

Threshold Guidance

January 2012

GCE Government & Politics

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Introduction

Following initial testing on two papers in Summer 2011, threshold guidance was provided to all examiners on Unit 1, 2 and 3 papers in January 2012 and it is likely this approach will be used for Unit 4 papers also in Summer 2012.

The aim is to increase the reliability of marking and the effect has been to see significant increases in mean marks and some changes in standard deviations.

The descriptors set out below outline common features of threshold level 2 and 3 performance for each question. They do not attempt to describe all the ways in which these levels can be achieved.

These specific descriptors should be considered in the light of the generic levels descriptors and the indicative content for each question.

While levels descriptors remain broadly unchanged from one examination series to another, threshold descriptors will vary according to the different questions set.

**Threshold Guidance
6GP01**

Question	Level	Threshold performance
Q1b	L2	We require a minimum of two points clearly explained to attain level 2.
	L3	We require a minimum of three points clearly explained to attain level 3.
Q1c	L2	At level 2 the points will not be as clearly explained and the examples may be sparse or the response may be good but essentially one sided.
	L3	At level 3 expect to see a range of points clearly explained and illustrated with a degree of balance.
Q2b	L2	We require a minimum of two points clearly explained to attain level 2.
	L3	We require a minimum of three points clearly explained to attain level 3.
Q2c	L2	At level 2 the points will not be as clearly explained or the response may be good but essentially one sided or focused exclusively on one party.
	L3	At level 3 expect to see a range of issues covering both parties with points clearly explained and illustrated with a degree of balance.
Q3b	L2	We require a minimum of two points clearly explained to attain level 2.
	L3	We require a minimum of three points clearly explained to attain level 3.
Q3c	L2	At level 2 the points will not be as clearly explained and the examples may be sparse or the response may be good but essentially one sided.
	L3	At level 3 expect to see a range of points clearly explained and illustrated with a degree of balance.
Q4b	L2	We require a minimum of two points clearly explained to attain level 2.
	L3	We require a minimum of three points clearly explained to attain level 3.
Q4c	L2	At level 2 the points will not be as clearly explained and the examples may be sparse or the points may be limited in range.
	L3	At level 3 expect to see a range of points clearly explained and illustrated. The need for balance and making out a case against retaining first past the post is not required.

**Threshold Guidance
6GP02**

Question	Level	Threshold performance
Q1b	L2	We require a minimum of two points clearly explained to attain level 2.
	L3	We require a minimum of three points clearly explained to attain level 3.
Q1c	L2	We require at least two examples of evidence on either side to enter level 2
	L3	We require at least two examples of evidence on one side of the argument and at least one on the other, i.e. a total of three points to enter level 3.
Q2b	L2	We require a minimum of two points with at least one of them well explained to attain level 2.
	L3	We require a minimum of three points well explained to attain level 3
Q2c	L2	We require at least two examples of the argument on either side to enter level 2
	L3	We require at least two examples of evidence on one side of the argument and at least one on the other, i.e. a total of three points to enter level 3.
Q3	L2	We require at least two examples of constitutional reform with some discussion to enter level 2.
	L3	We require at least three examples of constitutional reform, provided they are well explored, to enter level 3. We also require good balance concerning the extent of impacts on government power to enter level 3.
Q4	L2	We require at least two examples of prime ministerial powers with some discussion to enter level 2.
	L3	We require at least three examples of prime ministerial powers, provided they are well explored, to enter level 3. We also require good balance between knowledge of powers and limitations to enter level 3.

Threshold Guidance
6GP03 3A

Question	Level	Threshold performance
Q1	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely focused on one division over the issue of higher education funding • A limited understanding of recent conflict over this issue
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of at least 3 reasons for divisions over the issue • An awareness of divisions within the coalition over this issue
Q2	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to address either how OR why • Largely focused on one issue e.g. Universal Credit or child benefit
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of at least 2 policies (how) and 2 reasons (why) • Attempts to link the how and the why together i.e. why a specific reform has been proposed
Q3	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely focused on one reason why reforming the banking system is problematic • Limited knowledge of the proposed or actual reforms and their associated difficulties
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of at least 3 reasons why reforming the banking system is difficult • An awareness of attempts to reform the banking system in recent years
Q4	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely focused on one side of the argument and so lacking balance • Limited knowledge of green taxes that have been implemented/proposed
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of at least 3 reasons for/against green taxes • An awareness of implemented/proposed green taxes
Q5	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely focused on one reason for controversy over policing • Limited knowledge of the coalition government's reforms/proposals on policing
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of at least 3 reasons why the coalition government's policies on policing have been controversial • An awareness of the coalition government's reforms/proposals on policing

