



A-level POLITICS

7152/1

Paper 1 Government and politics of the UK

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

Levels of response mark scheme for 9-mark questions

0 1	Explain and analyse three ways in which UK membership of the EU has had an impact upon UK politics and policy making.	[9 marks]
0 2	Explain and analyse three powers of the UK prime minister.	[9 marks]
0 3	Explain and analyse three ways in which judicial impartiality is upheld in the UK.	[9 marks]

Target AO1: 6 marks, AO2: 3 marks

Level	Marks	Descriptors
3	7–9	- Detailed knowledge of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes is demonstrated and appropriate political vocabulary is used (AO1). - Thorough explanations and appropriate selection of accurate supporting examples demonstrate detailed understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes (AO1). - Analysis of three clear points is structured, clearly focused on the question and confidently developed into a coherent answer (AO2).
2	4–6	- Generally sound knowledge of political concepts, institutions and processes is demonstrated and generally appropriate political vocabulary is used (AO1). - Some development of explanations and generally appropriate selection of supporting examples demonstrate generally accurate understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, though further detail may be required in places and some inaccuracies may be present (AO1). - Analysis is developed in most places, though some points may be descriptive or in need of further development. Answers, for the most part, are clearly expressed and show some organisation in the presentation of material (AO2). Students who only make two relevant points will be limited to this level.
1	1–3	- Limited knowledge of political concepts, institutions and processes is demonstrated and little or no appropriate political vocabulary is used (AO1). - Limited development of explanations and selection of supporting examples demonstrate limited understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with further detail required and inaccuracies present throughout (AO1). - Analysis takes the form of description for the most part. Coherence and structure are limited (AO2). Students who only make one relevant point will be limited to this level.
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

0	1
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Explain and analyse three ways in which UK membership of the EU has had an impact upon UK politics and policy making.

[9 marks]

Indicative content

In their explanations and analysis, students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of the impact of EU membership upon the constitution and parliamentary sovereignty. Whilst the UK was a member of the EU, EU law took precedence over UK law and no Parliamentary Act could conflict with EU law (eg regulations upon farming and fishing quotas; impact of EU rules on VAT rates and the difficulties faced by the campaign to repeal the Tampon Tax). Limits on parliamentary sovereignty were removed by the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972 by the EU Act 2020 (eg abolition of the Tampon Tax from January 2021)
- explanation and analysis of the use of referendums to decide upon future UK membership of the EU in 1975 and 2016. The 2016 results highlighted a divergence in views towards membership (eg majority of MPs campaigned for Remain, 75%; Leave majority among the population, 52%; Remain majority in Scotland, 62%)
- explanation and analysis of the impact of EU membership upon government policy making due to the 'pooling' of sovereignty as the Government was obliged to fulfil the requirements of the EU treaties and law (eg Common Agricultural Policy; environmental regulations; working-time directives). However, EU membership had a limited impact upon policy making in areas outside of its direct competences (eg health and education) where national governments retained full control over policy
- explanation and analysis of the impact of EU membership upon judgments made by the UK judiciary as judges had to give precedence to EU law when making decisions (eg 1990 Factortame case). The relationship between the UK Supreme Court and the Court of Justice of the European Union has changed since the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (eg UK courts, including the Supreme Court, are not bound by decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union)
- explanation and analysis of the impact of EU membership upon political parties and party discipline (eg divisions created within both the Conservative and Labour parties; the formation of new parties such as UKIP, Brexit party and Change UK; suspension of collective responsibility with respect to the 2016 and 1975 referendums).

Students are required to consider only three ways. If a student exceeds this number, reward only the best three. However, some may include relevant points not listed above and these should be credited. If a student gives only one or two examples they will receive a maximum of three and six marks respectively.

0 2

Explain and analyse three powers of the UK prime minister.

