

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/01
Concepts and Institutions

The candidates who took this examination 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.

There is insufficient evidence to make any valid comments on the US question in **Section B**.

Comments on Short essay questions

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 the 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 in relation to the Awards.

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 a distinction. 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 this examination **Questions 1-3** were of equal popularity with the candidates. The majority of answers were of good quality with sound knowledge.

In **Question 1** the key word, as with all short answer questions, is 'explain'. Many candidates provided good explanations but some candidates tended to describe, rather explain, the differences between the devolved bodies in the UK. There was a tendency to leave out detailed references to Northern Ireland.

In **Question 2** the key word was 'functions'. There were some good answers to this question but some candidates needed to focus more on explaining the functions rather than describing some aspects of the Cabinet, with implied references to the functions.

In **Question 3** the key word was 'importance'. Candidates who realised the significance of focusing on the reasons why judicial independence was important tended to do well. However, some candidates just explained the term judicial independence and, therefore, did not address the question fully.

Candidates are reminded that there is not a requirement to provide evaluation for **Short essay** answers.

Comments on Full essay questions

Whereas the **Short essay** questions are focused on an explanation, the **Full essay** questions are focused on a **discussion and evaluation**. The aim of this type of question is to assess the candidates' ability 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 for the awarded levels 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 candidate's will identify which is the most important aspect but not provide adequate support for their statement.
- 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.

The most popular question in the **Full essays** was **Question 6** and it was generally well answered. It was pleasing to see that most of the answers to **Questions 4-6** showed a sound ability by the candidates to provide well structured and well argued discussions of the key issues in the questions.

In **Question 4** candidates realised that it was necessary to focus on the key words 'more important' and provided focused answers. However, further supporting evidence would have enhanced some of the answers.

In **Question 5** the focus of the argument should have been on the word 'needs', not just providing an explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of a codified constitution.

In **Question 6** most candidates showed a sound understanding of the arguments for and against the first-past-the-post system, but some candidates did not fully focus their evidence on the key words 'in general elections' and therefore, needed to provide more evidence from recent general elections to support their arguments.

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 need to make a number of points that are explained in detail for the short essays.
- Candidates must address both sides of the paradox in the full essays.

General Comments

The overall standard was very pleasing. For the most part candidates understood the requirements of the examination and showed that they had a good grasp of the concepts and ideas needed to succeed on this paper. Some excellent short and long answers were produced and some high marks were awarded accordingly. Time did not seem to be an issue and most candidates produced full and detailed responses. There were a variety of questions attempted and only questions numbers 2 and 5 were not. The paper allows the option to go down either the British or American route and it was pleasing to see that both options were followed in question choice.

For the short essays Examiners are looking for a very simple approach, namely a number of points are required to be explained in detail in order to achieve the highest bands. These points need to be explained with examples to support the assertions.

For the full essays Examiners are looking for a detailed approach. Achieving a balance is the key to being awarded a mark in the top two levels. The Examiner is expecting strong, accurate, focused and selective analysis with current and up to date examples to support assertions. One area of development should be a focus on the paradox in the question, with lower band essays on the whole agreeing unreservedly with the assertion in it. A more critical approach is to be expected. All full essay questions are evaluative in nature and candidates need to look at both sides of the argument before coming to a conclusion.

Comments on Individual Questions.

Section A: Parties and Ideas in the UK

Short essays

1. A small number of candidates attempted this question and for the most part did so successfully. They were able to cite various reasons for the importance of partisan dealignment such as class, tactical voting and a move away from the traditional partisan parties.
2. This was very popular and for the most part well done. Candidates avoided the trap of a historical narrative and concentrated on the key principles of socialism, namely social organisation, the idea of community and an explanation of the means of production and distribution from a socialist orientation.
3. This was popular and very well done. The best candidates were able to give a general definition and then cite various forms of nationalism, such as cultural, political and Republican variants of the term, whilst embellishing their answers with current and up to date answers.

Full essays

4. This was a very popular question. Candidates were able to give a balanced and successful evaluation of the current arguments surrounding the debate over the state funding of parties. What was most encouraging was their knowledge of the key issues on both sides of the

argument. Candidates discussed the Neill and Kelly reports and engaged fully with the notion of why state funding is opposed by the major parties as well as discussing the difficulties of who decides where the money should go. The best answers as ever were balanced, detailed and littered with good exemplar material.

5. This was attempted by a small number of candidates and on the whole was the least successful of the three essay choices. Some candidates did not recognise the slant of the question, which required a detailed analysis of the importance of electoral defeat as a causal factor in the emergence of New Labour. Other reasons tended to dominate, such as the Thatcherite legacy etc. This led to an imbalanced evaluation in some responses.
6. The question was reasonably well done. Candidates were able to cite various points in favour of the question such as the poor performance of political parties and the complete apathy and alienation of the voting public. On the other hand candidates appreciated the importance of political parties in our representative democracy and cited the importance they have in training future leaders, as well as representing tradition, and their operation at all levels of government

Section B: Parties and Ideas in the US

Short essays and Full essays

Insufficient candidates attempted these questions for a report to be produced.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/03
Ideologies and Philosophies

