



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level
In Politics (8PL0)
Paper 1UK Politics

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The 2025 AS 8PL01 paper showed that centres who teach the AS level are continuing to make good use of the course to give candidates a solid grounding in UK politics and post-16 skills such as essay structure, analysis and evaluation.

In particular this year candidates showed a strong use of sources; displaying a high collective ability to pick out, analyse and compare political material; and a good grasp of essay writing as they develop their writing skills at post-16 level. We are also seeing the continuation of the long-term trend of candidates getting better at AO2 analysis and AO3 evaluation in essay writing, with most candidates producing balanced and thoughtful essays.

Furthermore, there was widespread and effective use of political terms and precise vocabulary, and alongside this a good coverage of contemporary political events which added value and scope across all the questions. The use by many candidates of the 2025 local election results on question 4b about minor political parties was a particularly striking example of this.

Question 1a: Describe what is meant by the term class dealignment.

This was the more popular, and generally better answered, of the two short response knowledge-focused questions. Only a very small number of candidates did not grasp the basics of 'class dealignment', for example by focusing on other social or demographic factors without making any link to class. The vast majority of candidates offered a least a solid basic definition in terms of the decline in class-based voting, often coupled with a decline in class identity itself. There was also widespread use of examples linked to both parties – such as the decline of traditional working-class support for Labour or middle-class support for the Conservatives, and elections – such as the 'red wall' election of 2019. Whilst statistics were not necessary for success of this question, some candidates did use them to good effect. A number of stronger responses were also able to draw out the consequences of these changes, such as the increased relevance of other voting factors, the rise of minor parties, and the need for the major parties to have more 'catch-all' appeal. In the main it was the ability to move beyond the basic definition to the wider impact of class dealignment that marked the difference between level 2 and level 3 responses, and the recency and relevance of the examples that often made the difference within levels.

Class dealignment is where people of a certain ^{Social} class stop voting for their 'traditional' party. Looking at ~~the~~ ^{traditional surveys} ~~statistics~~ it was seen that Labour was the party for the working class, they mostly looked at issues concerning the people on a lower income, whereas the Conservative party was seen as for people of the middle class. Over recent years ~~there has been a~~ class has been less likely to mean you're voting for a specific political party, for instance in 2017 Labour won a landslide majority and from looking at some of the information published about the recent general election it shows that many people from the middle class voted for Labour. Another good example and cause of class dealignment is the amount of voters swayed toward minor parties, in recent years it's been obvious that reform are doing rather well, their voters tend not to align majoritively to one class.

Class dealignment means that political parties are not focusing on one specific social class's needs as it was seen to do in the 1900, this is a good thing as it means more people's views and needs are being supported by the government.

Examiner Comment: This is a solid level 2 response. It shows a clear understanding of the concept of class dealignment, with a supporting example, without going beyond this into the depth of development to enter the top level.

Class dealignment is a fairly recent occurrence in which the significance of class in regard to voting preference has decreased, due to a decrease in certain classes identifying with ~~for~~ specific political parties. ~~A major factor towards~~ A large reason for the development of class dealignment in more recent years has been the breakdown of the working class, alongside the development of 'New Labour'. Due to the decrease in heavy industries ~~in the~~ from the 70s onwards, there has been a significant decrease in the amount of people who would consider themselves 'working class'. The decrease of the working class breakdown of working class identity meant that the Labour parties 'Old Labour' ideals - which primarily identified with and supported the working class - were no longer compatible with the working class, a breakdown in the connection of the working class with Labour meaning class dealignment.

Furthermore, another key identifier of class dealignment. After the decrease in the working class identity, the Labour party rebranded, now identifying itself as 'New Labour', disconnecting from its working class roots and becoming more centrist in ideology. The transition to new Labour ~~shows~~ ^{means} meaning that the parties' working class roots were lost, and therefore dealigned with the working class.

Class dealignment can also be described as the loss of class support and identification with certain parties. For example, in the 1994 election, only 24% of the C2 class voted for the Conservative party - showing much ~~the~~ stronger support ~~from~~ ^{from} the C2 and DE classes for the Labour party. In the 1997 election, 42% of the C2 class electorate voted for the Conservative, showing how in more recent elections, voting has depended on other factors such as values, rather than classes ~~being~~ ^{being} associating with and voting for particular parties.

(Total for Question 1 = 10 marks)

Examiner Comment: This is a strong top level response. We can see the extra depth of development, a link to parties moving away from their roots, and the effective use of statistics.

Question 1b Describe the role of lobbyists.

This question was the less popular, and less well answered of the short responses. A disappointingly large number of candidates confused 'lobbyists' with the wider act of 'lobbying' and gave general responses about the campaigning activities of pressure groups – such responses, no matter how extensive and exemplified, were often stuck in level 1. A related error was to conflate insider corporate pressure groups with lobbyists, leading to muddled responses.

Middling responses understood the nature of lobbyists as paid professionals working to promote the interests of pressure groups and corporations. The best responses were able to discuss specific examples, often linking to the role of former MPs or even Prime Ministers, and to consider some of the challenges and controversies about the activities of lobbyists.

