



Answer guidance

Component 1 UK Politics

General advice on source questions

In many ways, the source questions cover the same format as the non-source essays. You are being asked to evaluate a view, meaning that you should analyse, or explain, the strengths and weaknesses of the given view (or its pros and cons) and evaluate by coming to a considered opinion about how far you agree with the view, if at all, and provide a reason for your judgement that should be consistent throughout the essay. The main difference with the source questions is that the arguments need to be selected and identified from the source. This means you really need to read over the source and identify possible arguments for the view presented and possible arguments against it. Ideally, you will want to pair the points up, so you can show support for and opposition to the view, and for Level 5, these pairings really should work well in combination, either being two linked sides of the debate, or two complementary points. You will not want to compare two points that do not really go well with each other. For example, for question 1 in Chapter 1, you would want to compare the arguments in favour of the UK electoral system with the arguments against the electoral system being fit for purpose. You would not want to compare the weaknesses of the electoral system with the rights of workers, as this is not an obvious pairing.

Usually, the source will be presented in two parts with a mostly 'for the view' section and a mostly 'against the view' section. Essentially you will be considering which section you feel is the stronger and more convincing, and this is what you will be arguing. There is no need to evaluate the source itself or consider who wrote it or when; simply use the content of the source to identify relevant arguments.

Practice questions

Chapter 1 (pp. 46–48)

- 1 Here you will want to focus on what 'fit for purpose' means. By defining this, you will make the analysis and evaluation much easier. Remember, something can be fit for purpose without being brilliant; it does a job, even if it is not perfect. Of course, you may have another definition of 'fit for purpose' and that is fine. Having defined it, you can then pair up points from the opposing views and use this to develop your analysis and evaluation.

Introduction: define what you mean by 'fit for purpose' and set out the arguments you plan to make and the judgement you will reach.

Main body

- 'Power is too far away from people', suggesting the system does not meet the purpose of allowing the people to hold those in power to account, *versus* 'Every 5 years, at least, there are free and fair elections to the House of Commons, as well as a whole host of second-order elections to devolved bodies and local government institutions, providing strong accountability and offering choice to voters', suggesting that, actually, the system does provide sufficient links between those in power and the people.
- 'Under the current electoral system too many voters are simply ignored', meaning the system is not delivering as well as it might in representation, *versus* '...there are free and fair elections to the House of Commons', suggesting that, actually, the nature of the elections is fine and they remain fit for purpose.



- ‘No one knows what the rules of our democracy are. They should be set down properly, so that everyone can understand and follow them’, suggesting that rights and other issues are not clear in the uncoded system, *versus* ‘Despite some legal restrictions, the freedom of assembly and right to protest is well respected and protected by laws’, suggesting that, in fact, rights are sufficiently well protected under the current system, meaning it is fit for purpose.
- ‘...our democratic system lags far behind the technology and its promise of participation’, suggesting that, with new media and technology, the current system is out of date and this impacts negatively on participation, *versus* ‘The growth of the media and ease of access — thanks to the expansion of the internet and expanding opportunities to broadcast on television — have created a host of competing platforms that contribute to lively and better-informed political debate’, suggesting that, actually, the system has utilised these new technologies and platforms to create lively and better-informed debate, suggesting it is actually fit for purpose.

Conclusion: reassert your judgement in line with your argument, with a developed reason for why you think this.

- 2 This question is posing the view that ‘there is more to be hopeful of than concerned about in the UK’s current democratic system’. Be careful with this type of question. It may seem that you are being asked to compare hope with concern, but really, it is about comparing the extent of balance. Is there more to be hopeful of than concerned about, or less? If you just look at reasons for hope and reasons for concern, you will only go so far towards addressing the question, so make sure, when you discuss the points, that you argue there is more to be hopeful than concerned about *versus* more to be concerned than hopeful about. This focus for the analysis and evaluation will be key for the top levels.

Introduction: clearly set out the debate, identify the general arguments from the source and give a clear reason why you find one side of the debate, or view, more convincing than the other.

