

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/01
Concepts and Institutions

The vast majority of candidates answered questions from the UK section of the examination paper. They answered the questions well and there were no major problems in terms of the candidates being able to answer the questions in the time allowed; it was encouraging to see the quantity, and more importantly the quality of their answers.

In the short questions section (**Question 1-3**, in which candidates had to answer two questions) **Question 1** and **3** were the most popular. In the long question section (**Question 4-6**, in which candidates had to answer one question) **Question 4** was, by far, the most popular.

Section A

The aim of these questions (whether for UK or USA sections) is to assess the candidates' ability to provide a clear, detailed and concise answer for the question set. The focus is on their ability to **explain** the answer. As a general rule the following criteria will help explain the general principles that will guide Examiners in the awarding of marks.

The main features expected for the short answers for the awarded levels are:

- Distinction: A number of key reasons, which are well explained and supported with relevant and concise examples
- Merit A number of key reasons, which are not so well explained, possibly some imbalance in the quality of explanation and limited specific examples.
- Pass: Some key reasons, with some explanation, focused on the question.

In this examination most of the candidates provided the features for a merit and distinction awards. It was the quality and detail of their answers that prevented more candidates from attaining the highest marks. It should be noted that using the knowledge of political theorists is not a requirement of this type of question. As with all questions, there are key words that emphasise the focus of the question.

In question 1 the key words were 'parliamentary sovereignty'. Some candidates needed to more aware that when explaining issues concerning Parliament, more than just the House of Commons need to be considered. Candidates could have explained more about recent developments both in and outside the UK that have affected sovereignty.

In **Question 2** the key word was 'role of the Supreme Court'. Candidates needed to explain more than just the composition of the Supreme Court. Also it should be noted that this syllabus does not required a detailed knowledge of the legal aspects, rather focus should be on the political role of the Supreme Court.

In **Question 3** the key words were '**Government**' and '**Parliament**'. Some candidates had difficulty answering the question as they were unclear about the distinction between the two.

There were too few candidates to make valid comments about the performance of the candidates for the USA questions, but the key words for **Questions 7-9** were: **Question 7** it was 'role'; for **Question 8** it was 'significance' and **Question 9** it was 'functions'.

Candidates need to identify these key words and focus their explanation on them. Candidates are reminded that there is not a requirement to provide evaluation for **Section A** answers.

Section B

Whereas **Section A** questions are focused on an explanation, **Section B** questions are focused on a **discussion and evaluation**. The aim of this type of question is to assess the candidates' ability to provide to provide a well argued and balanced discussion that arrives at a clear and substantiated judgement for the question set.

The main features expected for the long answers are:

- Distinction: A well argued and balanced argument focused on the key issues in the question. There will be evaluation/prioritising, which is fully supported with evidence.
- Merit: Will have the features of a 'distinction' but the quality of explanation/ analysis and evaluation will be more patchy and imbalanced. A common feature will be that candidates will identify which is the most important aspect but not provide adequate support for their statements.
- Pass: Candidates will attempt to address the question but there will be imbalance in the argument and the quality of the supporting evidence will be limited. There will be limited evaluation.

By far, the most popular question in this section was **Question 4**. It was generally well answered. However, some candidates need to be more aware that, in this type of question, there is a given element in the question. In this question it was '**size** of a pressure group'. To attain high marks candidates need to provide a detailed and fully explained section related to the given element as well as explaining other elements. Also, evaluation of the relative importance of the various elements needs to be considered in relation to the question.

In **Question 5** the focus needed to be on evaluating '**how effective**' the various electoral systems were. In **Question 6** the focus should have been on '**too powerful**'.

With reference to the USA questions, the key focus of the evaluation for each question were: **Question 10** '**relationship**'; **Question 11** '**more important**' and for **Question 12** '**how important**'.

In this examination most of the answers provided the features for merit and distinction awards. It was encouraging to see that most candidates identified the purpose of the question and were able to focus on their arguments appropriately. Again the ability to identify the key words in the question significantly helps candidates to provide good answers.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/02
Parties and Ideas

Key Messages

- Candidates produced some excellent work.
- Candidates need to end their long essays with an effective conclusion.