Lobbyists are a group of people that attempt to bring ~~are~~ about policy changes ~~and~~ through convincing the government through public support, disruptive action and ~~the~~ working alongside ~~the~~ policymakers and politicians. One key role that lobbyists have is to lobby the government for changes in policy through working alongside them. For example, during the Covid 19 pandemic, the British Medical Association has conducted research and through their expert knowledge were able to aid the government in policy and their actions. This was particularly effective ~~in~~ with the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 which helped ensure public safety. Furthermore, BMA worked alongside the government during the NHS strikes to aid with ~~the~~ creating policy to benefit NHS workers. Another key role of lobbyists is to influence government decision through disruptive actions. This can be seen by Just stop oil and Extinction rebellion, two passionate groups lobbying the government for policy changes regarding the environment and climate change. However, this has been largely ineffective as they have alienated the public and politicians, making the government unlikely to support their causes.

Another key role of lobbyists is to gain public support on their issue so that governments will adapt and change policy for the better. This is evident through Marcus Rashford's campaign for free school meals which led to effective government action due to the public support it gained. Furthermore, lobbyists such as Greenpeace have started making petitions to garner support and action as if it reaches 100,000 signatures, they must be debated in the House of Commons making it more likely to experience effective policy changes which is the goal for lobbyists.

Lobbyists also have the key role of conducting research about certain topics to aid in government decision making. For example, climate activists have researched on the importance of ~~climate change~~ ^{climate change} and presented their findings to government which led to the Labour party announcing a "state of climate emergency."

Examiner Comment: This is an example of a candidate who clearly has a good grasp of pressure groups in general, but has not answered the specific question asked about lobbyists. Credit is given for the sections where there is cross-over, but this response cannot escape level 1.

Lobbyists are individuals hired by organisations such as companies, businesses and industries to meet with and garner influence^{over} and connections with politicians within mainstream politics. This industry of lobbyists hires around 4000 people and worth around two million pounds sterling. The main role of lobbyists consists of protecting business interests of employers, garner influence over policies, have power over the actions of Members of Parliament (MPs) and hide the link between employers and politicians.

One of the roles of lobbyists is to protect business interests of their employers. As policies change with electoral cycles, party leadership and alignment with party values, lobbyists ensure policies which harm the business of their employers in any way are not passed to maintain their growth and business venues. For example, with the help of lobbyists, Bernie Ecclestone was able to influence Tony Blair into halting or dragging the ban ^{on} of tobacco advertisements from playing in between the F1 race program even though

advertisements during other programs was approved.

Another role of lobbyists is to garner influence over policies passed within Parliament. To ensure the advancements of employers, lobbyists influence politicians to bring up certain policies on the top of the agenda or shape the way certain ways are brought up within Parliament. Under John Major, a huge scandal of "Cash for Questions" took place with the suspected help of lobbyists where MPs were given cash for asking certain questions about policies or topics of discussion within Parliament.

Additionally, an added role of a lobbyist is to hold power over MPs to ensure their interests within Parliament. To make sure that MPs remain loyal to the lobbyist and comply with them, lobbyists try to hold power over MPs. An example of this would be how Mohammed Al-Fayed, owner of Harrods, hired lobbyists to hold power over a MP within Nest minister.

A crucial role of the lobbyists is to also maintain secrecy ~~by~~ between the MP, politicians and employers.

Since taking bribes and propagating policies of not one's own party is against the individual ministerial code, this link must be kept a secret to prevent scandals such as "Cash for Questions" or Blair's government.

(Total for Question 1 = 10 marks)

Examiner Comment: This candidate has clearly grasped what is meant by a lobbyist, their activities, and the nature of the lobbying industry. It is not a 'perfect' response, and the section about controlling MPs gains little additional credit, but there is plenty here that is creditable, and enough to enter level 3.

Question 2 Using the source, explain the disadvantages of the Additional Member System (AMS)

The overwhelming majority of candidates answered this question well, with a lot of level 3 responses, suggesting that centres have done a strong job in preparing candidates for the specific demands of this questions. Most managed to identify at least three disadvantages of the Additional Member System from the source, and could then offer up supporting examples and developed analysis. Only a small number of responses took up time discussing the workings or advantages of the system, which were not credited. The main discriminating factor between level 2 and level 3 was the depth of analysis, and the ability to explain and dig deeper on the criticisms offered by the source, including the use of supporting examples, rather than regurgitating them with less development.

Very few candidate attempted any AO3 evaluation here, for example via a conclusion; which is completely correct for this question, and shows good awareness of the demands of the question.

Additional members system (AMS) is an effective system that has become popular, as it has more compromise. There is less bias than FPTP.

A disadvantage of AMS is that, as a compromise, AMS keeps Westminster's 'safe seats' that rarely change hands. This is damaging to democracy in many ways.

Another advantage of AMS is that the number of constituency ~~and~~ list seats can be split differently for different parliaments. But the more FPTP seats, the less proportional AMS will be.