Main body

- Explain why ‘there are laws that protect our rights to vote and be represented’ may offer more hope than concern. However, this can be contrasted with ‘there is no clear way to have influence. We need to feel that change can happen and that different voices are taken into account’, which you might suggest shows there is more to be concerned than hopeful about because it means that, even with laws to protect the right to vote, people do not feel their voices are being heard, which may be a bigger concern. Then make your reasoned comparative judgement.
- ‘...everyone can influence change via voting, standing for Parliament, joining a political party of their choice, initiating petitions, etc.’ gives more to be hopeful about as it suggests there are a number of important ways in which people can engage with the political process. However, the more convincing point may be that ‘there are not enough “ordinary people” in parliament’, which means that, while many people could be participating, the reality is that only a small, elite group actually does participate. Then make your reasoned comparative judgement.
- The idea that ‘governments do change and come to an end’ suggests that the voting system is doing its job and working well, which suggests there is more to be hopeful than concerned about. However, perhaps the more convincing argument is that ‘no matter which party is in power, a big part of the population is likely to be dissatisfied due to the nature of the current voting system’, which suggests that, whether or not governments change, a large part of the population is unhappy with the current voting system and the representation it leads to, which shows there is actually more to be concerned than hopeful about. Then make your reasoned comparative judgement.

Conclusion: ‘While (in this case) there may appear to be some reasons to be hopeful about British democracy, the more convincing view is that there is actually more to be concerned about. This is because the negative points speak more of the reality of the situation rather than potential or theory.



The reality indicates that there is less to be hopeful of than concerned about and therefore the stated view is not very convincing.'

- 3 With this question, you need to focus on the word 'serious'. You may well feel that there is a voter participation crisis, but does it constitute a serious one? You should define this in your introduction and, based on your definition, you should then be able to develop an analysis and evaluation that reaches a sustained and consistent judgement. In terms of structure, you should consider three aspects of voter participation, so perhaps three areas of voting, such as in general elections, in devolved or local elections and in referendums. Then, for each one, consider whether or not it meets your criteria for a 'serious' voter participation crisis.

Whenever there is a word like 'serious', you can use it to come to a strong evaluative conclusion: there is a voter participation crisis, but it is not serious. Of course, you can argue that there is a serious crisis, but sometimes it is easier to argue by challenging a key word.

Introduction: set out your criteria for serious, the aspects of elections you will look at and what your overall judgement will be.

Main body

- General elections: participation is well below the historic average and lower than participation in some other modern democracies. However, despite a slight dip in 2019, it has been increasing since the low of 2001 and the UK does compare well to most other democracies. Therefore, while there is an issue of voter participation, it is not a serious one.
- Local elections: in many local elections, participation by voters is much lower than in general elections — at about 33% in local council elections and as low as 12% for PPC elections — suggesting there is a serious crisis at local level. However, local elections are considered second tier and not as important as general elections and, in some cases, as in Scotland, turnout has been relatively high at over 50% since the 2014 referendum. Therefore, while there is a voter participation crisis, it is not a serious problem.
- Referendums: given the importance of referendums, low turnout could be a serious problem. At times, major decisions have been determined by a relatively low number of voters, such as AV in 2011 and the rejection of the Northeast Assembly in 2004. However, such low turnouts are usually a sign of lack of voter interest and, in major issues that matter, such as the EU referendum of 2016 and Scottish Independence in 2014, there have been very high levels of voter participation, even higher than in general elections. Therefore, while there is something of a voter crisis in some referendums, it is not really a serious crisis.

Conclusion: confirm your overall judgement by relating it to your criteria.

- 4 In this question, it is clearly important to refer to three different types of organised groups, such as pressure groups, lobbying firms and think tanks. So that gives you your basic plan. The tricky part is meeting the demands of the question. The debate is between 'they do more harm than good' and 'they do less harm than good', not between 'they are good' and 'they are bad'. So you are comparing the extent of benefit. For this reason, a sample section on lobbying firms is provided below.

Sample section

'For all the criticism of lobbying firms, it could be argued that they do provide more good than harm as, despite the methods they may use, they can lead to better-quality representation and legislation. Even though their methods of gaining access may be harmful to perceptions of democracy, in engaging politicians in all aspects of the debate and enabling key groups to gain effective access to decision makers, they can improve the quality of legislation, such as by putting forward the potential economic impacts of a proposal for the Treasury, as in the case of the fixed-odds betting terminals.



However, while this case can be made, it is hard to suggest that the legislative benefit outweighs the harm done to democracy by lobbyists. The perceptions of politicians favouring those with money and some groups gaining privileged access undermines confidence in the process, no matter what the potential benefits may be. In addition, for any potential positives that might emerge in terms of informing legislation, cases like betting companies trying to undermine measures to restrict gambling and tobacco companies funding campaigns to prevent tougher legislation on smoking suggest they are working more for vested interests than the public good. Therefore, while there may be an argument that lobbying groups can lead to some good, on balance, the harm they cause is much greater than the good, and therefore the view is highly convincing.'