[9 marks]**Indicative content**

In their explanations and analysis, students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of the power of appointing and dismissing cabinet ministers ('hiring and firing') and undertaking cabinet reshuffles. Responses may argue that prime ministers use the power of appointment to maintain balance and diversity within the cabinet (eg gender, ethnicity, party factions, inclusion of 'big beasts', such as Gordon Brown as Chancellor) and that increasingly there are appointments of special advisers within the Prime Minister's Office (eg Johnson and Dominic Cummings; Blair and Alastair Campbell; Thatcher and Alan Walters). Prime ministers also have the power to create new departments (eg Sunak, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero)
- explanation and analysis of the power of authority over the cabinet, determining the cabinet agenda and policy agenda (eg timing of cabinet meetings, style of meetings – bilaterals, kitchen cabinets, the Quad), allowing some prime ministers to exert their political influence and principles, such as Thatcher (privatisation, reducing the power of trade unions, Falklands, poll tax); Blair (constitutional reform, university tuition fees, Iraq); Johnson ('Get Brexit Done'); Sunak (Northern Ireland deal)
- explanation and analysis of the prerogative power of patronage (eg life peerages, recommending the Chair of the BBC with the assistance of an Advisory Assessment Panel) often awarding positions to former loyal MPs or party supporters (eg Boris Johnson and Peter Cruddas). Analysis may focus upon how some prime ministers use this power extensively and face criticism, such as Boris Johnson appointing 79 new peers between July and December 2019 or the appointment of Richard Sharp as BBC Chairman. Both Tony Blair ('Tony's cronies') and David Cameron exceeded the number of peers created by Boris Johnson in their first year in office
- explanation and analysis of the power of managing Parliament as leader of the majority party and the House of Commons. Prime ministers have power to control the parliamentary timetable, determine the timing of general elections (Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022) and that there are expectations of party loyalty (eg Keir Starmer's decision to suspend seven Labour MPs for supporting an amendment to scrap the two-child benefit limit, 2024). Analysis may also focus upon the impact of party discipline and circumstances such as size of majority.

Students are required to consider only three powers. If a student exceeds this number, reward only the best three. However, some may include relevant points not listed above and these should be credited. If a student gives only one or two examples they will receive a maximum of three and six marks respectively.

0	3
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Explain and analyse three ways in which judicial impartiality is upheld in the UK.

[9 marks]**Indicative content**

In their explanations and analysis, students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- explanation and analysis of judicial impartiality, whereby judges operate without personal bias, which is an essential requirement of the rule of law. This can be achieved through anonymity (eg operating away from the public eye, avoidance of open defence of rulings, avoidance of open criticism of those in government). Analysis may focus upon how senior judges have been drawn more openly into public conflicts and criticism from the media in recent years (eg 'enemies of the people') and politicians (eg Braverman's criticisms of judicial encroachment; Johnson's attacks on 'lefty lawyers')
- explanation and analysis of how judges are expected to refrain from political activity (eg political campaigning, pressure group support) and that their political outlook should not be made public. Analysis may focus upon how measures such as the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 have created a more independent appointments system (eg creation of the Judicial Appointments Commission) in order to address accusations of political bias
- explanation and analysis of how judges are part of a highly trained profession which is regulated by the Law Society with appointments based upon meritocracy. Analysis may focus upon how it will take time to widen the narrow recruiting pool from which senior judges have traditionally been drawn (eg Oxbridge-educated, white, middle-class, privately educated, male). Such life experiences may affect judicial impartiality when making decisions
- explanation and analysis of the expectation that senior judges explain their decision making based upon the law, not personal bias (eg UK Supreme Court decisions published on the Court's website). Analysis may focus upon how senior judges apply the law (eg Human Rights Act 1998, Scotland Act 1998) and constitutional principles (eg parliamentary sovereignty) to challenge the actions of the political establishment in defence of civil liberties or hold governments to account (eg prorogation unlawful, 2019; legislating for a referendum on independence a reserved power of Westminster, 2022).

Students are required to consider only three ways. If a student exceeds this number, reward only the best three. However, some may include relevant points not listed above and these should be credited. If a student gives only one or two examples they will receive a maximum of three and six marks respectively.

Section B

Levels of response mark scheme for 25-mark extract-based essay

0	4
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Analyse, evaluate and compare the arguments in the above extracts regarding the effects of First Past the Post upon the party system in the UK.

[25 marks]