Some will also argue that the AMS creates 2 classes of MPs, and that this can create tension. For instance,

constituency MPs receive local casework, whilst the party-list MPs don't. In addition, AMS is more likely than FPTD to produce a coalition.

Examiner Comment: This is a typical level 2 response. The candidate has taken the correct material from the source, and added a little development in places. However there is insufficient development to go beyond a middling mark.

(10)

One reason ~~for~~ ^{probable} the disadvantage of AMS is that it is a coalition is more ~~likely~~ under AMS rather than other voting systems. Source 1 states "AMS is more likely to produce a coalition". This is poor as coalitions are built of 2 parties coming together to form a majority. This is ~~an issue~~ as a disadvantage as the coalition is ~~not~~ ^{weaker} as the coalition is often weak due to a compromise of policy leading to further chance of collapse.

Another disadvantage to AMS could be the fact it doesn't fully eliminate safe seats. Source 1 states "AMS keeps Westminster's 'safe seats' which rarely change hands". This is an issue as it means that many people who have contrasting views to the views of the 'safe seat' ~~constituent~~ constituency that they live in, are unrepresented by in Parliament because their area all ~~believes~~ ^{votes} the opposite way. This encourages wasted votes which prove unrepresentative in the parliament.

Another disadvantage of AMS is that it creates ~~issues~~ ^{issues} between the constituency and the party list; "AMS creates ~~between~~ ^{between} two

Classes of MP, and that this can create tension". Tension can be a large issue as issues between MPs in the same constituency can lead to ~~more~~ weakness and less strength in decision making and running of the constituency. This is further seen demonstrated in the source ~~the~~ "on a constituency MP runs local housework while the party-list MPs do not". This limits transparency between the two which can be not be useful to the constituents of ~~the~~ either MP.

Another reason disadvantage ~~from~~ ^{of} the AMS could be that damages democracy. This ~~was~~ was seen earlier in the source with the system still giving ~~the~~ 'Safe seats' but again where parties have more a control over who gets elected. Source 1 states "Party parties AMS also adds lists of candidates chosen by the political parties". This can be undemocratic as it demonstrates parties to be more focused on seeing the ~~election~~ ^{majority} and winning a lot of ^{seats} ~~people~~ than actually representing the people in local constituencies. This means that the AMS system goes against the definition of Democracy: "for the people, for the people" by the people, of the people, for the people" as it is not for the people, it's for ~~the~~ ^a majority government.

Examiner Comment: This is an example of a common lower level 3 response, similar to that which a lot of candidates produced. The points are drawn from the source, with additional relevant explanation added of why they are weaknesses. More development of examples could have taken this on to full marks.

Question 3 Using the sources, assess if voting should be made compulsory.

There were very few poor responses here, again suggesting that centres had prepared candidates well to compare and contrast the sources. It was notable that more or more candidates are adopting the approach of analysing and comparing within paragraphs, rather than considering the sources separately, which is a stronger analytical approach.

Those few weaker responses tended to either ignore the source or simply to describe the different views without analysing them. A typical middling response did a competent job of identifying relevant similarities and differences between the competing sources, but tended to perform less well on AO3 evaluation. This was the real dividing line on this question between level 2 and level 3 responses: the latter drew evidenced conclusions from the debate between the sources, and in the case of the strongest responses did this throughout their answer as well as at the end.

Both Source 2 and 3 agree that the low turnout in recent years is "concerning" which is true as turnout numbers have hovered around the 60 percentile in recent general elections over the last few years. However, this is about all these two sources agree upon, they do tend to disagree and even counter each other's points. For example, Source 2 mentions how ~~internationally~~ international experience demonstrates conclusively that making voting compulsory ensures that a vast amount of majority of eligible voters participate" which is true, forcing people to vote through fines and other means drastically improves turnout but leaves the underlying issue of people voting at random just to avoid fines. Source 3 counters by saying how it's "not part of the British Democratic tradition and such a scheme may be against British political culture" This is also true as the UK

has always been about choice and democracy and therefore forcing a vote would be undemocratic as it takes away the people's power to abstain from a political system they don't believe in.

Lastly, Source 2 says how forcing a first vote would make it "so that the habit of voting is developed and continued" which is flawed thinking as they may be in a safe seat of the party they vote for may not fulfill their manifesto and therefore they may gain voters apathy and not want to continue. Source 3 counters Source 2 by saying "Voters should have a right to ~~vote~~ not to vote and forcing people to vote should be rejected." This is because it is our human right whether to vote or not to vote and no government should have such power over the public's rights.