Key Messages

- In order to score well on **(a)** questions, candidates need to compare the extracts. Stronger answers often started with brief summary as to whether the documents agreed/disagreed before developing those ideas.
- Candidates need to make greater use of the material in the passages in their answers to sub question **(a)**.
- Candidates do not have to place the extracts in their historical context unless it helps to explain the key points of the extract.
- In answering sub **Question (b)**, candidates need to provide an answer to the question set and not simply write about the topic. Many responses were awarded Level 3 because there was only a partial answer to the question.
- In answering sub **Question (b)**, candidates should be encouraged to put forward their view about the issue in the question and then use their knowledge of theorists to help support or challenge that view.
- 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

Most candidates were aware 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 in the question when answering **Question (a)** but fewer were providing an answer to the question set and a significant number drifted into description when answering **Question (b)**. However, where candidates were specifically asked to assess there were attempts to weigh up factors and to reach judgements, even if they were limited, about the issue in the question. At the higher levels, candidates offered their own opinions and used theorists to support their ideas. However, in many instances knowledge was simply imparted and the views of theorists described, often with only limited link to the question so that any argument was, at best, implied. Candidates also showed a much greater understanding of some of the different types of liberalism, conservatism and socialism, but again this was variable, and in some instances limited, but where there was awareness of this it allowed candidates to bring in a greater range of ideas and approaches in their answers.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a)** This was a very popular question and most responses showed a sound understanding of the two passages. Responses were mostly able to identify the limits of the powers of individuals and governments to restrain others. However, weaker answers drifted away from a comparison of the two passages to a more general account of liberal views about the liberty of the individual and whilst this has some merit, the focus should be on the actual passages with contextual knowledge used only when it helps to explain the passages. Most answers were able to identify the main similarity that true freedom is the absence of restraints, and many were able to see the difference between the Declaration and Mill's view. However, candidates were less able to suggest that the individual is the best judge of what constitutes or will promote happiness for them. Very few picked

up the possible link between the Declaration, which claims that life is an inalienable right, and Mill, who argued that interference was only justifiable to prevent harm or the loss of life.

- (b) Although candidates knew a great deal about liberalism and its key features, there were very few answers that focused consistently on the actual question. Candidates who defined or offered a view as to the key features of liberalism and then compared different types of liberalism to the various themes scored well. Very few picked up on the idea of 'true' liberalism and what it actually meant. There were many who understood at least some of the key elements of classical liberalism, but found it difficult to link this knowledge to the question and simply described the features and then provided a brief analytical comment at the end of a paragraph rather than consistently arguing and analysing the feature in terms of the question. In discussing other types of liberalism, candidates often struggled to link their material to the question and few picked up on the idea that liberalism had to change, as a state of nature where individuals acted in isolation was implausible. A few candidates did discuss the extent to which liberalism had changed and whether there were still elements of 'modern' liberalism that could be described as 'true' liberalism, with some drawing attention to issues such as individualism, the free market and the role of the state. Most answers made reference to relevant theorists, more so on classical liberalism than more modern forms, but in weaker answers candidates tended to use their knowledge illustratively, rather than to argue.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question and most candidates were able to recognise that both passages considered authority to be important. However, as with **Question 1(a)** many did not make the views in the two passages the focus of their answer. Where candidates did maintain a focus on the passages most argued that Hobbes considered authority to be absolutely crucial as without it society would soon collapse, whilst Scruton, although he still saw it as important, did not paint such a bleak picture. It was the ability to move from a supported view that the passages agreed to a more nuanced and detailed consideration that distinguished the stronger answers from the more solid ones. Candidates could have taken this further and noted that Hobbes suggests man will and needs to be submissive to an all-powerful 'Leviathan', whereas Scruton suggests that man does not need to be submissive, thus it was possible to provide a further point of contrast.
- (b) The question required candidates to consider whether conservatism is an ideology or a pragmatic response to political developments and events. Stronger answers attempted to define ideology and then compare conservatism to the definition. A number of answers argued yes and then provided a counter argument, but were never clear as to their actual view as no supported judgement was reached and this is something that Centres could encourage candidates to do as the Examiner is interested in their view, provided it is supported and not simply asserted. This approach will also encourage more analytical responses and move candidates from Level 3. There were a number of possible approaches and those who did offer an argument argued both for and against the proposition. There were some who argued that at the core of conservatism was the view of no change, which is not pragmatic, whilst others suggested that conservatism responded to other ideologies of the time and was therefore pragmatic. Many answers focused heavily on Burke and his ideas of respect for the past and would have benefited from a wider theoretical perspective. A number of answers focused on the ideas of the New Right to argue that conservatism did have political principles. A few answers picked up on Karl Popper's idea that ideological movements influence human nature.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates who tackled this question often overlooked the fact that the passages focused on two issues: economic progress and social justice, and confined their answer to one of the elements. Most focused more on the economic aspect and argued that both passages suggested that the Third Way was different from the free market, but having done that, a number then drifted away to compare the ideas of the Third Way with other types of socialism rather than focusing on the actual content of the passages. It was this that may have resulted in candidates not addressing the issue of social justice. However, in discussing economic progress, contextual knowledge of the abandonment of Clause IV would have been beneficial as economic development was a crucial component of the Third Way. Some candidates did pick up on the passages' view of the role of the state, where Passage A was more supportive. Social justice should have been a key element in answers as there was concern among many socialists that the Third Way had abandoned the more vulnerable.