- 5 The key word in this question is 'need'. Reform might be desirable, but is it needed? In your introduction, you should set out how you intend to judge this. Usually, it is easier to argue that reform would be good, but is not needed, but you must decide your own opinion.

You need to refer to at least one campaign to extend the franchise, which will be the case study you learnt, probably the Votes at 16 campaigns. However, be careful: you need to see the campaign as an example, not spend the essay giving a history of the campaign. It also just means you have to reference it at some point, so while you may have a section on votes at 16, you may want to talk about other issues or ways in which the franchise could be extended.

Introduction: set out the key areas you will talk about, possibly votes at 16, prisoner votes and perhaps voter ID laws. Set out your criteria for needing reform and what your judgement is likely to be.

Main body

- Votes at 16: why more reform may be needed, countered with why it may not be needed, before reaching a judgement.
- Prison voting: why more reform may be needed, countered with why it may not be needed, before reaching a judgement.
- Voter ID laws: why more reform may be needed, countered with why it may not be needed, before reaching a judgement.

Conclusion: reassert your overall judgement, explaining why you have reached it, in line with the essay.

- 6 You can approach this question in a number of ways, such as by looking at particular rights and considering how they are protected, or by looking at methods of protection and considering how effective they are. This second option may be easier if you have studied the sections from Component 2, so here we will take it rights by rights. Whatever approach you take, it is important to note the key word in the question, 'effectively'. It would be useful to define what you consider to be 'effectively protected' and then apply this criterion to your analysis and evaluation.

Introduction: establish what you consider 'effectively protected' to mean and what rights you will discuss before reaching your overall judgement.

Main body

- Right to free speech and protest: these rights have been protected under the HRA and by various pressure groups who have brought legal cases and tried to uphold the principles. However, government legislation has undermined them and restrictions on the right to protest in the name of national security have been allowed, meaning that they are not being effectively protected.
- Right to privacy: this has been upheld in some high-profile court cases and via pieces of government legislation. However, the 'snoopers' charter' and press intrusion, such as the phone hacking case against the *Daily Mirror*, show that the legal protections are not being effectively enforced and, therefore, the right is not being effectively protected.



- Right to equality (freedom from discrimination): the Equality Act has meant a strong legal document exists to ensure this right is protected and some pressure groups have promoted awareness of this and offered legal advice. However, not all characteristics are protected and sometimes conflicts emerge between beliefs on one hand, and rights and freedom from discrimination on the other, which means that, while the right to equality is protected, it is not fully and effectively protected.

Conclusion: starting with 'While', give a clear comparative judgement in line with your argument.



Chapter 2 (pp. 94–95)

- 1 Before reading the sources, you should read the question carefully and identify what is being asked. The key words to notice are ‘should’ and ‘full state funding’. This should mean you need to consider why it really needs to happen, not just whether it might be a nice idea. This means contextualising it and explaining whether or not full state party funding needs to replace the existing system and should be introduced. Full state funding means that 100% of the funding comes from the state. Remember, there is already some state party funding, so the question is whether or not *only* state funding should be allowed. This is an important conceptual point that you will need to focus on for the higher levels.

Possible pairings are:

- ‘British parties are reliant on very small number of donors’ *versus* ‘Demands for the state to fund political parties would only institutionalise the dominance of the established parties and make them even more insulated from any need to engage with their grassroots.’
- ‘...donors get regular off-the record-meetings with senior ministers’ *versus* ‘Representatives of big business do not need to donate in order to exercise undue influence over government policy.’
- ‘Accepting private donations leaves parties open to charges of hypocrisy, cronyism, or worse’ *versus* ‘there would certainly be an outcry the first time an “extreme” party got its hands on public cash’.

These pairings would form the basis of the three key sections of analysis and evaluation you would give. A sample section is given below.

Sample section

‘As Source A mentions, there is an argument for introducing full state party funding as “accepting private donations leaves parties open to charges of hypocrisy, cronyism or worse”, which undermines faith in the UK’s system of democracy. This is, of course, very damaging if it leads to clear evidence of hypocrisy or cronyism, such as occurred with several high-profile appointments to the Lords, e.g. Lord Ashworth, a former donor who was given a seat in the Lords and even suggested he deserved a seat in the Cabinet. Such examples of parties giving political office and power to donors gives the appearance of a “democracy for sale”, and this would be overcome if full state funding for parties was introduced, as parties would no longer be able to reward private donors.