Examiner Comment: This is an example of a candidate showing good AO2 analysis, as they directly compare and contrast similarities and differences in the source, but weaker AO3 evaluation. Additional judgements throughout and at the end of the response would have taken this beyond it's solid level 2 mark.

the idea that whether or not ^{compulsory} voting is a part of British duties is debated by the two sources. Source 2 states that "voting is a citizens duty" ~~where~~ ~~as Source 3 states~~ ~~it is~~ and "alongside it other duties have already been made compulsory". Where as Source 3 states "compulsory voting is not a part of the British democratic ^{tradition} ~~tradition~~" and that it would be against "British political culture". Whilst voting is a very important duty for British citizens to complete, ~~the base~~ Source 3's point that it's "not a part of the British democratic tradition" which is a stronger point than Source 2 makes as democracy in the UK is about citizens getting to choose in politics, one of those choices is not to engage. Therefore Source 3 argument is more powerful and voting should not be made compulsory at the expense of traditional democracy and the rights of the public.

However, both sources explore the idea of only implementing compulsory voting on first timers, but they disagree on how effective they predict it will be as Source 2 argues "that the habit of voting" will become "developed and continued" where as Source 3 argues that the government would have "problems of enforcement". Source 3's argument of enforcement is weak as it fails to recognise that sanctions would be imposed if the voting was made compulsory, such as fines. This would eliminate any "problems of enforcement" as the electorate and general public would be more than likely to vote due

to fear of having sanctions instrumental upon them. Therefore, Source two's argument of "first time votes only, so that the habit of voting is developed and continued" is much more convincing as people can go for the first time, reducing any factor of fear or coercion and then stay true to themselves. It's quick and private, continuing to freely vote in the future.

However, compulsory voting may not be a good idea as, like both sources mention "governments have rejected the idea of compulsory voting". ~~Also~~ If the government are rejecting the idea of compulsory voting then it can be inferred that it's not within the public's best interest as the government are a body of expertise and political knowledge who are more informed of what policies and legislation is in the public's interest therefore the fact that the government rejected any form of compulsory voting, suggests it is not within the public's interest.

In conclusion, ~~therefore~~ compulsory voting should not be made compulsory as, both sources agree, the government have rejected any suggestion on it. Therefore, due to their expertise, the inference that it's not within the public's best interest can be made, as well as this it would also remove the public's democratic right of choosing not to engage with politics and even though source 2 makes a valid point that if it's only implemented for first time voters.

Examiner Comment: This candidate has recognised the evaluate throughout, making effective use of 'stronger' and 'weaker', with justification provided for these judgements. Therefore is there good evidence of both AO2 and AO3, and this is a clear level 3 response.

Question 4a

'The media now largely determines the outcomes of general elections.'

How far do you agree that the outcomes of general elections are determined by the media?

This question was the slightly more popular of the essays and provided candidates with the scope to produce a variety of valid responses. The vast majority of candidates followed the requirements to discuss at least two types of media, and there were also very few one-sided responses. Many candidates covered all three broad types of media, often using this to effectively structure a response; it was then the quality of analysis and evaluation to a consistent and evidenced line of argument that divided these responses into middling and strong.

It was notable that on newspapers in particular a large number of candidate remain over-reliant on older examples such as the Sun in 1992

. Unsurprisingly, examples of social media were much more contemporary, with the impact of television lying between the 2 – often around the 2010 leader debates or the 'bigoted woman' incident. That said there was a surprisingly sizeable minority of candidates who did not discuss social media, and centres are advised to ensure that when covering this topic they give due weight to more recent developments.

Another discriminating factor was the effective paring of arguments to support analysis, generally a much stronger approach than simply considering on side and then the other – again, structuring the essay by different sectors of the media often facilitated this.

Whilst it was not essential to weigh the media against other factors to achieve high levels, where this was done well, with direct links drawn between class and newspaper choice or media image and leader perception for example, it could be very effective. Much less effective was to offer a pre-prepared run through of different factors that might determine election outcomes without linking them to the specific question asked.

It should finally be noted that this question specifically asked about general elections, and therefore the discussion by some candidates of referendums, such as the Brexit referendum, was less relevant.

The media holds a great influence on today's society. The media is now the main source of education to the public whether its in the form of newspapers, TV debates, social media etc.

Firstly, I will be talking about social media. The quote "the media now largely determines the outcome of general elections" can be perceived as true when looking at social media as, as a society we are all so hooked to it whether its accessed through our mobile devices, ipads, laptops, computers etc. The list goes on. The legal voting age in the UK is 18 and studies show that this age category use social media the most. Because this is the new generation of voters, they could be easily swayed by peer pressure groups online or even persuasive

messages, on the media, given by party leaders. Although, this could be perceived as true, it is also nonsense to know that the older generation have less usage or even access to social media meaning that they are very sure of who they will vote for in the general elections. ~~It is also~~ The quote could also be seen as not true as there is a low vote turnout for young voters. Social media could be seen as overpowering them with too much persuasive information that it causes them not to vote.

Another source of media is newspapers! It tends to be the older generation that get their political information from newspapers. The Times is a newspaper that is for votes that vote for a party on the right, for example Conservatives. The Daily Mirror is a newspaper that is designed with ideas revolving around the left parties such as Labour. Nigel Farage, the leader of the Reform party, strategically advertised his

ways in one of these magazines to help and try to sway the public's opinion. However some people who read the ~~new~~ newspapers may start to distance themselves from who they usually vote for because of many reasons, one being new and old Labour. As it's an axiom that the older generation are more likely to read newspapers may see the difficult in Labour one time. Saying this in 2015-17 when Corbyn played a big role in UK politics they may have stuck strong with their political party as Corbyn brought back old Labour ideas. This can help determine that the outcome of general elections are determined by the media as it plays a big role in ensuring and reassuring the public opinion.

