



Rewarding Learning

ADVANCED

General Certificate of Education

January 2010

Government and Politics

Assessment Unit A2 2

assessing

Module 6: The Government and Politics of
the United Kingdom and the USA (Comparative)

Module 7: The Government and Politics of
the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland
(Comparative)

[A2Q21]

MONDAY 1 FEBRUARY, MORNING



TIME

1 hour 30 minutes.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Write your Centre Number and Candidate Number on the Answer Booklet provided.
Answer **either** Section A on Module 6 **or** Section B on Module 7.
Answer **all** questions from your chosen section.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

The total mark for this paper is 40.
Quality of written communication will be assessed in questions 3 and 4.
Figures in brackets printed down the right-hand side of pages indicate the marks awarded to each question or part question.

ADVICE TO CANDIDATES

You are advised to take approximately 20 minutes to study the source material before attempting to answer the questions.
You are advised to take account of the marks for each part question in allocating the available examination time.

You should answer **all** questions from **either** Section A **or** Section B

Section A

Module 6: The Government and Politics of the United Kingdom and the USA (Comparative)

Source A

The British Cabinet

The first, and the most powerful, constituency which needs to be kept on board is the Cabinet. Almost by definition, it is composed of extremely ambitious politicians whose fates are a collective reflection of the success or failure of the very Prime Minister whose patronage puts them there in the first place.

Any, if not most, cabinet ministers believe they can do a better job than the Prime Minister. Although few if any would admit to it, when times get hard they will blame the person in the hot seat, rarely recognising their collective responsibility for the Government's fortunes.

Source: Adapted from Peter Kilfoyle, The Observer, 24 March 2002.

Source B

Congressional Committees

When Congress is in session, as many as 100 meetings of full committees and sub-committees take place each week. Meetings of the House's 19 standing committees and one select committee outnumber those by the Senate's 16 standing committees, 2 select committees and one special committee by about two to one. All committees differ because they deal with different kinds of policy. They also differ because members choose committees that reflect their personal political goals.

Source: Adapted from R Singh, Governing America. Oxford UP, 2003 p 208.

Source C

American Cabinets

Some presidents – most notably Dwight Eisenhower – attempted to establish a Cabinet that would work on the basis of collective decision making. However, in practice, the Cabinet is only as important or unimportant as a president chooses to make it. The great majority of presidents have begun their periods of office by declaring that the cabinet would become a principal forum for decision-making. However, almost all have within a short period relegated their Cabinets to the political sidelines.

Source: E Ashbee and N Ashford. US Politics Today. Manchester UP 199, p 121.

Source D

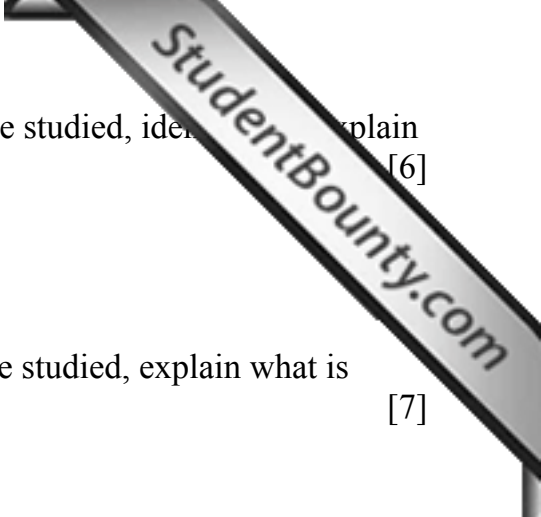
Select Committees in Parliament

Departmental Select Committees have a wide range of responsibilities and their work is taken seriously. They tend to adopt an adversarial style of questioning which can, on occasions, be aggressive. Indeed many ministers and civil servants have admitted to approaching hearings with some unease.

These Committees have a small research staff to assist them and, after years of service, the MPs can develop a high degree of knowledge and experience. Most Committee members end up serving for more years than the minister they are investigating.

There is no equivalent of Departmental Select Committees in the House of Lords.