- (b) This question required candidates to consider the different types of equality and types of socialists. Where candidates did consider the different types of equality they were able to argue that socialists have different views about the various types of equality and this allowed a more evaluative and analytical approach. Stronger answers also ensured that they focused on 'why' socialists support equality and were able to place initial support in its historical context in order to explain its development. The strongest answers also noted that different types of socialists had different attitudes to equality, with some arguing that differentials in rewards due to abilities or contributions were justified. Even where some candidates were aware of the different types of equality they described the features and did not analyse why socialists supported it.

Question 4

- (a) There were insufficient responses to produce a report on this question.
(b) There were insufficient responses to produce a report on this question.

Question 5

- (a) There were insufficient responses to produce a report on this question.
(b) There were insufficient responses to produce a report on this question.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Paper 9770/4

**Contemporary International Debates:
Contexts and Comparisons**

This was the fifth 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 question style remains the same in that broad and engaging topics are set, allowing the candidates to answer the question as they see fit and bring in appropriate knowledge from other areas of the syllabus.

The key advice that all candidates need to take, is to maintain a clear focus on all aspects of the question. Answering the question set is the only way a candidate will get into the top levels. Examiners are looking for responses that deal directly with each word in the question. Sophisticated, considered and nuanced answers will be well-rewarded, whilst responses that fail to deal closely with the question set will score less highly. Defining terms at the start of the answer is good practice, and candidates are encouraged to bring their own individual ideas to these terms. Level 5 does require candidates to consider every term in the question. For example from this year's exam there was a need to focus on the 'inevitability' of global government rather than just the likelihood or need. Likewise, candidates needed to consider whether sovereignty is an 'outdated' concept rather than just a less relevant one. Candidates who take too much of a general approach to the answering of the questions will score less well, as will candidates whose answers are less developed, contain fewer examples or are unbalanced. The key way, as before, 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 going to remain in Level 3. Candidates are also reminded to bring as much theoretical and contemporary knowledge to their answers as possible. Knowledge must be of course 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.

Generally speaking, candidates showed broad and appropriate knowledge and understanding. Candidates wrote balanced, analytical answers that were in line with Examiners' expectations.

Question 1

Responses to this question were largely well-focused and were able to debate whether there is too much focus on human rights in the world today. Other areas of focus included the environment and lack of resources. What prevented many candidates getting into the higher levels was a lack of explanation of why there was too much focus on human rights or why there should be focus elsewhere. There could also have been more of a defence of human rights as many candidates elected to look at other issues that are important. A small minority did not consider adequately other areas of focus and this made scoring marks difficult. Very few candidates analysed the type of focus or whose focus the question could be referring to.

Question 2

This question proved more difficult for many candidates. In assessing whether democracy faces too many threats to be a success globally, candidates needed to consider the features of democracy and analyse why democracy might not last or expand. Furthermore, durability implies that democracy is here and will last. Many candidates were focused on other systems in isolation from debate around threats to democracies. These candidates were more concerned about whether democracy would flourish in places like the Middle East and China, rather than debating whether countries that already have democracy will continue to remain democratic. Stronger answers linked the features of democratic societies and features of illiberal or totalitarian societies and explained why democracy was under challenge. These answers were rewarded for their approach.

Question 3

The major drawback for candidates answering this question was the confusion between global governance and global government. Some candidates conflated the two terms and were therefore not able to answer the question effectively. Global governance refers to the current system of global cooperation and decision-making, whilst global government refers to a centralised authority for the world. Improvements could have been made by candidates placing a greater emphasis on the defence of the state in the current global order. Candidates were able to argue that environmental challenges and change necessitated more global cooperation, but were less able to argue that states could deal with environmental issues either by themselves or through cooperation (i.e. global governance institutions). Increased focus was required on the inevitability of global government.

Question 4

This was the most popular question. Candidates generally gave good arguments for nationalism not being the main cause of war today. They posited causes such as the pursuit of resources, humanitarian intervention and the war on terrorism. A number of essays ended up being somewhat unbalanced as they struggled to develop the argument that nationalism is the main cause of war today. This could have been avoided by playing around with the concept of nationalism and linking it to ethnic, cultural and religious violence, discussing perhaps the changing nature of nationalism or linking the pursuit of the national interest more explicitly to nationalism.

Question 5

This was a popular question and probably caused the least difficulties for candidates. Candidates were well aware of the contemporary debates surrounding sovereignty and were able to provide very focused responses with good supporting evidence. Strong, balanced answers prevailed and few candidates struggled with their focus. Nonetheless, few responses dealt explicitly with the outdated nature of sovereignty and few candidates considered the changing nature of sovereignty. Some candidates did argue that the pooling of sovereignty in institutions like the EU meant that sovereignty was not an outdated concept. This type of response was, of course, rewarded.