Another source of media is TV debates. An example of this is Hegmannia where Nick Clegg was in a TV debate. This could help determine the outcome as something like

a tv debate could be the last thing to help
inform the public on a party. However,
it could also change the public's
view on somebody.

In conclusion, I ~~become~~ agree with the
quote as the media has, like
mentioned previously, seen a massive
uprise in usage meaning that it
is more likely for the media
to determine the overall outcome of the
general election.

Examiner Comment: This is a typical middling response. There is some reference to all three sectors of the media, albeit the last section is rushed. Similarly there is a clear line of argument which is sustained without providing sufficient substantiation to enter the higher levels. There is such use of examples, but more would support the response further, and this sits comfortably within level 3.

In order to be able to make an argument on whether the media now largely determines the outcome of general elections it must first be understood that the media refers to forms of content which the public consume for education or entertainment. This includes broadcasting, newspapers and social media. Although it could be argued that this content lacks an impact on the UK public's voting behaviour, this essay will showcase the stronger argument that media does now largely determine the outcome of general elections as it is increasingly the main way in which the public interacts with politics.

One way in which media determines the outcome of general elections, is through the impact of broadcasting. In 2010, the first leadership debate ~~was~~ ^{was} viewed by 9.4 million people, showcasing ~~how~~ ^{the} ~~important~~ ^{impact} broadcast debates ~~are~~ ^{have} in the run up to general elections. A commonly utilised phrase by other party leaders ^{during the 2010 elections} was 'I agree with Nick', in reference to Liberal Democrat party leader Nick Clegg. This became famous online for the persistence of the phrase, ^{which added to} ~~and~~ ^{and recognition of} increased interest ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the party, as well as creating an image of dependability ^{under} ~~in~~ its leader. The popularity of Nick Clegg may have contributed to the Conservative

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enabled
them to
introduce
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party's decision to form a coalition with the Liberal Democrats after the results of that ^{year's} election. As well, during her premiership as ~~the~~ Scottish National Party (SNP) leader, Nicola Sturgeon was often deemed a strong speaker in debates, leading to the SNP winning 56 out of the 59 seats they stood ~~for~~ in 2015. This displays the importance of broadcasting media in effecting how the UK public votes in general election as it is how a ~~very~~ large portion of the public access politics and build an image of party leaders. Conversely, it could be argued that broadcast media does not have a large impact on voting intentions in general elections. This is because, in the UK, broadcast news ~~is~~ (such as the BBC) ~~are~~ required to be politically neutral and balanced, therefore it ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~has~~ ^{is} unable to change people's ~~beliefs~~ ^{beliefs} ~~or~~ ^{or} politics from what they already believe. This follows the Rational choice theory that people ~~consume media~~ already have set voting intentions and consume media either without ~~it~~ impacting their political views, or in a way that will reinforce their views. This displays the argument that broadcast media does not impact how people vote in general elections. Although there is merit to this ~~perspective~~ ^{perspective} ~~argument~~, it can be seen that the stronger argument is that broadcast media does impact voting intentions as, even if news is presented without bias, this form of consuming political knowledge still ~~creates~~ ^{contributes} a person's ~~image~~ belief set ^{based on} ~~surrounding~~ how certain political party members appeal (or don't) ^{and therefore the party is a choice}

to them.

Another way in which form through which media determines voting intentions is newspapers. In 1992, the Conservative party leader John Major was perceived as weak and the party disunited due to varying opinions on the EU. Despite this, the Conservative party won a majority in that year's election, which was followed by The Sun famously stating that ~~there~~ their support for the party "was not won it". The influence of newspapers on their readers has been consistently displayed since, with 70% of The Telegraph readers saying they voted in line with the paper in 2019. This indicates that newspapers do influence voting behaviour as ~~they also~~ influence how their readers or their readers' partisanship to the paper encourages them to vote in line with it. However, it could be argued that newspapers ~~do not~~ ^{no longer} determine the outcome of general elections as they are now less relevant to people's voting intentions than previously. This belief is founded by the trend of decreasing news paper readership in recent years, with it having decreased by 85% between 2019 and 2024. Evidence for their lack of impact is supplied by the 2017 general election in which, despite ^{only} 2 out of 6 of the ~~biggest~~ ^{most popular} parties in newspapers in the country supporting Labour, the difference between the Conservative party and Labour's vote share was only 3%. This suggests

that newspapers lack impact on voting behaviour due to their irrelevance to modern day voters. Despite the ~~argument~~ alternative perspective which this argument suggests, it sustains that ~~newspapers~~ ^{the media} continue to have an ~~increasingly~~ ^{increasingly} important impact on election outcomes. Despite decreased newspaper readership from younger voters, they ~~continue to~~ ^{still} consume their political information from media - just different ^{have different} sources such as social media, and older voters with partisanship to a newspaper continue to consume political content from them. Newspapers impact on media is sustained even outside its printed papers as many now have ^{social media} accounts - such as The Daily Mail with 22 million followers on tiktok. This showcases how newspapers now ~~continue~~ ^{greatly} contribute to media determining the outcome of elections.