Target AO1: 5 marks, AO2: 10 marks, AO3: 10 marks

Level	Marks	Descriptors
5	21–25	- Detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion (AO1). - Analysis of the extract is balanced and confidently developed (AO2). - Comparisons are well explained, are focused on the question and fully supported with relevant and developed examples (AO2). - Evaluation of the above leads to well substantiated conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3). - Relevant perspectives and/or the status of the extract are successfully evaluated in the process of constructing arguments (AO3). - The answer is well organised, coherent and has a sustained analytical focus on the question (AO2).
4	16–20	- Accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion, though further detail may be required in places (AO1). - Analysis of the extract is balanced and developed, though some elements of the analysis could be expanded and/or developed further (AO2). - Comparisons are relevant to the questions as set, and supported with examples (AO2). - Evaluation leads to conclusions that show some substantiation and are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3). - Relevant perspectives and/or the status of the extract are evaluated in constructing arguments, although in some places there could be further development (AO3). - The answer is well organised, analytical in style and is focused on the question as set (AO2).
3	11–15	- Generally sound knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though inaccuracies will be present (AO1). - Analytical points relating to the extract are made and developed in places, showing some balance, though some points are descriptive rather than analytical (AO2). - Comparisons are made and may be supported by examples (AO2). - Evaluation leads to conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion, but that lack substantiation (AO3). - Relevant perspectives and/or the status of the extract are commented on in constructing arguments, though evaluation is lacking depth (AO3). - The answer is organised, occasionally analytical and focused on the question as set (AO2).

2	6–10	• Some knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though these contain inaccuracies and irrelevant material (AO1). • Analysis of the extract takes the form of description in most places, with some attempt at balance, though many points are unsupported assertions (AO2). • Comparisons tend to be limited and unsupported by examples (AO2). • Some attempt to draw conclusions is made, but these lack depth and clear development from the preceding discussion (AO3). • Relevant perspectives are identified and some awareness of the status of the extract is shown in the process of constructing arguments, though evaluation will be superficial (AO3). • The answer shows some organisation and makes some attempt to address the question (AO2).
1	1–5	• Limited knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with inaccuracies and irrelevant material present throughout (AO1). • Analysis of the extract takes the form of description and assertion, with little or no attempt made at balance (AO2). • Comparisons tend to be superficial and undeveloped (AO2). • Conclusions, when offered, are asserted and have an implicit relationship to the preceding discussion (AO3). • Little or no evaluation of relevant perspectives and the status of the extract is present (AO3). • The answer shows little organisation and does not address the question (AO2).
0	0	• Nothing worthy of credit.

0 4

Analyse, evaluate and compare the arguments in the above extracts regarding the effects of First Past the Post upon the party system in the UK.

[25 marks]**Indicative content**

In the analysis and evaluation of the arguments regarding the effects of First Past the Post (FPTP) upon the party system in the UK, as made in the extracts, students should be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- analysis and evaluation of FPTP as a 'single-member plurality electoral system' and the effects of FPTP upon the party system. Extract 1 argues that recent general election results have challenged traditional expectations of FPTP upholding the two-party system and there is evidence of a multi-party system. In comparison, Extract 2 argues that FPTP does uphold the two-party system and is 'brutal in denying millions of voters any representation at all'. For analysis, responses may make reference to key elections studied to support or challenge information in the extracts
- analysis and evaluation of how FPTP can result in a 'hung parliament', as argued in Extract 1, with analysis focusing upon the impact that this has upon the party system (eg Conservative and Lib Dem coalition 2010, supply and confidence agreement with the DUP 2017). Comparisons may be made with Extract 2 and the perspective that FPTP is unrepresentative and in 2019 'did what it is supposed to do in manufacturing a majority for one party'. Analysis may focus upon how and why FPTP delivers such large majorities (eg strongholds, 'winner takes all', wasted votes) and responses may provide statistical analysis (eg Conservatives 80-seat majority with 43.6% of the popular vote 2019). Responses may argue that this is a frequent occurrence (eg 1997, 1983, 1987, 2024)
- analysis and evaluation of how FPTP usually produces a single-party government but that the size of majority may vary even though there may be 'a similar vote share', as stated in Extract 2. Analysis may focus upon comparing the results of elections studied (eg 2017 and 2019). Responses may focus upon the outcomes in Scotland which, for the third election 'in a row, departed radically from that in the rest of Britain' in terms of party representation (eg SNP 56 seats 2015; 48 seats 2019). In comparison, responses may argue that Extract 2 is more convincing as many votes 'went to non-elected candidates (eg Greens) or were surplus to what the elected candidate needed'. FPTP is consistent in 'manufacturing a majority for one party at the expense of voters' choices' regionally and nationally. Statistical evidence from a range of elections may be used for analysis
- analysis and evaluation of the impact of FPTP upon small parties and the overall effect upon the party system. Responses may argue that, as stated in Extract 1, there are regions where 'parliamentary representation has been dominated by small parties ever since the early 1970s' (eg Northern Ireland: DUP, Sinn Fein, SDLP, Alliance Party). Responses may discuss the impact of 'a small party whose vote is geographically concentrated' (eg loss of Scotland as a stronghold for Labour since 2015), arguing that there is evidence for a multi-party system in the UK. In comparison, Extract 2 suggests that FPTP over rewards the two main parties and that 'across the UK, over 22 million votes (70.8%) were ignored'. For analysis, responses may discuss how FPTP distorts results (eg winner's bonus, surplus votes, safe seats, dispersed support) and argue that many voters are effectively disenfranchised by the resulting two-party system in the UK (eg UKIP 1 seat for 12.6% popular vote 2015; Lib Dems 11 seats for 11.5% of popular vote in comparison to SNPs 48 seats for 3.9% of popular vote 2019).