However, Section B suggests that “there would certainly be an outcry the first time an ‘extreme’ party got its hands on public cash”, which is a much stronger argument than that offered in Section A. The prospect of public money being donated to an extremist party, or even a party that some voters objected to, would likely lead to greater anger and division among the public and a much more severe loss of faith than the accusations of hypocrisy or cronyism, as demonstrated by the public outcry whenever an “extreme” party gets access to public media or platforms; actual tax funding would lead to even greater anger. Therefore, while there are issues with the current system, the argument that there should be full state funding for parties is not as convincing as the arguments against it, as the political discontent that exists with the current system is far less than might occur under a state-funded system.’

- 2 In this question, there are not two clearly defined sections labelled ‘A’ and ‘B’, but if you look at the two paragraphs in Source 2, you will see the first is making points that suggest two-party dominance is no longer the best description of the UK party system, while the second is making points suggesting it still is. Therefore, as with other source essays, you need to set up the paired arguments to debate the merits of the view and really focus on what you mean by ‘best described’, which could be based on what happens in Westminster, representation across devolved areas, votes won or seats won. However, you choose to define it, this will help you develop an effective analysis and reach an evaluative judgement.



Introduction: set out your understanding of ‘best described’ and the arguments you will consider from the sources before reaching a comparative judgement that will be consistent across your essay.

Main body

Three sections, made up of three pairs of points selected from the source and analysed and evaluated to reach a reasoned comparative judgement. Possible pairings include:

- PR systems have ‘enabled impressive electoral successes for UKIP, the SNP and the Brexit Party’ *versus* ‘the decline in electoral vote share for the two main parties has not been mirrored by a decline in their relative parliamentary or executive dominance’.
- ‘the Conservatives and Labour face ongoing challenges from insurgent parties, like the Brexit Party’ *versus* ‘Whilst UKIP had achieved the third highest number of popular votes at that election at 12.6 per cent, the first-past-the-post system did not translate this in terms of parliamentary representation’
- ‘...real opportunities have emerged for so-called “third” parties to take advantage’ *versus* (in 2017) the Conservatives and Labour taking over 82% of the popular vote and gaining nearly 90% of parliamentary seats.

Conclusion: a clear comparative judgement that is in line with your arguments. You should suggest that, while one side may have *some* merit, the other side is more convincing because...and then explain your reason.

- 3 The key to this question will be defining what you mean by the ‘traditional values and beliefs’ of the Labour Party. You could refer to the original aims and intentions, or perhaps the reforms of the Atlee era. Whatever you choose to define as traditional will give you the key thing to compare to the current situation of the Labour Party.

The debate is about whether the present Labour Party can be described as committed to these values, so you will want to consider how it may be committed and how it may not be so committed to them. In determining the extent of commitment, you will reach your conclusion.

The best way to structure your answer might be to look at three big topic areas, such as the economy, law and order, and welfare. For each one, you can define what the traditional values and beliefs of Labour would have been in that general area, and then consider the policies of the current Labour Party and whether or not they show a commitment to those traditional values.

Sample introduction

‘The modern Labour Party has to deal with many issues and problems that the traditional Labour Party would not have had to consider. Nevertheless, in considering many key policy areas, such as the economy, law and order, and welfare provision, the current Labour Party does retain a strong commitment to traditional Labour Party beliefs and values, such as the idea of a mixed economy and wealth redistribution, a commitment to law and order, and higher welfare provision. Although modern policies might not be as sweeping as the policies of the Atlee government of the 1940s, they nevertheless show a strong commitment to such beliefs and values.’

Main body

- State what the traditional values and beliefs of Labour would have been in regard to the economy. Then explain why it could be argued that the modern Labour Party is not as committed to those values and beliefs. Contrast this with the argument that, in fact, the policies do still retain a commitment to these basic principles, even if less sweeping. Then make a judgement on how far you agree with the view.
- State what the traditional values and beliefs of Labour would have been in regard to law and order. Then explain why it could be argued that the modern Labour Party is not as committed to those



values and beliefs. Contrast this with the argument that, in fact, the policies do still retain a commitment to these basic principles, even if less sweeping. Then make a judgement on how far you agree with the view.

- State what the traditional values and beliefs of Labour would have been in regard to welfare. Then explain why it could be argued that the modern Labour Party is not as committed to those values and beliefs. Contrast this with the argument that, in fact, the policies do still retain a commitment to these basic principles, even if less sweeping. Then make a judgement on how far you agree with the view.