General Comments

The overall standard was very pleasing. For the most part, candidates understood the requirements of the examination and were able to produce some excellent supporting evidence for both the short and long answer questions. There were a variety of questions attempted, although this year there tended to be far more of an emphasis on the British side of the course than previously. The paper allows the option to go down either the British or American route; it would be good to see Centres mixing and matching their answers rather than just relying on one country alone.

Last year's report and comments on both the short and long essay are still as pertinent this year and at the risk of repeating this advice, candidates still need to adopt what seems to be a very simple approach namely on the short essay a number of points are required to be explained in detail in order to achieve the highest bands, these points need to be supported with examples to augment the assertions. As stated above the observation this year was that the supporting exemplar material was effectively used and some outstanding responses emerged.

For the full essays Examiners are looking for a detailed approach. The general impression this year was that the essays were very good. There was a good factual knowledge employed; political terminology was accurately used and the candidates for the most part produced balanced and succinct answers. Once again the candidates need to adopt a simple but effective strategy by answering the paradox in the question in a direct way. A sense of balance is vital if candidates are going to challenge for the top grades, and if the candidate decides that they have agreed wholeheartedly with the assertion in the question then they should re-examine their approach. Contemporary examples are always welcome as they reveal candidates with up to date thinking and who are able to relate concepts to some of the theories. This year more than ever, candidates were able to end their answers with an effective conclusion. The key to a good conclusion is to reach a verdict and not sit on the fence. It is the last thing the Examiner reads so candidates are advised to make time to get it right.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: Parties and Ideas in the UK

Short essays

The numbers relate to the question as they appear on the examination

1. This proved to be a popular question which was well covered by most candidates. There were a number of excellent responses showing a clear understanding of the nature of what the term Big Society meant. The best ones pointed to the idea of devolving power; Localism and the state acting as the catalyst for the strengthening of local services. Outstanding responses did all of the above and talked about initiatives such as Big Society day, National citizenship service and the localism Bill.

2. The explanation of the term New Labour proved to be as popular. On the whole, candidates accomplished their task in a very impressive manner. A few weaker responses did confuse New with Old Labour but generally the responses which gained the highest marks talked of communitarianism; the Third way and the idea of an ethical foreign policy. Candidates were also well versed in the abolition of clause IV and the new labour emphasis on a slicker presentational style.
3. The question on Orange Book Liberalism was less popular but generally well done by those who attempted it. Candidates emphasised personalities involved in its inception such as Laws and Oaten whilst discussing its key features. They included more private sector involvement in the provision of local services; market discipline in environmental policy whilst emphasising old style liberalism over social democracy.

Long Essays

4. This essay was attempted by a number of candidates and was reasonably well done. The key was to try and show how the Liberal Democrats in coalition have attempted to blunt the more extreme elements of the Conservative agenda. Successful candidates pointed to a number of initiatives such as the emphasis on increased civil liberty; House of Lords reform; fixed term parliaments and a referendum on electoral reform. The assessment was reasonably well done and candidates pointed to a number of areas where the Conservative message was neutralised. They were also able to state quite accurately that the Conservatives are the senior partner in the coalition and were able to initiate their own agenda despite the coalition agreement. Less successful candidates merely mentioned Liberal Democrat beliefs without relating them to the question.
5. Insufficient candidates attempted this question for a report to be produced.
6. This was by far the most popular question on the paper and on the whole candidates tackled it with great skill and some excellent responses emerged. Those that agreed with the question pointed to the legacy in relation to a reduction in state intervention; a belief in tax cuts and market regulation; firmness in dealing with law and order and an emphasis on cutting waste and debt. There was a pleasing balance in some of the best answers and they were able to point out how the modern Conservative party has moved away from the Thatcherite legacy on issues such as the environment and gay rights. Some mentioned Cameron's attempt to emphasise a more inclusive liberal Tory ideology via a discussion of the Big Society. Also the modern party's emphasis on increasing International aid and fighting global poverty was regarded by some as a departure from a Thatcherite agenda.

