



Pearson

Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Government & Politics (6GP01)
Paper 1: People and Politics



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Publications Code 6GP01_01_1806_ER

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Principal Examiner Report 2018 Series 6GPO1

Summer 2018 sees one of the penultimate appearance for this 'legacy' AS paper as the new specification at AS which began this summer with the new A level having its first examination in summer 2019.

Again Assistant Examiners commented that they saw many candidates who had done extensive preparation and displayed considerable insight into UK Politics – at the same time there were candidates who made some common mistakes which could have been avoid

1a

This was answered really well and was probably the best answered part (a) out of all the questions. Many responses either used BMA or CBI as an example for insider groups and Fathers for Justice was also very popular as an example of outsider groups that uses direct action. A lot of responses combined two differences into one and this prevented them from gaining full marks, e.g., insider groups have close contact with the government and use lobbying to influence them whereas outsider groups don't have direct contact with the government and use direct action to influence them. All too often weaker responses failed to provide an example as demanded by the question.

1b

This question was generally well answered with most candidates electing to discuss three ways pressure groups improve the democratic process these often being education, participation, representation, and the scrutiny of government. Most candidates also gave supporting examples, and the number and quality of these was a key factor in how well they performed within level 3.

1c

Most candidates made at least some attempt to address membership specifically, and stronger responses addressed the limitations of large membership as well as the benefits – often linking the latter to fundraising, voting power, and the ability to organise more effective protests. However, a number of candidates overly relied on standard 'success factor' essays with insufficient attention given to the specific question, and these generally achieved L2 marks. The strongest responses tied other factors back to membership, for example observing that higher membership might lead to greater media coverage, but that the reverse can also be true.

2a

This question was not always answered well. A significant number of candidates struggled to find two ways linked to participation, with some verging into other functions of parties like representation. A small number of candidates did not focus on parties but covered the role of MPs or government instead. However, many were able to find two separate ways.

2b

This question was not answered well which is odd, given the number of times it has appeared in examination papers. There were a higher number than usual that left this blank. Many confused consensus/adversary with coalition or adversarial politics, and some thought it was based on a single policy or to do with agreement or disagreement within a political party. However, those that understood the term were able to support with examples most commonly drawn from the post-war consensus and Thatcher/Foot in the 1980s. The very best examples drew on a number of examples and were able to develop the definitions beyond simply agreement or disagreement over a range of policy areas.

2c

For the candidates that chose this question, this was the essay question that showed the greatest range in the quality of responses. Most candidates had a reasonable to good level of knowledge of Corbyn's political views and policies, especially within the context of Old Labour. The knowledge of New Labour was not always linked to the current Labour Party, and this meant that some candidates lost marks. However, a number of candidates achieved full or close to full marks due to their contemporary and historical knowledge and ability to balance the two.

3a

In overview this question was not answered very well and many students seemed not to be familiar with this aspect of the topic. Many answers simply write about the role of parties rather than about the concept of **party system**. As a result there were some who achieved no marks at all. Even those who understood the concept did not develop their answer by considering the occurrence of two, two and a half or multi party systems in the U.K. and so did not obtain high marks. Maximum marks were given rarely because of this.

3b

Most candidates understood the term 'mandate', although a few confused the term with a manifesto or a majority. The majority of answers referred to consent which was achieved through winning an election and the authority to carry out manifesto pledges. The best answers considered alternative mandates such as those achieved through a parliamentary vote or referendum, or highlighted how the strength of the mandate was tied to the size of the majority or turnout. A few candidates referred to the Salisbury Convention or the 'Doctor's Mandate'. A good number linked this to the questionable mandate given to the Conservatives after the last general election.

3c

This is a familiar question and very straightforward for student to gain high marks. Many did so as they were knowledgeable about the range of strengths and weaknesses of each electoral system, especially first past the post. The question invited 'write out my notes' style answers. Also very few students made mistakes by mixing up the different systems unlike previous years. Those who achieved lower level marks simply did not include enough arguments and evidence for or against or they spent too long describing each election system rather than focusing on strengths and weaknesses. Some simply ran out of time and so lost marks by not considering three different electoral systems.

4a

This question did cause issue for some candidates, since it had never been asked before, and there was a large number that did not attempt it. Of those that did, many showed little awareness of the current rules on general elections since the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, suggesting that elections must happen at least every five years or even that elections happened every four years. There was frequent reference to May's 'snap election' in evidencing factors, but examples beyond that were generally lacking or wrong. A significant minority of candidates seemed to think that Thatcher and Major had been brought down by votes of confidence. Dates of elections were often wrong. However, there were some very impressive answers that showed a thorough awareness of the current rules and even referred to 2/3 super-majorities in Parliament in calling an early election.

4b

This is a general question on the difference between two types of democracy but many students took it as a question on referendums and failed to

appreciate the fundamental differences between two kinds of popular participation. Concepts such as unmediated and continuous democratic participation were rarely addressed. Many simply considered the use of referendums as opposed to decisions made by parliament in the U.K. rather than discussing the main conceptual differences between direct and indirect democracy. The best answers used referendums as an example of direct democracy rather than its sole method.

4c

This question was generally answered well. The vast majority of candidates understood both terms and showed an awareness of how they would work. Most referred to Australia or Belgium as examples of compulsory voting, and to the Scottish independence referendum for votes for 16 year olds. Most were able to explain how they would increase participation. There were many assertions that lowering the voting age would increase turnout without understanding that this was unlikely since young people have a lower than average turnout rate. The best answers discussed the arguments for and against both compulsory voting and lowering the voting age and then assessed the potential success of these in increasing participation compared with other methods such as e democracy, referendums or changing the voting system and then assessed the arguments for and against these too. Weaker answers simply considered compulsory voting and lowering the voting age without comparing them with the alternatives. The balance of this answer was important in getting the marks and weaker answers were limited to the aspects mentioned in the question. However, most students were able to access this question without much difficulty and achieved good or high marks.

Summary Points

Performance on part (c) questions is a major factor as it always has been. It was all too often the case that a balanced answer was not provided. Balance not necessarily from the perspective of equal content but due recognition of both sides in the debate.

Again it has been stressed many times but the careful use of examples is key to reaching higher levels and they can form the base for both AO1 and AO2 – crucial in part (c) questions

It is clear that some topics despite appearing regularly are not taught fully and in the depth required. This is true for consensus and adversary politics and for an appreciation of the UK party system.

Answers on political parties although less popular continue to be the base for many good answers – here the move and performance of Labour under Corbyn was well known and taught in numerous centres – candidates who selection this option scored well

If political parties was the least popular – in contrast pressure groups was the first option for many – however the mean score on 1c was lower than most other c questions – popular in terms of choice but never the highest scoring question