Sample conclusion

‘While the policies of the current Labour Party may not be as extensive or sweeping as the traditional policies of the Labour Party, they nevertheless indicate a fundamental commitment to Labour’s traditional Labour values and beliefs in terms of a mixed economy, strong law and order, and higher welfare provision. Therefore the view that Labour remains committed to its traditional values and beliefs is largely convincing.’

- 4 For this question, you are being asked to focus on the extent of divisions between the Labour and Conservative parties. It may be useful to consider what a ‘serious division’ would look like. A serious division is likely to mean that there is an opposite position on a key area, not just a difference in policy. For example, there may be differences over the extent of taxation and who should pay tax and how much, but neither party is offering a radically different approach to the basis of taxation and the management of the economy. The parties disagree over policy and how the economy should be managed, but not over the core concept of the mixed economy, suggesting perhaps that there are not serious divisions on the economy. Similarly with law and order, both parties support increasing the number of police officers, but they disagree about the number and how to achieve this. So, you could argue that there are differences over policy and extent, but there are not fundamental differences in approach to each core area, and therefore the divisions are not serious.

For each section, you may want to start by suggesting that the parties appear to have differences over policy, analyse what these are (AO2), then evaluate this by countering with how they are not serious divisions (AO3 and AO2 in explaining), before reaching a clear judgement (AO3).

Introduction: set out how you will define a ‘serious division’, the three key areas you will discuss (identified here in the question) and what your final judgement will be.

Main body

- The economy: outline and explain some apparent differences in policy, including taxation, management and spending. Begin the evaluation with ‘however’ and then counter by considering why these differences in policy are not really serious divisions and explain your reasoning. Finish with an evaluative judgement beginning with ‘therefore’ that is consistent with the judgement in your conclusion: ‘Therefore, while they do differ over policy in the three key areas, these divisions are not really serious divisions over principle and therefore the view is not very convincing.’
- Law and order: repeat the process and structure above. Make sure your argument and judgement remains consistent.
- Foreign policy: repeat the process and structure above. Make sure your argument and judgement remains consistent.

Conclusion: make sure your final conclusion is clear, evaluative (meaning you compare the strength of the arguments) and consistent with your judgements, saying that ‘While there are differences in policy, these are not serious divisions [as you have defined them] because... Therefore the view is not very convincing.’



- 5 In this question you are being asked to consider whether or not the abilities of the leader are the most important factor in determining a political party's success. It is important to note that the question is not asking you 'what is the most important factor in determining a political party's success?' but whether or not the abilities of the leader are most important. Therefore, you need to have three sections, each comparing the relative importance of the abilities of the leader with another factor that determines a political party's success. This will keep you focused on answering the question and ensure you are developing a comparative analysis and evaluation.

In this plan, we are going to argue that the abilities of the leader, while important, are not the most important factor. You might want to argue the opposite, in which case you would invert the plan.

Introduction: identify how the abilities of a leader may be important and identify other factors that contribute to the success of a political party. Give a clear judgement that will be consistent throughout the essay. In this case, we are arguing that, while important, the role of the party leader is not the most important factor in determining party success.

Main body

A sample section, comparing the role of the leader with the importance of policy, is given below, together with notes on two other points of comparison.

- 'When it comes to electoral success, the party leader clearly plays an important role in determining turnout and the commitment of supporters to actually campaign and vote. As the head of the party, the leader can play an important role in motivating supporters to vote, perhaps far beyond any policies or the party's general reputation. For example, it could be suggested that, in 2019, it was the personality of the leader, Boris Johnson, that motivated so many 'red wall' voters to vote Conservative, while in contrast, in 2017, Theresa May did not have the same ability to inspire voters, which explains why she had a comparatively weak result. Even with smaller parties, the ability to motivate people to turn out and vote can be a key skill of the leader, as seen with the success of UKIP under Nigel Farage, and its subsequent collapse in electoral votes when he stepped down as leader. This would seem to add weight to the idea that the party leader's ability to inspire and motivate the electorate is an important factor in determining party success.