Source: Adapted from N McNaughton. Government and Politics for AS Hodder. 2008. p 208

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- 1 With reference to **Source B** and any other information you have studied, identify and explain **two** functions of Congressional Committees. [6]
 - 2 With reference to **Source A** and any other information you have studied, explain what is meant by the term “patronage”. [7]
 - 3 With reference to **Sources B** and **D** and any other information you have studied, compare and contrast the effectiveness of Congress and Parliament in scrutinising the executive. [12]
 - 4 “Both British Prime Ministers and US Presidents can ignore their cabinets.” Discuss with reference to **Sources A** and **C** and any other information you have studied. [15]

Section B

Module 7: The Government and Politics of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (Comparative)

Source A

The Dail's Scrutiny Role

Does the Dail merely sit back and allow the government to act as it wishes? Or does it keep the government under careful scrutiny, checking on whether it has behaved as it said it would and on whether public money has been spent as the government promised? Does it keep the government on its toes, exposing its mistakes? How effective is the Dail in making the government answerable and accountable? The Dail has three main methods of trying to compel the government to justify its behaviour: debates, parliamentary questions and committees.

Source: Adapted from J. Coakley and M. Gallagher. Politics in the Republic of Ireland. PSAI Press. 1996. p 135

Source B

The Powers of the PM

The powers exercised by a British Prime Minister are now so great as to encroach upon the legitimate rights of the electorate, undermine the essential role of Parliament and usurp some of the functions of collective Cabinet decision-making. In short, the present centralisation of power into the hands of one person has gone too far and amounts to a system of personal rule.

Source: Tony Benn quoted in D Watts. British Government and Politics Edinburgh UP. 2006. p 131.

Source C

The Taoiseach's Powers

The Taoiseach has, in himself, certain constitutional and statutory powers. He may compel any minister to resign for any reason which to him seems sufficient. He nominates the Attorney General for appointment by the President and the ministers of state for appointment by the government. He appoints eleven members of the Seanad. He appoints the chief officers of the Dail and Seanad as well as the Superintendent and Captain of the Guard.

Source: Adapted from S. Dooney and J. O'Toole. Irish Government Today. Gill and Macmillan. 1992. p 10

Source D

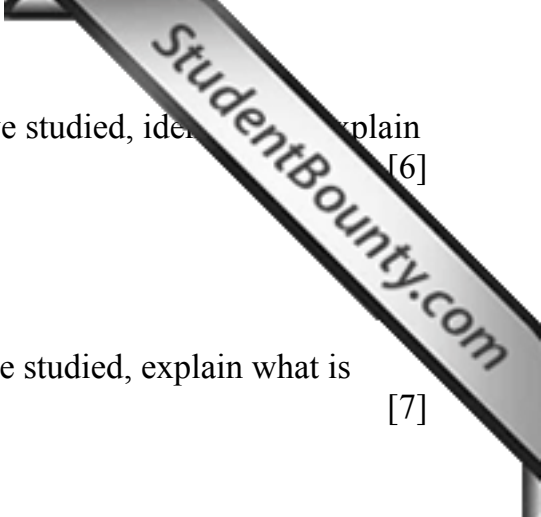
Select Committees in Parliament

Departmental Select Committees have a wide range of responsibilities and their work is taken seriously. They tend to adopt an adversarial style of questioning which can, on occasions, be aggressive. Indeed many ministers and civil servants have admitted to approaching hearings with some unease.

After years of service, the MPs can develop a high degree of knowledge and experience. Most Committee members end up serving for more years than the minister they are investigating.

There is no equivalent of Departmental Select Committees in the House of Lords.

Source: Adapted from N McNaughton. Government and Politics for AS Hodder: 2008. p 208

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- 1 With reference to **Source D** and any other information you have studied, identify and explain **two** powers of Departmental Select Committees. [6]
 - 2 With reference to **Source B** and any other information you have studied, explain what is meant by “centralisation of power.” [7]
 - 3 With reference to **Sources A** and **D** and any other information you have studied, compare and contrast the effectiveness of Parliament and the Dail in keeping a check on the executive. [12]
 - 4 “The Taoiseach’s powers are remarkably similar to those of a British Prime Minister.” Discuss with reference to **Sources B** and **C** and any other information you have studied. [15]

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTION PAPER

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will be happy to rectify any omissions of acknowledgement in future if notified.