The analysis and evaluation of any political information is affected by:

- who the author is – their position or role
- the type of publication – newspaper, academic journal, electronic media
- the overt or implicit purpose of the author – to inform, persuade or influence

- the relevance of the extract to a political issue or concern, and how representative the extract is of a particular viewpoint.

Students will be expected to address some of these factors in their analysis and evaluation of the extracts:

- Extract 1 is taken from Parliamentary Affairs, a reputable academic journal whose articles are well-researched, accurate and written by qualified academics such as John Curtice. The purpose is to inform and educate readers rather than to persuade. Responses may make reference to this for evaluation when reaching an overall decision as to which of the extracts is most convincing regarding the effects of FPTP upon the party system in the UK
- Extract 2 is taken from a publication by the Electoral Reform Society, an organisation that seeks to promote electoral reform in the UK and is critical of First Past the Post and its effects. The purpose of the article is to persuade the reader towards the negative effects of First Past the Post upon the party system in the UK. In the context of recent elections, some responses may evaluate that the arguments are very convincing whilst others may disagree
- Responses may consider the context in which both extracts were written, in the months following the 2019 general election when sufficient electoral data was widely available for analysis and evaluation
- Students are required to analyse and evaluate the arguments presented in the articles. Students who identify which arguments support which of the different views towards the effects of First Past the Post upon the party system in the UK may be awarded marks for analysis (AO2). To gain marks for evaluation (AO3) students must assess the relative strengths of the differing arguments and whether the arguments in Extract 1 are more convincing than those in Extract 2 regarding the effects of First Past the Post upon the party system in the UK. The analysis and evaluation must clearly focus on the arguments presented in the articles.

The analysis and evaluation must clearly focus on the arguments presented in the extracts. Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks; equally, some may introduce further relevant points and these should be credited. The conclusion should clearly focus on the issue in question. In their evaluation, it does not matter what view students reach. However, their position must be supported by their arguments and examples. Students who fail to focus their discussion on the arguments in the articles, however complete their answer may otherwise be, cannot achieve above Level 2.

Section C

Levels of response mark scheme for 25-mark essays

0 5 'Constitutional changes since 1997 have enhanced democracy in the UK.' Analyse and evaluate this statement. **[25 marks]**

0 6 'The most important role of MPs in the House of Commons is to support their parties, not to exercise their personal judgements.' Analyse and evaluate this statement. **[25 marks]**

Target AO1: 5 marks, AO2: 10 marks, AO3: 10 marks

Level	Marks	Descriptors
5	21–25	- Detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion (AO1). - Analysis is balanced and confidently developed (AO2). - Synoptic links are well explained, are focused on the question and fully supported with relevant and developed examples (AO2). - Evaluation leads to well substantiated conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3). - Relevant perspectives are successfully evaluated in the process of constructing arguments (AO3). - The answer is well organised, coherent with a sustained analytical focus on the question (AO2).
4	16–20	- Accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support analysis of the issue under discussion, though further detail may be required in places (AO1). - Analysis is balanced and developed, though some elements of the analysis could be expanded and/or developed further (AO2). - Synoptic links are relevant to the questions as set, and supported with examples (AO2). - Evaluation leads to conclusions that show some substantiation and are consistent with the preceding discussion (AO3). - Relevant perspectives are evaluated in the process of constructing arguments, although in some places there could be further development of the evaluation (AO3). - The answer is well organised, analytical in style and is focused on the question as set (AO2).