However, while this ability to motivate the electorate is important, it is not the most important factor. When it comes to inspiring voters to vote, the key policies of the party, especially around the major issues of the day, are probably far more important than any single leader. In this sense, Boris Johnson led the Conservatives to success in 2019 because of his clear view on Brexit, which was in contrast to the less clear and more divided position of Labour, while Theresa May suffered more from the lack of difference in policy over Brexit in 2017 and the policy over social care funding than any personal characteristic. Indeed, in 2019, Johnson's strategy seemed to be to keep a low profile and let the issue determine the outcome, and it was the issue of Brexit, far more than the ability of the leader, that motivated and swung voters towards the Conservatives. Likewise for UKIP, the collapse in its vote probably had more to do with the result of the 2016 referendum than the change in its leadership, as it removed the party's single purpose. Therefore, while the ability of the party leader to motivate and enthuse can contribute to a party's success, it is not as important to electoral success as the actual policies chosen, suggesting that the view is not very convincing.'

- Following the model above, argue that the ability of the party leader to gain media support can be important for a party's success, but that this is not as important as partisan loyalty and having a large membership for determining success.
- Following the model above, argue that the ability of the party leader to choose policies and determine electoral strategy is important, but not as important as the electoral system and party system for determining success.



Conclusion: begin with 'While' and make a final evaluative judgement in line with your previous arguments.

- 6 For this question it is important to remember that you are being asked to talk about parties other than the two main ones, so you should not be talking about either of these. You can use any other political parties in the UK, and as the specification requires you to know about two other parties, it would make sense to use these two (you do not need to use more than that).

When it comes to the debate, it will be up to you to determine what 'meaningful role' means and consider three ways in which parties can play a meaningful role in UK politics, which will make it much easier to create a debate. You should avoid structuring your answer by party as this will lead to repetition and weaker analysis.

Introduction: in this case, define that a party having a meaningful role means being able to achieve some of its political policies or objectives. In Parliament, devolved bodies and in issues addressed, parties other than Labour and the Conservatives can, and have, played meaningful roles in UK politics.

Main body

- The House of Commons has been dominated by the two main parties since the Second World War, which would seem to suggest that it is very hard for other parties to play a meaningful role, especially when one party has a large majority. However, at times of minority government, such as the Conservatives during 2017–19, smaller parties can exert a meaningful influence through a supply and demand vote, as the DUP did, or actually form part of a coalition, as the Liberal Democrats did in 2010–15, which gave them a meaningful role in government. Therefore, parties other than Labour and the Conservatives can play a meaningful role in UK politics.
- The Welsh Assembly and London mayoral candidates have been dominated by the two main parties since they were created, suggesting that, in devolved bodies in England and Wales, other parties have not been able to play a meaningful role by gaining power and control. However, in Scotland, the SNP has been in power since 2007 and has used this to enact meaningful political decisions, while the DUP and Sinn Féin have been the dominant parties in Northern Ireland. Therefore, across devolved bodies in the UK, parties other than Labour and the Conservatives have played a meaningful role.
- When it comes to major issues, it is hard for smaller parties to break through as Labour and the Conservatives will usually co-opt popular policies from other parties or offer a clear choice on issues. However, the fact that the two main parties have co-opted the environmental policies of the Greens shows that the Greens have been able to play a meaningful role, while the electoral pressure from UKIP led David Cameron to call the referendum on leaving the EU, which played a very meaningful role in UK politics. Therefore, while it may be harder for them, parties other than Labour and the Conservatives have played a meaningful role in UK politics.

Conclusion: give a clear comparative judgement in line with what has been argued.



Chapter 3 (pp. 126–28)

- 1 As you will have seen from previous questions, be careful with this one. It is not, as you may first think, a debate between the benefits and negatives of referendums, but a debate about the relative extent of benefit; are referendums more beneficial than negative or more negative than beneficial? Make sure, in your analysis, that you really focus on the relative extent of benefit, not just comparing negatives to benefits. Remember, when you debate, that any benefits of referendums depend on one's perspective, as do the negatives; some people may consider having a clear and decisive public vote highly beneficial when compared to the compromises reached in legislative bodies, but others may see that decisive vote as ill-informed or too simplistic. Therefore, the debate arises in considering the weight different people may attach to each side of the argument and which side you find the more compelling.

Sample introduction

'While it may be fair to suggest that referendums used in the UK have led to some negative aspects, the more compelling view in the source is that the use of referendums has actually been more beneficial than negative. This is because, despite some negativity noted in the source, the benefits of referendum campaigns in engaging national publics, resolving issues and creating broad coalitions on key events are far more beneficial for democratic practices than any negatives that might occasionally occur. Therefore, the view presented is highly convincing.'