A final way in which media contributes to ~~form~~ the outcome of general elections is through social medias impact on general elections. In 2019, ^{in the run up to the general election} the Conservative party had 10 times more ads on Facebook than any other ~~party~~ political party and ended up winning a majority of 365 out of 650 seats in that election. As well, in 2015 70% of 18-25 year olds said they got most of their news from social media. This displays how ~~not~~ ^{social media} people are increasingly interacting with politics through social media, ~~and are~~ ^{influenced} which influences their behaviour when voting in general elections. Conversely, it could be argued that

Social media does not alter how the public vote in general elections due to social media's lack of impactful influence on political decisions. Despite an increase in social media use for younger voters, older voters are less likely to consume political information through social media and more likely to use traditional news sources. This is important as older people have higher election turnouts - meaning their votes have more overall impact on election results, as shown by in 2012 when the turnout for people over 70% was 80% but for 18 to 24 year olds it was 50%. As well, ~~it~~ This showcases the argument that social media does not ~~do~~ ^{greatly} effect the outcome of general elections ~~as~~ due to its small range of influence on voters. However, the ~~arguer~~ stronger argument remains that social media does have a strong impact on the outcome of general elections as it influences both young and old age groups, but through different social media sources. For instance, ~~the average Facebook user is~~ Facebook is commonly used by older or middle-aged voters while TikTok is more likely to be used by younger voters, with both social medias containing political content which can influence how people vote in elections.

In conclusion, despite the ~~the~~ requirement for news programmes to have neutrality; decreasing newspaper readership and ^{the argument for} social media

~~varying~~ Lack of impact on older voters, it can be seen that the media does now largely determine the outcome of general elections. This is because, in the UK, technological ^{has made possible} advancements have enabled digital media sources such as broadcast TV and social media to have a greater impact and presence in our lives than ever before. ~~Through these sources. Even~~ Through these ~~source~~ people interact and understand politics through how they are presented by media sources, ~~therefore building peoples~~ with media image ~~building~~ ^{improving} people's understanding of political parties and leaders. Even people who ~~pro~~ ~~test~~ struggle with modern technology tend to use traditional media sources such as newspapers to inform themselves on politics. This ~~enables~~ showcases how media is ~~able~~ how media has been able to largely determine the outcome of general elections in recent years.

Examiner Comment: This is a good example of a candidate making effective use of structure by sectors of the media, and within each section considering both sides of the argument. There is effective use of examples, and sustained substantiated judgement supporting by the consistent references to 'stronger' and 'weaker arguments'. The one additional thing the candidate could have done is to make a greater 'tie-in' to factors outside the media. Nevertheless this is a strong response and sits comfortably in the higher levels.

Question 4b 'The dominance of the established parties, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Labour, means that minor parties have little influence in UK politics'.

How far do you agree that minor parties have little influence in the UK? This was the slightly less popular essay question but less so than is sometimes the case for 'political parties' questions, as the political climate made it a more tempting area than usual for many candidates. It therefore saw the best use of contemporary political knowledge; in particular around the success of Reform and the Green Party (and relative lack of success of the SNP) in the 2024 General Election, and even more impressively the 2025 local elections that took place shortly before the exams. There was relatively little out of date material here, and the use of the most contemporary examples often led to great reward. There were only a few one-sided responses, although in a few cases candidates suffered from only discussing Reform, and a small number of otherwise very strong responses found themselves capped by not following the instruction to consider at least two minor parties. The best responses considered a range of different minor parties, sometimes also including the DUP's 2017 confidence and supply agreement with May's government to good effect.

Stronger response also tended to recognise that party success can take many forms – aside from winning general elections, it may include influencing the political agenda, raising awareness of issues, and achieving power locally, regionally, or in devolved bodies.

Candidates were also generally effective at explaining the way in which the political system, as well as the electorate, often favours established parties – for example through First Past the Post, media focus, and fundraising capacity. As in question 4a the effective pairing of arguments to support analysis and evaluation was a common feature of stronger responses. Some candidates missed the reminder in the question instructions that the specification defines the Liberal Democrats as an 'established' rather than a 'minor' party, and tried to use the 2010-15 coalition as an example of minor party impact. A casual misunderstanding of this distinction is understandable, especially given the party's fluctuating fortunes in recent years, although less so where the question instructions give a helpful explicit reminder of it.

The idea that minor parties have little influence in UK politics is an idea that ~~stems~~ stems from typical general election results where an established party such as the Conservatives or Labour will win and the other will come second, therefore not giving much of a chance for some of ~~the~~ the smaller parties to be seen or heard.