3	11–15	• Generally sound knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though inaccuracies will be present (AO1). • Analytical points are made and developed in places, showing some balance, though some points are descriptive rather than analytical (AO2). • Synoptic links will be made, though explanation will lack depth (AO2). • Evaluation leads to conclusions that are consistent with the preceding discussion, but that lack substantiation (AO3). • Relevant perspectives are commented on in the process of constructing arguments, though evaluation lacks depth (AO3). • The answer is organised, occasionally analytical and focused on the question as set (AO2).
2	6–10	• Some knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes are used to support points made, though these contain inaccuracies and irrelevant material (AO1). • Analysis takes the form of description in most places, with some attempt at balance, though many points are unsupported assertions (AO2). • Synoptic links tend to be limited and undeveloped (AO2). • Some attempt to draw conclusions is made, but these lack depth and there is no clear development from the preceding discussion (AO3). • Relevant perspectives are identified, though evaluation is superficial (AO3). • The answer shows some organisation and makes some attempt to address the question (AO2).
1	1–5	• Limited knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with inaccuracies and irrelevant material present throughout (AO1). • Analysis takes the form of description and assertion, with little or no attempt made at balance (AO2). • Few if any synoptic links are offered (AO2). • Conclusions, when offered, are asserted and have an implicit relationship to the preceding discussion (AO3). • Little or no evaluation of relevant perspectives is present (AO3). • The answer shows little organisation and does not address the question (AO2).
0	0	• Nothing worthy of credit.

0 5

'Constitutional changes since 1997 have enhanced democracy in the UK.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]**Indicative content**

In the analysis and evaluation of the statement students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- analysis and evaluation of the nature and sources of the UK constitution and issues and debates around recent constitutional changes since 1997. Responses should argue that the UK constitution is uncoded, evolutionary and flexible and is shaped by historical developments, conventions, laws and judicial decisions. Comparisons may be made to the US Constitution to support analysis. Responses may argue that this degree of flexibility enhances democracy as Parliament remains sovereign and accountable. The constitution can evolve with changing political conditions (eg impact of New Labour's modernisation and Blair's 'constitutional revolution' post 1997) with some reforms improving democracy. Judicial independence upholds rights and the rule of law. Responses may argue that executive dominance means that constitutional rules and laws can be changed easily, perhaps weakening democratic safeguards, and that some legislation which has been passed or repealed (eg the Fixed Term Parliament Act) may have made the UK less democratic
- analysis and evaluation of the impact and significance of devolution. Responses may argue that devolution has increased representation and brought decision-making closer to regional and local populations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland and areas with directly elected Metro Mayors (eg London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region). This has led to regional policy making (eg London congestion charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone; nationalisation of bus services in Greater Manchester). Analysis may focus upon how democracy has been enhanced by the introduction of more proportional electoral systems (eg AMS) and the election of minor parties to government (eg SNP, Green Party). Responses may argue that devolution has led to unequal representation (eg West Lothian Question; issues around funding fairness (Barnett Formula); asymmetrical devolution) and that some powers reserved for Westminster may, for some, undermine the positive impact of devolution (eg Brexit-related tensions arising from regional variations in Brexit referendum results, 2016; Supreme Court ruling on Brexit Bill, 2019; the limitations of the Sewell Convention exposed by Brexit; regional variations in response to Covid)
- analysis and evaluation of reforms to the House of Lords. Responses may argue that constitutional changes (eg House of Lords Act, 1999; House of Lords Reform Act, 2014) have enhanced democracy (eg removal of all but 92 hereditary peers; allowance for the expulsion of members in certain specified circumstances; independent House of Lords Appointment Commission). For development, responses may challenge the significance of the changes and argue that reform is incomplete (eg Lords unelected and largely unaccountable; House of Lords Appointment Commission is advisory; size) and that further reforms have been proposed that will have an impact upon appointments, hereditary peers and the current state of membership (eg House of Lords Bill, 2025). Some may argue that the Lords is an anachronism and should be abolished in its current form
- analysis and evaluation of constitutional changes that have strengthened rights protection, particularly in equality, data privacy, increased government transparency and accountability, and criminal justice (eg the Human Rights Act, 1998; Freedom of Information Act, 2000; Equality Act, 2010; Investigatory Powers Act, 2016 ("Snooper's Charter"); Data Protection Act, 2018). The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 remains the cornerstone of rights protection, allowing UK courts to rule on human rights violations domestically (eg Rwanda Asylum Plan, 2023). For development, responses may argue that rights are not entrenched and Parliament is sovereign. Controversial legislation can be enacted if the government has a large Commons majority (eg

the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act (SORA), 2024; proposals for a possible withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights under Conservative governments). Counter-terrorism laws and surveillance powers have raised concerns about civil liberties and privacy (eg Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019)