Q6	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely one-sided, most likely agreeing with the premise • Heavily reliant on arguments for or against from just one source (e.g. political party/pressure group/newspaper etc) • Limited or no reference to divisions within the coalition over how to tackle the deficit, thus limiting AO2 and synopticity in particular
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts balance with a good evaluative conclusion in answer to the question • At least 3 specific policies should be referenced and evaluated to reach level 3 on AO1 and AO2. • Direct comparison of different viewpoints on policies to reach level 3 on synopticity
Q7	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely one-sided in the arguments presented and/or the government discussed • Heavily reliant on arguments for or against from just one source (e.g. political party/pressure group/newspaper etc) • Limited or no direct comparison of the impact of different policies, thus limiting AO2 and synopticity in particular
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts balance with a good evaluative conclusion in answer to the question • At least 3 specific policies-including references to the coalition government- should be referenced and evaluated to reach level 3 on AO1 and AO2. • Direct comparison of different viewpoints on policies to reach level 3 on synopticity
Q8	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely one-sided, may be quite historical in its approach • Heavily reliant on arguments for and/or against from one source (e.g. political party/pressure group/newspaper etc) • Limited or no direct comparison of different political party/governments ideologies and policies, thus limiting AO2 and synopticity in particular
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts balance with a good evaluative conclusion in answer to the question • At least 3 specific policies-including references to the coalition government- should be referenced and evaluated to reach level 3 on AO1 and AO2. • Direct comparison of different viewpoints on policies to reach level 3 on synopticity

Threshold Guidance
6GP03 3B

Question	Level	Threshold performance
Q1	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate, if probably implicit, awareness of the nature of authority • Limited knowledge of at least one conservative argument in favour of authority
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, and possibly explicit, understanding of the nature of authority • Sound explanation of at least two conservative arguments in favour of authority
Q2	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge of at least one aspect of the socialist view of human nature • Some awareness of why this aspect of human nature is 'positive'.
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear understanding of at least two aspects of the socialist view of human nature • Sound explanation of why these aspects can be considered 'positive'
Q3	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some awareness of both the anarchist and Marxist views of the state • Limited, but explicit, knowledge of at least one way in which the anarchist view of the state differs from the Marxist view
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear understanding of both the anarchist and Marxist views of the state • Sound explanation of at least two ways in which the anarchist view of the state differs from the Marxist view
Q4	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge of the liberal view of equality • Accurate awareness of at least one way in which socialists would criticise the liberal view of equality
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear understanding of at least two features of the liberal view of equality • Sound explanation of at least two socialist criticisms of the liberal view of equality
Q5	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate, if probably implicit, awareness of the nature of rationalism • Some awareness of the link between liberalism and rationalism • Limited knowledge of at least one implication of the liberal belief in rationalism
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, and probably explicit, understanding of rationalism • Sound knowledge of the link between liberalism and rationalism • Sound explanation of at least two implications of the liberal belief in rationalism

Q6	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge of New Right ideas and beliefs • Limited but accurate awareness of differences within the New Right between neoliberal and neoconservative beliefs
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound and comprehensive understanding of New Right ideas and beliefs • Clear explanation of the tensions between neoliberalism and neoconservatism • Some ability to evaluate the extent of these tensions by also showing why the New Right may be coherent
Q7	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate, if implicit, awareness of the nature of individualism and collectivism • Limited knowledge of differences between classical liberalism and modern liberalism
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, and probably explicit, understanding of the nature of individualism and collectivism • Sound and comprehensive explanation of differences between classical and modern liberalism • Some ability to evaluate the extent of these differences by also discussing similarities between classical and modern liberalism
Q8	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate awareness of anarchist ideas and theories • Limited knowledge of how anarchist disagree over the nature of the future anarchist society
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound and comprehensive explanation of the tensions within anarchism over the nature of the future anarchist society • Some ability to evaluate the extent of these tensions by also discussing areas of agreement within anarchism

Threshold Guidance
6GP03 3C

Question	Level	Threshold performance
Q1	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates need a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in their handling of the material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.
Q2	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need a simple and partially accurate definition, and two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates need a full and mostly accurate definition, and a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.
Q3	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation and show some understanding of what caucuses are.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates need a fairly precise understanding of how caucuses work, a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.
Q4	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation which need not name individual groups.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates need a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points) based securely on a knowledge of specific groups, a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points and a logical structure.
Q5	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need a simple and partially accurate definition, and two points with fairly simple and/or superficial explanation.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates need a full and mostly accurate definition, and a range of points (typically at least three/four well developed distinct points), a sense of competence and control in handling of material, developed use of contemporary/recent examples to support most points, some degree of balance and a logical structure.