Section A: Parties and Ideas in the US

Short essays.

7. Insufficient candidates attempted this question for a report to be produced.
8. Insufficient candidates attempted this question for a report to be produced.
9. Some candidates answered this question very well. Their explanation focused on the issue that States in the USA possess certain rights over the Federal government. Current States' rights include the death penalty, assisted suicide, gay marriage and the medical use of marijuana. All candidates recognised that the Federal government is still all powerful in most matters.

Full Essays

10. Insufficient candidates attempted this question for a report to be produced.
11. Insufficient candidates attempted this question for a report to be produced.
12. There were some excellent responses which fully understood the paradox in the question. The question demanded a balanced response and candidates were very effective in doing so. Those that agreed with the quotation pointed to such issues as the two party monopoly of the media; the historical circumstances of the duopoly; the matching funds issue and their

strong organisational structure which confirmed their monopoly of power. On the other side of the argument there was an emphasis on the growth of independents such as Nader, Perot and Paul and the rise of alternative interest groups. Candidates also noted the negative impact on the two parties of the rise of partisanship in Washington and the fact that Parties do not control Presidential nominations.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/03
Ideologies and Philosophies

Key Messages

- In order to score well on **(a)** questions candidates do need to compare the extracts.
- Candidates are advised to read the extracts carefully as many misunderstood at least one extract and this had serious implications when the comparison was made.
- Candidates do not have to place the extracts in their historical context unless it helps to explain the key points of the extract.
- When answering **Question (b)** candidates should be reminded that this is a Politics examination and not a History paper.
- In answering **Question (b)** candidates do need to provide an answer to the question set and not simply write about the topic.
- When answering **Question (b)** candidates do need to refer to a range of political theorists to support their ideas and argument, but they should avoid simply describing their views.
- Candidates should be encouraged to consider the different types of liberalism, conservatism, socialism etc.

General Comments

There was considerable evidence to suggest that candidates had been well prepared for the paper and that there was an understanding of the different demands of this paper in comparison to the other papers in this qualification. A large number of candidates were making direct comparisons about the issues when answering **Question (a)** and were providing an answer to the question set and not simply describing when answering **Question (b)**. There was a willingness to weigh up factors and to reach judgements about the issue in the question. It was also pleasing to see that candidates were willing to offer their own opinions and use other theorists to support their ideas rather than simply describing the views of other theorists. Candidates also showed a much greater understanding of the different types of liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism and feminism than has been apparent in previous examination sessions and this allowed candidates to bring in a greater range of ideas and approaches to their answers.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1a

This was a very popular topic and most candidates were able to identify the different views expressed in the two extracts. As a result they were able to contrast the view of A, which represented the ideas of classical liberalism, with those in B, which represented New Liberalism. At the higher levels candidates did contextualise the extracts and used that to help explain the differences. The extracts offered a range of ideas with which candidates could engage and most were able to consider a good range of issues, allowing a thorough comparison. However, at the lower range candidates were unclear about the differences between the two extracts and attempted to argue that the extracts put forward similar views about the concept of freedom. As suggested in the general comments, it is vital that candidates read the extracts carefully before commencing writing as confusing the key messages of the extracts is likely to result in lower marks achieved.

Question 1b

This question was answered well, with many candidates showing a good understanding of the concept of liberty and its various forms. Many answers discussed liberty in terms of the rights of others and some were able to draw a good distinction between liberty and license. A significant number of answers considered the difference between positive and negative liberty and were able to use that to challenge the question, considering social, economic and political preconditions necessary for the enjoyment of liberty. Most candidates were able to support their arguments by reference to relevant theorists and there was some good

discussion of issues raised by Hobbes and Locke, as well as New Liberals. There was some discussion of the different views of liberty as outlined by different ideologies and some made a distinction between the assumptions and values of Right and Left wing ideologies. However, there were some candidates who focused more on what was meant by liberty and did not engage with the actual wording of the question and as a result were placed in the lower bands. There were many responses which drifted into a more historically focused essay and this was pleasing to note.