The general argument for minor parties having little influence in UK politics is the downward spiral argument of they won't win a seat/~~so~~ ~~there~~ the election so there is no point in voting for them. Evidence of this can be seen as recent as in 2024 ~~as~~ although both the Green Party and Reform won very few votes and even fewer seats both less than 8% of the vote combined. This is due to the voting system of ~~FP~~ first past the post general leading to a binary decision between the main two parties if you want your vote to count towards the final result. This results in less democratic legitimacy and the smaller parties being less relevant in the context of the election.

However an argument against this would be that when there is a more important single issue party such as they will win more of the vote. Evidence of this can be seen in 2014 as UKIP added a promise in their manifesto that they would call a Brexit vote if they won, this led to an increase in votes for UKIP and directly effected the Conservative party as they began to lose votes. This resulted in the Conservatives making the same promise which ultimately ended with a Brexit referendum. This is proof that with the correct exposure and of it as an issue of high relevancy the smaller parties can make a big difference in the parties.

Similarly to the last point smaller parties can act as a representation of the people that feel unheard in politics or an issue that is important. Another example of this would be the Scottish national party ^{that} campaigned for a Scottish independence ~~election~~ ^{referendum} in 2014 they were a party representation of the people protesting for an independence election and by creating waves and gaining votes they got their wish of an independence referendum they did however lose the referendum as the 'No' side won but provides another example of how much of a difference these smaller parties can make.

Finally you could also make the case that when given the right media traction and popularity parties can increase in stature to almost a level to challenge the main parties. An example would be as recent as the 2025 local council elections where Reform UK won by far the highest percentage of the votes increasing speculation they may win the next general election. This proves that although it has not happened often in the past the constitution still allows for small parties to do big things.

To conclude although there is a strong argument for the view that they do not have much of an effect there are still many examples where they have.

Examiner Comment: This candidate makes some valid points with some supporting evidence, without greatly developing or evaluating them. There is not a clear line of argument, and whilst there is some balance, it is far from equal. AO1 Knowledge is solid level 3, but AO3 evaluation is in level 1, with AO2 analysis sitting between the two; leaving this on the borderline between level 2 and level 3 overall.

Over the last few years, minor parties, such as Reform UK, the Greens, and the SNP, have received an increased amount of attention in the media. However, some argue this does not mean they have major influence in UK politics like the major parties do, whereas others argue increased media attention is a sign of their growth in relevance. This essay will argue that minor parties have an increasingly important influence in UK politics on policy, voting, and in devolved and local areas, at the expense of the established parties.

Those who claim that minor parties have little influence in UK politics argue that they have little say in policy, as they have not been in government. Within the last 15 years, all three of the established parties (the Tories, Labour and the Lib Dems) have been in government, whereas none of the minor parties have, limiting their influence. The established parties have ignored calls from the minor parties seeking to influence their policy in government. For example, in 2025, Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced plans to build a third runway at Heathrow, despite vocal opposition from the Green Party, citing environmental concerns. Likewise, in January 2025, Labour refused calls from Reform UK for a national ^{morning} ~~meeting~~ into the grooming gangs scandal. After Scotland voted 62% to

remain in the EU ~~in~~ the 2016 Brexit referendum, the Conservatives refused to entertain calls for a second independence referendum, despite calls from the SNP ~~one~~. These all demonstrate how, as they are not in government, the influence of minor parties on UK politics is minor and the established parties can exercise their dominance over them ~~potentially~~. However, increasingly, this is no longer the case. ^{especially} The growth of minor parties in the past year or so, has applied significant pressure on government to change policy. For example, in May 2025, after pressure from Reform UK to do more to reduce immigration, Keir Starmer set out a White Paper aiming to do just that, with policies such as greater English language requirements to enter the UK. Likewise, the growth of the Green Party has applied significant pressure on successive governments to do more to tackle the climate crisis, with the Conservatives in government promising net zero by 2025 and Labour promising an end to oil and gas licensing in the North Sea. Indeed, the 2016 Brexit referendum primarily came about after the growth of UKIP, and the 2014 Scottish independence referendum after the growth of the SNP. This demonstrates how, despite not being in government, minor parties are exerting an increased amount of influence through their ability to influence government policy, which rejects the idea that the dominance of the established parties means minor parties have little say in British politics.

~~However~~ However, some argue that minor parties have little influence on UK politics due to their limited influence on