Main body

- Although there is an argument that referendum campaigns may 'seduce voters with false promises based on fantasies of what ideal outcome might be delivered', more often than not 'referendum campaigns engage national publics, often passive and sometimes actively excluded, in the business of political debate and decision-making', which is far more beneficial than any negativity that might occur from false promises.
- It can be argued that 'A core purpose of referendums is to engage those with relatively low information about the issues', which could be a negative as it may lead to people making emotional decisions than a more rational set of political actors in a legislative body might make. However, while such a negative may exist, it is outweighed by the much stronger benefit that referendums 'can be important in prodding elites, otherwise comfortable in their factional power, to do the harder work of engaging with the bigger political picture'. Although the negatives of such an approach may on occasion cause issues, allowing the public to ensure that the elites take action according to public pressure is far more beneficial because it strengthens faith in democracy, therefore making the view very convincing.
- On occasion, it is true that 'referendum campaigns themselves can be savagely divisive', which may leave a legacy, but in this process of discussion and debate a decision is usually reached, meaning a 'referendum may be useful to ensure a broad base of political support for a controversial decision'. The building of broad coalitions is much more common than the divisive aspects, which suggests that referendums are more beneficial than negative.

Conclusion: assert your comparative judgement, as you have done in the introduction and each section, giving a clear reason for your decision.

- 2 This question is simply asking you to evaluate the pros and cons of one electoral system, in this case SV. You may well refer to other systems to illustrate your comments, but everything needs to be focused on SV and whether or not it is appropriate for use in UK elections. In one sense, the fact that it is no longer in operation makes this a bit more challenging, but you can and should use examples from when it was being used and show your knowledge and understanding of the pros and cons. It will be up to you to define what 'appropriate' should look like: you may define it as appropriate, even if that does not mean you think it should be reintroduced.



Introduction: clearly state your definition of 'appropriate' and establish the points you will make and the judgement you will reach.

Main body

Below are some possible pairings from the source that you could choose to use.

- SV 'increase[s] the number of spoiled ballots' *versus* 'misses many other potential reasons, including protest votes and confusion caused by ballot design, which could affect FPTP as much as SV', undermining the initial argument.
- SV allows "'loser" candidates to win' *versus* 'on no occasion has...seen "the loser" or second-choice candidate achieve a victory', which undermines the argument in this case.
- SV 'was "out of step" with other elections in England' *versus* 'Indeed, the public seemed perfectly content to use SV for directly-elected mayors', especially as these are the only elections for a directly-elected individual executive office and are therefore different from any other election anyway.
- SV is not as good as FPTP because 'FPTP improves accountability by making it easier for voters to express a clear choice' and is 'the world's most widely-used electoral system' *versus* 'In the short time it was in operation it appears to have worked at least as well, if not slightly better, in close races', suggesting SV was at least appropriate.
- '...any form of transferable vote had been overwhelmingly rejected by the British people in 2011' *versus* 'The rejection of AV in 2011 is also a spurious argument, as this had much to do with politics, was a different system anyway, and it was before people had been able to make use of SV for themselves', which seriously undermines the initial point.

Sample conclusion

'While there are some valid issues and concerns about SV and it may be true that other systems are more desirable in some respects, the view that it is not an appropriate system for UK elections is flawed. At the very least it appears to have worked effectively and provided at least as effective a set of results as FPTP. Therefore, while it may not be perfect, it is unfair to claim that that it is not an appropriate system for UK elections, making the view highly unconvincing.'

- 3 There are two ways you could approach this question and both would be fine. On the one hand, you could look at three areas of reform and determine whether they have been mostly effective or not. This could mean looking at the introduction of STV, SV and AMS to parts of the UK, or adopting a more thematic approach, such as the introduction of new electoral systems and how effective they have been, the attempts at reform of the general election system, covering the AV referendum and how effective that has been, and attempts to widen the franchise or improve voting and how effective they have been. Alternatively, you could consider three aims of voting reform, such as greater democratic legitimacy, more proportional results and allowing more parties some degree of representation, and for each, evaluate how effectively these aims have been achieved. The key is to remember that the debate is about 'mostly ineffective,' so if there has been some limited success, but reform has mostly not worked, that would agree with the statement. But if there has been more success than ineffectiveness, you would need to disagree with the statement. It will depend on how you have defined 'ineffective'.

Introduction: set out areas of argument and judgement.

Main body

- The introduction of new electoral systems has been largely accepted in the regions and has given some improved degree of representation. However, the removal of SV for mayoral elections, the Welsh Senedd's decision to replace AMS with a full list system and the fact that single parties have continued to dominate in Wales and Scotland, and the same two parties regularly come out on top, suggests little has actually changed, and therefore it has been mostly ineffective.