Question 2a

This question proved the most challenging of the sub question (a) answers. There were a number of candidates who did not read extract B carefully and therefore misinterpreted the message. However, a number did note that Oakeshott was writing a critique of the rationalist view and that he was criticising violent change and viewed society as an organism. Some stronger answers pointed this out, but also commented that the extract appeared to contrast with the view of Burke in A, and this was acceptable. However, even where candidates did not fully grasp this, they were able to clearly explain the views of Burke in A and this was credited. Some candidates were able to place the two extracts in the wider context of Conservative thought and this was also credited.

Question 2b

This question produced a significant number of excellent responses, with candidates identifying and explaining a wide range of reasons as to why Conservatives value authority. Stronger answers went beyond simply listing the factors and evaluated their relative importance, which resulted in some very well-developed arguments. Many candidates argued that Conservative support for authority was very dependent upon their view of human nature and used their negative view to develop their argument. This was often linked to the need for strong government to back up decisions. Most candidates were able to make reference to the Conservative view of the organic nature of society and link this to their argument, usually with pertinent reference to relevant theorists. However, some answers considered the different types of conservatism and the role that authority played within the different strands. Weaker answers occasionally focused too heavily on recent developments within the Conservative party and there was often too much emphasis on Thatcher and Cameron.

Question 3a

Although the two passages were clearly understood by candidates, a number of answers did not develop the points fully or did not pick up on the slightly different focus of the two extracts which limited the level awarded. Most were able to explain that the passages suggested that workers were exploited in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but did not go on to show that extract A suggested that exploitation was more blatant than extract B. Most notably, very few commented on the question of inequality, which was commented on in both extracts. Some candidates were able to use contextual knowledge to explain the passages, but this was used less convincingly when handling extract B.

Question 3b

This question produced a significant number of strong responses, particularly where candidates approached the question by examining the different types of equality. However, weaker answers did not focus on 'to what extent' and instead tended to describe the different views of different strands of socialism about equality and explain why socialists disagree, rather than the extent. Stronger answers were able to argue that socialists do not disagree on all elements of equality and were able to show where there was greater disagreement, most notably over absolute equality. However, even stronger answers would have benefited from greater links to theorists as support was often superficial.

Question 4a

There were very few responses to this question and those that did attempt it did not address the main issues raised in the two extracts. Candidates did not see the contrast between the freedom that the creation of the state could create, as expressed in A, in comparison with the subordination noted in B.

Question 4b

As with sub **Question (a)** there were very few responses to this question and as with **Question (a)** the quality of the responses was disappointing. Very few candidates were able to show a clear understanding of democracy and dictatorship and thus did not establish criteria against which to compare the two forms. As a result, answers were frequently poorly structured and were descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates also struggled to link their ideas to relevant theorists.

Question 5a

Although this was quite a popular option, a number of candidates were unclear about the views represented by the two extracts, but an awareness that they were from two different periods of feminist thought and ideology was crucial. Some confused the periods and this also made an explanation of the differences difficult. However, stronger answers noted that A was from the start of the second wave of the feminist movement, whilst B represented the radical wing. Once candidates had established this many were able to compare and explain the differences in the development of feminist ideas and develop full and convincing comparisons, using contextual knowledge to enhance their arguments.