Q6	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need a couple of undeveloped points on each side of the argument, or one more developed point, with some simple explanation; points need only be partially accurate; the argument may not be consistently clear, and some points made may not be relevant to the question.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates typically need at least three reasonably developed points on both sides of argument; the answer conveys a sense of competence and control in both explanations and direction of argument; expression is mostly precise, and relevant contemporary examples are fairly consistently used to develop and qualify points; the argument keeps the question firmly in focus and has a convincing conclusion.
Q7	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need a couple of undeveloped points on each side of the argument, or one more developed point, with some simple explanation; points need only be partially accurate; the argument may not be consistently clear, and some points made may not be relevant to the question.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates typically need at least three reasonably developed points on both sides of argument; the answer conveys a sense of competence and control in both explanations and direction of argument; expression is mostly precise, and relevant contemporary examples are fairly consistently used to develop and qualify points; the argument keeps the question firmly in focus and has a convincing conclusion.
Q8	L2	To attain level 2, candidates typically need a couple of undeveloped points on each side of the argument, or one more developed point, with some simple explanation; points need only be partially accurate; the argument may not be consistently clear, and some points made may not be relevant to the question.
	L3	To attain level 3, candidates typically need at least three reasonably developed points on both sides of argument; the answer conveys a sense of competence and control in both explanations and direction of argument; expression is mostly precise, and relevant contemporary examples are fairly consistently used to develop and qualify points; the argument keeps the question firmly in focus and has a convincing conclusion.

Threshold Guidance
6GP03 3D

Question	Level	Threshold performance
Q1	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate, if possibly implicit, awareness of the nature of realism • Narrow or limited explanation of realist theory relating to war
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of a range of reasons why realists believe there is a tendency to war • Awareness of a number of realist thinkers and explanation of their views. • Sound explanation of 'why' realists believe there is a tendency to war with examples
Q2	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some attempt at a wide definition • Awareness of the main functions of economic regionalism and bodies. Awareness of the main functions of political bodies. • At least one clear example of both economic and political regionalism.
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear definition of the term • Clear, and probably explicit, explanation of the differences between economic and political regionalism. • Clear use of a range of examples of both economic and political regionalism from a number of regional bodies
Q3	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of the original purpose of NATO • Recognition of the need to develop a new role with the end of the Cold War • Some knowledge of operations since the end of the Cold War
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate and full explanation of the original purpose of NATO • Knowledge of a range of new roles since the end of the Cold War with examples. • Wide knowledge of operations and developments since the end of the Cold War
Q4	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of Hard and Soft Power • At least one clear example of hard power and soft power used to illustrate difference between the two.
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full and accurate explanations of both Hard and Soft Power. • A number of accurate examples to fully explain and illustrate the differences between the two.
Q5	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition which makes clear the devolution from centre to lower levels • An understanding that, within the EU, it helps to defend sovereignty.

	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition which explains that devolution of decision making takes place with decisions at the lowest appropriate level. • Use of examples to illustrate and explain the defence of sovereignty and modification of the trend towards federalism and supranationalism.
Q6	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of sovereignty explaining some of the main elements of the term. • Some factors undermining sovereignty with a few examples • Some factors providing a counter argument to the assertion in the title with a few examples.
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of sovereignty explaining the wider implications of the term for the state and for the wider community of states. • A wide range of factors suggesting that sovereignty is outdated, well explained and with clear examples • A wide range of counter arguments suggesting that sovereignty isn't outdated, well explained and with clear examples
Q7	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and explanation of the rise of emerging powers • Some explanation of signs of a shift in the world order • Some counter arguments that no or only slight shift has taken place
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed awareness and explanation of the rise of emerging powers • Fuller explanation of the possible consequences for polarity and the international community. • Fuller counter argument that there is no or only slight shift in power and consequences for the international community.
Q8	L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of a changing level of success/ failure of the UN based on a number of factors such as changed polarity in the international system, complexity of individual operations and inadequate resources or ill-defined missions. • A few examples in support.
	L3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fuller explanation of the factors behind success or failure of United Nations peacekeeping, including recognition of changed circumstances and polarity. • A wide collection of examples to support a developed argument.

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