. Society is sometimes better served by people taking a more measured, long-term view of the issues acting in the national interest rather than party interest. It also means the whips have less power over the Lords, meaning they vote with conviction rather than toeing the party line, as demonstrated by the defeat of the government's cuts to tax credits. More than anything, we need to determine the purpose of a second chamber, before deciding who should sit in it.

(Source: adapted from an article defining the House of Lords)

Is the House of Lords value for money? Certainly not: the huge cost incurred by housing and staffing chamber of 800 is ridiculous and an unnecessary cost to the taxpayer. While there may be some hard-working peers. Many just take their payment and leave. Few of the 800 do much of anything, while the sight of Lord Lloyd-Webber flying in from his New York home simply to vote to cut tax credits undermines every sensible notion of democracy. Some Lords do not even pay tax in the UK while others are convicted criminals, who would be barred from sitting in the Commons! With 34% of peers being from MPs and political staff, the impression is that the Lords is a well-funded retirement home for the political establishment. This is not what democracy looks like.

(Source: adapted from an article attacking the House of Lords)

Using the sources, evaluate the view that the House of Lords is in need of major reform.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

THIRTY-SEVEN

Evaluate the extent to which Parliament remains sovereign.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

THIRTY-EIGHT

Evaluate how far reforms since 1997 have made Parliament a more democratic institution.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

THIRTY-NINE

In bringing her case against the government, Ms Miller claimed that ‘no prime minister can expect to be unanswerable’, a view upheld by the Supreme Court, which has ruled that Parliament, not the PM, must take responsibility for triggering Article 50. Ms Miller said: ‘Only parliament can grant rights to the British people and only Parliament can take them away. No prime minister., no government can expect to be unanswerable or unchallenged. Parliament alone is sovereign. My motivation was upholding our constitutional law and ensuring that a government can’t put themselves above the law. I’m sure that everyone would agree it is only right that Parliament now votes’.

(Source: adapted from a report over the Miller case, 2017)

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010) states that: ‘The minister of the civil service has the power to manage the civil service.’ This is just one of the many legally recognised powers held by the PM and recognised by statute laws. However, the most prominent powers of a PM are the they hold from the monarch and there is no statutory law or regulation of these powers. In essence, when it comes to powers under the royal prerogative, the PM can essentially do as they please.

(Source: adapted from an account of the PM’s powers)

Using the sources, evaluate the view that prime ministers have become too powerful in recent years.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

FORTY

Evaluate the extent to which the executive has become less powerful in relation to Parliament.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FORTY-ONE

Evaluate how far the power of the executive has been undermined by constitutional reforms since 1997.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FORTY-TWO

‘The European Court of Human Rights exceeds its legitimate powers, usurps the role of politicians and undermines the democratic process.’

‘The Strasbourg court...has become the international flag-bearer for judge-made fundamental law extending well beyond the text which it is changed with applying. It has over many years declared itself entitled to treat the [European Convention on Human Rights] as what it calls a “living instrument”.’

The right to a private life, a right originally ‘devised as a protection against the surveillance state by totalitarian governments’ now extends ‘to cover the legal status of illegitimate children, immigration and deportation, extradition, aspects of criminal sentencing, abortion, homosexuality, assisted suicide, child abduction, the law of landlord and tenant, and a great deal else besides.’

(Source: adapted from a public speech by the Supreme Court Justice Lord Sumption)

One of the European Conventions on Human Rights’ early architects was that most British politicians, Winston Churchill, so to say it is ‘un-British’ is a nonsense. To replace the Human Rights Act with a British bill of rights would serve no purpose other than to remove the scrutiny of the European Court of Human Rights, leaving UK citizens to the mercy of the UK government that judges have little power over. It was the European courts that allowed the Sunday Times to report thalidomide scandal: the European courts that overruled a UK court’s defence of a step-father who was regularly beating a child: the European Court who struck down Northern Ireland’s criminalisation of homosexuality in 1981: the European courts that ended the British government’s effective use of torture against IRA members in the 1970s. Without the European courts, who knows how many abuses may have been ignored? As Bella Sankey, policy director for Liberty, has said: Britain founded [the Convention], it is the most successful system for the enforcement of human rights in the history of the worlds, and every day it helps bring freedom, justice and the rule of law to 820 million people.’

(Source: adapted from an article about the role of the ECHR)

Using the sources, evaluate the view that the European Court of Human Rights undermines democracy in the UK.

In your response you must:

- *compare and contrast the different opinions in the source*
- *examine and debate these views in a balanced way*
- *analyse and evaluate only the information presented in the source.*

(30)

FORTY-THREE

Evaluate how far the judiciary is the right body to protect civil liberties.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

FORTY-FOUR

Evaluate the extent to which the EU has impacted UK institutions.