Question 5b

Although many candidates had a sound understanding of religious fundamentalism, there were very answers that fully developed an argument and instead listed reasons for its growth, rather than addressing 'to what extent.' It was also noticeable that the range of types of fundamentalism covered was narrow, and if studying this option, it would be advisable to look at a range, in the same way Centres have been encouraged to look at the different types of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. The majority of candidates did struggle to make reference to relevant theorists which would have helped to enhance responses. However, there were some answers which contrasted the reasons for its growth in the Middle East and the USA.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/04

**Contemporary International Debates:
Contexts and Comparisons**

This was the fourth sitting of the Pre-U examination in Comparative Government and Politics, Contemporary International Debates: Contexts and Comparisons. Candidates are required to answer two essays worth fifty marks each from a choice of five. They have one hour and forty minutes to answer the paper, devoting fifty minutes to each essay. The questions are deliberately broad and intended to allow candidates to bring their knowledge and understanding from other areas of the specification to bear in answering these questions.

Once again it is worth giving some general advice regarding answering the questions. In order for a candidate to get into the top bands, their answers must unswervingly focus on all aspects of the question. Each word in the question must be considered and its meaning addressed. The old adage about answering the question remains true today. The Examiners are looking for a very deliberate, focused response to the question set. The reader should be able to ascertain exactly what the candidate's answer is to a very complex question. The more sophisticated and nuanced the response is to a very broad question, the more marks the candidate is likely to receive. It is good practice to very clearly define all the specific terms used in the question in the opening paragraph or paragraphs. To reach the highest level on the mark scheme, candidates must address all the key words in the question, whether it be about 'all' states, or 'always' imperialist, or 'no longer'. Examples of this will be given later. Candidates who did not clearly specify the exact nature of the debate they were undertaking scored less well in this examination and their arguments and analysis is inevitably thinner and less developed. Candidates should also be reminded of the need for balance in their essays. Those candidates who do have one-sided or weaker arguments for one element of the debate will struggle to achieve the higher levels. The key way of differentiating between candidates is their ability to remain focused on the question throughout the essay. Responses that lose focus or have thinner arguments are unlikely to achieve higher levels. Candidates are also reminded to bring theoretical and contemporary knowledge to their answers. Knowledge must of course be shown in answers, but it should be stressed to candidates to add their own analysis and views in order to score in the higher levels.

Question 1

This was not a popular question. It required an understanding of the concept of the separation of powers. Some candidates were comfortable with the concept but neglected to include the separation of power between the judiciary and the two other branches. Moreover, this essay required an understanding and definition of tyranny which was rarely included. Thus, the ability of candidates to get into the higher levels was limited.

Question 2

Very few candidates delved deeply into the issue of minority rights or argued why the protection of minority rights may be considered crucial in a democracy. Most candidates were able to posit other important aspects of democracies. The candidates who were able to consider whether elections per se were sufficient for a democracy were more likely to get into the higher levels. It is the quality of the analysis and evaluation when answering questions that is rewarded.

Question 3

This was the most popular question. It was generally well attempted by the candidates, but the normal differentiators prevailed. A good answer to this question required clear working definitions of imperialism and intervention. Those candidates who were able to subtly define intervention rather than insist that all activities, including giving aid, help or advice, were by definition intervention and therefore imperialistic were

generally better rewarded. Likewise, the ability to construct or draw upon a suitable definition of imperialism meant that some candidates were able to score more highly than others,

Question 4

This was also a very popular question that was on the whole answered well and in line with Examiners expectations. The type of answers that scored reasonably well were those that discussed the likes of sovereignty and globalisation. The biggest differentiator was between those candidates that conflated the concept of nation and state, assuming the two coalesced around nation-state. However, the question actually was about nations, so candidates who were able to focus more on elements of nationhood were able to do better. For example, whilst one candidate may have talked about economic globalisation affecting the viability of the sovereign state, another may have talked about economic and cultural globalisation impacting the *nation* itself and the viability of the nation-state. The latter would have scored more highly.

Question 5

This was another popular question. It allowed candidates to bring in their contemporary knowledge of the Arab Spring into their answers. Candidates should be aware, however, that the jury is very much still out on the final impact of the Arab Spring. This does mean that candidates can use these revolutions in both sides of their arguments. Better responses debated what liberty actually meant and how it could be interpreted in different ways, though this was rarely done. Weaker responses tended to write an “are human rights universal?” essay, again emphasising the need to answer the question set.