- analysis and evaluation of Brexit and the impact of legislation such as the EU Withdrawal Act, 2018, and later amendments in 2020. Responses may argue that Parliamentary sovereignty has been restored as UK law no longer has to align with EU law, Parliament can decide its own legal protections and there is enhanced flexibility to make independent laws. UK courts now have greater independence from EU law however, courts can still refer to pre-Brexit European Court of Justice (ECJ) decisions if relevant. For development, responses may argue that Brexit has had a negative impact upon democracy as rights protections (eg workers rights, environmental protections, discrimination laws) and judicial review have been weakened. The shift in legal and political power has created ongoing legal and political tensions (eg tensions with devolution; Northern Ireland Protocol and legal disputes) and parliamentary sovereignty has not been fully restored as some post-Brexit agreements (eg UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement) still require legal alignment in trade and security
- analysis and evaluation of constitutional changes that have had an impact upon the UK judiciary and the separation of powers, such as the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. For development of analysis, responses may argue that such changes have enhanced democracy as judicial independence has been strengthened. There is a clearer separation between the government and the judiciary, and appointments have become more transparent, impartial and based upon merit (eg Judicial Appointments Commission; UK Supreme Court established, 2009; removal of judges from the House of Lords). Some responses may argue that the judiciary has too much power and that concerns have been raised regarding judicial activism (eg Miller, 2019) and that the judiciary's role in Parliament has decreased, leading to reduced legal expertise in decision making.

Synoptic links may be found in areas such as political parties, devolution, the Prime Minister and cabinet, electoral systems, referendums, the European Union, the judiciary, rights, the US Constitution, the US Supreme Court, Congress. Any response that does not include synoptic points cannot achieve above Level 4.

Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks; equally, some may introduce further relevant points and these should be credited. The conclusion should clearly focus on the issue in question. In their evaluation, it does not matter what view students reach. However, their position must be supported by their arguments and examples.

0 6

'The most important role of MPs in the House of Commons is to support their parties, not to exercise their personal judgements.' Analyse and evaluate this statement.

[25 marks]

Indicative content

In the analysis and evaluation of the statement students may be expected to cover areas such as the following:

- analysis and evaluation of the various demands upon MPs, with analysis focusing upon frontbench and backbench MPs, contrasting theories of representation (Burkean, mandate, delegate) and the debate over the representative role of MPs
- analysis and evaluation of the predominance of party discipline within the House of Commons with modern politics essentially being about party government and opposition (eg electoral success linked to the party label; commitment to the party manifesto; the party career ladder; collective responsibility and the payroll vote). Responses may evaluate that the influence of the party reduces MPs to lobby fodder and leads to executive dictatorship
- analysis and evaluation of the extent to which MPs are willing to 'air their consciences' and exercise their judgement (Burkean theory) and the potential consequences for those who choose not to do so (party sanctions). Analysis may consider 'parliamentary mavericks' (Dennis Skinner, Jeremy Corbyn, Peter Bone) or MPs who choose to air their consciences and rebel over a particular issue (Brexit votes, Nick Boles; 100-strong Conservative rebellion over new COVID restrictions, 2021; resignation of Annelise Dodds over cuts to the aid budget, 2025). MPs may decide to support internal party factions rather than 'toe the party line' (eg ERG's influence during Brexit negotiations; Major's Eurosceptic 'bastards')
- analysis and evaluation of the extent to which MPs are able to follow their own consciences for example, when votes are unwhipped ('free votes' such as same-sex marriage, 2013; assisted dying bill, 2025) and the degree to which MPs still vote alongside the party leadership
- analysis and evaluation of the extent to which MPs are bound by other roles, such as representing the wishes of constituents (delegate theory and MPs who rebelled over HS2 eg Cheryl Gillan) and the difficulties associated with this, ie clashes between the interests of constituents and their own personal beliefs (eg MPs supporting the issue of Remain when representing Leave seats, such as Ken Clarke being the only Conservative to vote against triggering Article 50, 2017)
- analysis and evaluation of the extent to which the position taken by MPs changes according to circumstances such as size of majority or coalition government (eg Liberal Democrat and Conservative backbenchers expressing frustration over 'party support' effectively meaning 'coalition support').

Synoptic links may be found in areas such as the executive, political parties, Congress, pressure groups, elections and referendums, rational theory. Any response that does not include synoptic points cannot achieve above level 4.

Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks; equally, some may introduce further relevant points and these should be credited. The conclusion should clearly focus on the issue in question. In their evaluation, it does not matter what view students reach. However, their position must be supported by their arguments and examples.