In your answer you should draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of the study of Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas and consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

(30)

Component 1 – Core Political Ideas

Edexcel endorsed

FORTY-FIVE

To what extent do modern and classical liberals agree over the role of the state?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.

(24)

FORTY-SIX

To what extent are different socialists committed to ‘equality of outcome’?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.

(24)

FORTY-SEVEN

To what extent are the views of One Nation conservatives on the economy consistent with those of the New Right?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way.

(24)

FORTY-EIGHT

To what extent do conservatives have a common view of human nature?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FORTY-NINE

To what extent do different conservatives agree on the importance of paternalism?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY

To what extent is there agreement between classical and modern liberals?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-ONE

To what extent do different socialists agree over the role of the state?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

Unendorsed

FIFTY-TWO

To what extent have modern liberals abandoned individualism and embraced collectivism?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-THREE

To what extent does modern liberalism depart from the ideas of classical liberalism?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-FOUR

To what extent are conservatives pragmatic?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-FIVE

To what extent do conservatives differ over the role of the state?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-SIX

To what extent do socialists agree on both the means and ends of socialism?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-SEVEN

To what extent are socialists committed to the abolition of capitalism?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-EIGHT

To what extent do modern and classical liberals agree over the nature of the state?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider any differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

FIFTY-NINE

To what extent can liberalism be reconciled with collectivism?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider any differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

SIXTY

To what extent is conservatism a philosophy of imperfection?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider any differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

SIXTY-ONE

To what extent is conservatism coherent ideology?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider any differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

SIXTY-TWO

To what extent are socialists committed to equality of outcome?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider any differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

SIXTY-THREE

‘Socialists have disagreed over means rather than ends.’ To what extent is this true?

You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider any differing views in a balanced way.

(24)

Component 2 – Non-core Political Ideas

1. To what extent does Nationalism look to the past and not to the future?
2. To what extent have nationalists defended the nation-state?
3. To what extent is Nationalism a recipe for peace and international order?
4. To what extent have the nation and the state become confused?
5. To what extent is nationalism a backward-looking ideology?
6. To what extent is Nationalism inherently expansionist and aggressive?
7. To what extent have nation and race become confused?

Component 3 – Comparative Politics – Governing the USA

These are non-endorsed Edexcel Questions

Constitution

1. Evaluate the extent to which the Constitution protects state power.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the Constitution protects the rights of the individual.
3. Evaluate the extent to which the Constitution enhances democracy in USA.
4. Evaluate the extent to which the US Constitution is inflexible.
5. Evaluate the extent to which the USA operates within a constitutional framework of federalism.
6. Evaluate the extent to which the three branches of government have failed to protect constitutional rights in recent years.
7. Evaluate the extent to which the US constitution is anti-democratic.

Congress

1. Evaluate the extent to which Congressional oversight of the President is ineffective.
2. Evaluate the extent to which Congress is a representative institution.
3. Evaluate the extent to which Congress can be said to be a ‘hyper-partisan’ institution
8. Evaluate the extent to which the Supreme Court is now an ‘imperial judiciary’.
9. Evaluate the extent to which racial equality has been advanced in the 21st century.
10. Evaluate the extent to which Congress carries out its functions effectively.
11. Evaluate the extent to which Congress become the weakest of the three branches of government?
12. Evaluate the extent to which Congress is significantly less effective when different parties control its two chambers.

US Presidency

1. Evaluate the extent to which presidential power has become increasingly constrained.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the ‘the power to persuade’ is the president’s most important power.
3. Evaluate the extent to which the President cannot always have the foreign policy he wants.

The Supreme Court and Civil Rights

1. Evaluate the extent to which the Supreme Court has become too powerful.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the Supreme Court a political rather than a judicial institution.
3. Evaluate the extent to which political measures to promote racial equality are doomed to failure.

4. Evaluate the extent to which the Supreme Court can be said to have advanced conservative values since 2005

Democracy and participation

1. Evaluate the extent to which pressure groups have taken over the key functions of US political parties.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the Democratic Party remains a party of the centre.
3. Evaluate the extent to which US elections, particularly congressional elections, fail to make politicians truly accountable to voters.
4. Evaluate the extent to which candidate personality, rather than campaign finance or policies has become the deciding factor in the outcome of recent presidential elections.
5. Evaluate the extent to which the major parties adequately represents minority voters.
6. Evaluate the extent to which influencing Congress the most successful route for pressure groups?
7. Evaluate the extent to which the Electoral College is fit for purpose.
8. Evaluate the extent to which the two major parties have an overlap in ideas and policies.
9. Evaluate the extent to which The Republicans are now a more divided party than the Democrats.
10. Evaluate the extent to which local factors are more important than national factors in congressional midterm elections