voting behaviour. The majority of people still vote for the three main parties, with them receiving 87.2% of the vote combined in the 2019 general election. In 2024, just 5% of those aged over 65 voted for the Green Party, as opposed to 46% for the Conservatives and 20% for Labour. Even for 18 to 24 year olds, just 18% of people voted Greens, as opposed to 41% with Labour, suggesting they have little influence on voting habits. ~~After~~ In After 2016, despite UKIP seemingly having momentum after the Brexit referendum, virtually no-one voted for them, with the 2015 election being their best result. The SNP significantly fell in support in the 2024 election, with 40% less people voting SNP in 2024 than 2019. This demonstrates how minor parties can be seen to have little influence on voting behaviour, unlike the established parties. However, this can be rejected. Voting behaviour has significantly changed with the growth of minor parties in the last year. The Green Party went from 2.7% of the vote in 2019 to 6.7% in 2024, suggesting an increasing amount of left-wing votes are pivoting from Labour to the Greens over Keir Starmer's centrist approach. Reform UK in particular have made massive changes to voting behaviour, with them receiving 11.3% of the vote in 2024 and only gaining seven seats, taking Labour's 16th largest seat in the 2024 election in May 2025 with the Barron and Helsby by-election (~~with~~ just six votes). In 2019, 50% of people in Scotland voted for the SNP, making them the most popular party in Scotland. ~~Therefore~~ As a result of all of this, the dominance of Labour and the Conservatives in voting share is in decline.

from 75.7% in 2019 to just 57.4% in 2024, the lowest in a century. ~~Therefore~~ Therefore, these all demonstrate how minor parties have increasing influence regarding voting behaviour, at the expense of the established parties.

However, there are people who argue that minor parties have little influence in UK politics due to their small presence in Parliament. In the 2024 election, the Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal Democrats were the three largest parties, winning 605 of 680 seats. Reform UK only ~~won~~ ^{won} five seats (though since MP Rupert Lowe has been suspended and they gained an MP in Sarah Packman in the Lincoln and Holbyke by-election), the Greens only two seats, and the SNP only nine seats (down from a peak of 56 in 2015). This means they have virtually no influence over the legislative programme in Parliament, as their small stature compared with Labour's 172 seat majority means it is virtually impossible they would be able to amend or block legislation. In 2019, the Conservatives and Labour won 89% of seats, with the Greens only winning 1 seat (Olivia Williams, Caroline Lucas) and the Brexit Party (now Reform) winning none. This demonstrates how minor parties could be seen to have limited influence in UK politics due to their small size in Parliament. However, smaller parties have significant influence in local and devolved governments. In the May 2024 local elections, Reform were the single largest party, winning 677 council seats, controlling multiple councils, and winning the mayoralities of Hull and East Yorkshire and Greater Lincolnshire. This means that Reform

now have a significant amount of influence in local areas. Likewise, in devolved regions, minor parties dominate, with the SNP being the single largest party in Holyrood since 2007 (winning 49.6% of seats in the 2021 Scottish elections), Plaid Cymru having considerable influence in the Senedd Cymru, and Sinn Féin and the DUP being the two largest parties in the Northern Irish Assembly. This shows how minor parties have significant influence, often more than the established parties, in devolved regions. Therefore minor parties have a significant level of influence in UK politics due to their strong base in local and devolved governments.

Overall, minor parties have major ~~power~~ influence in UK politics, especially since the 2024 election. They have significant influence on government policy (despite not being in government), significantly impact voting behaviour, and have strong influence in local and devolved regions. With the development of minor parties, the UK is now increasingly moving from a two party system to a multi party system, with Reform in particular seemingly set to be the largest party in the 2029 election.

Examiner Comment: This is a strong response which clearly enters the top level. There is a clear sustained line of argument the start, whilst giving good consideration of alternative views. Evidence is wide and contemporary throughout, and there is clear understanding of the different forms that party success can take.

The following key points form the core messages from this summer 2025 series:

Short response questions require a good level of precise knowledge tied closely to the question and supported by examples.

For question 1a we see that a good basic definition will take candidates into level 2, and it is then the quality of development and supporting examples that secure a level 3 mark.

On 1b we see the criticality of accurately understanding the key terms in the course, and not confusing two similar sounding but distinct concepts.

On question 2 we see the importance of using candidates' knowledge and skills to develop and analyse the material offered by the source: this is often very fertile ground to pick up marks provided candidates understand the requirements of the questions – as a great many clearly did.

On question 3 we see that whilst comparative analysis will take candidates to a solid level 2 mark, it is often the addition of effective evaluation and judgement that was the hallmark of the strong level 3 response. Merely replicating or describing the source by contrast gains little benefit.

For the essay questions the general key points to take away are to aim for a clear sustained line of argument, and use the effective pairing of points to support analysis, whilst using examples to provide the key supporting evidence.

4a showed that structuring by theme or concept within a topic, in this case the difference sectors of the media, is a much more effective approach than covering one side of the debate in its entirety followed by the other. It was also a good question for recognising the benefits of using the most up to date examples available.

Finally question 4b showed that following developments that have taken place very close to the exam can really pay off when the question matches contemporary events as it did in this case. Equally there can be a danger of getting so sidetracked by current events that candidates forget the criticality of following the guidance and instructions supplied with the question – such as how many 'minor parties' to consider, and which parties do not count as 'minor'.

Overall, the usual sound advice for all Politics exams remains true in this series. Candidates should:

- give due balance to all three assessment objectives – knowledge, analysis and evaluation, recognising that this due balance varies between question type.
- divide their time proportionately between questions
- perhaps most of all, use the wording of the question, guidance, and source material to answer the question, the whole question, and nothing but the question.