- There have been some clear attempts to reform the voting system for general elections since 1997, including the proposals of the Jenkins Commission and the AV referendum proposal in 2011. However, these proposals have not led to any change and, while there has been an increase in the number of parties supporting electoral reform for general elections, attempts at reform have so far achieved nothing and so have been mostly ineffective.
- Attempts to extend the franchise and improve access to elections have had some success with Wales and Scotland introducing votes at 16 for local elections. The Conservative government has also introduced measures it believes will reduce electoral fraud and improve the legitimacy of results. However, there have still been no attempts to reduce the voting age to 16 for national elections, while the attempts to reduce electoral fraud have in fact appeared to lower turnout. On this basis, attempts to improve access to elections and increase democratic legitimacy appear to have been largely ineffective.

Conclusion: clearly give a comparative judgement in line with your argument.

- 4 For this question, you only need to look at one form of proportional representation, so STV or AMS, though you could consider both if you wanted to. Essentially, this question is asking you to analyse the pros and cons of a PR system when applied to the House of Commons, and evaluate by considering whether the pros outweigh the cons. Ideally, you would use your knowledge of the use of PR systems in the UK to support your points. Note that the question asks 'should', meaning that a PR system needs to be better than the current system, not just a nice idea.

When planning this answer, the best way would be to consider three functions of elections, consider how a PR system might improve them for elections to the House of Commons, then contrast how it might not, before reaching your judgement.

Introduction: set out the key areas to consider (here, democratic legitimacy, accountability and being representative) and what your judgement will be.

Main body

- A PR system like STV could improve democratic legitimacy by reducing wasted votes and minority constituencies and perhaps improving turnout, which suggests it should be used for elections to the House of Commons. However, the issues with spoiled ballots and the fact that in Northern Ireland no party has secured a clear majority suggests that this might actually be bad for effective government in the House of Commons, so while it is a positive argument, it is not a convincing argument that a PR system should be used for elections to the House of Commons.
- A PR system like STV could help improve accountability, as it would allow voters to choose from a wider range of parties and switch their votes in the knowledge that they might be able to affect the outcome, unlike the current system of FPTP with its many safe seats. However, with no winner's bonus and seats being allocated proportionally, it is actually harder to remove a government from power as coalitions will have to be formed. So the same parties tend to remain dominant for long periods, such as the DUP and Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland and, under AMS, the SNP in Scotland and Labour in Wales. The fact that it would be harder to remove unpopular governments is an argument that a PR system should not be introduced.
- A PR system may improve representation by allowing more parties to gain access to the House of Commons and ensure that they have some degree of representation. A system like AMS, with a party list element, may also help increase social representation, which could be beneficial for the House of Commons. However, this could allow small extremist parties to gain representation in the national legislative body, which would be concerning, and there is little clear evidence that social representation has actually improved as a result of PR in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. Therefore, while PR is potentially beneficial, there is not enough evidence yet to say that a PR system should be introduced for elections to the House of Commons.



Conclusion: a clear answer to the question, consistent with your judgements throughout.

- 5 The key to planning your answer to this question is to think about the features of effective representation and then compare how well referendums achieve these, as compared to elections, before reaching a judgement. In this case, we may consider representation of views, the ability to express opinions and the quality of the representation offered. In each section, depending on your judgement, explain and analyse how referendums could be seen to do these better than elections, then evaluate by analysing how, in fact, elections do them better than referendums (or the other way round, if you think so) before reaching an interim judgement.

Introduction: set out the areas you will consider and give a clear judgement.

Main body

- Referendums can allow views to be expressed that were ignored by the main parties (further devolution in Wales, 2011, which all the major parties supported in 2010). However, even if alternative views can be expressed, referendums are too narrow and, as referendums are binary, it is unlikely any minority opinion will succeed in gaining representation, so elections are better.
- By being on single issues, referendums can allow people to express opinions that they may not be able to in an election, where they have to vote for a party manifesto and compromise across a variety of issues (electoral reform, 2011, Brexit, 2016). However, while this might work on major issues, for everything covered in elections to be dealt with by referendum would cause voter fatigue (2011 AV referendum) and undermine parliamentary government (2016 Brexit referendum). Therefore, elections remain more effective than referendums.
- In some ways referendums offer more effective representation because they come directly from the people, allow them to express opinions that may be at odds with the government (Scottish independence, 2014 and Brexit, 2016) and can increase turnout and participation. However, the simplistic 'yes or no' nature of the questions and the fact that voters may vote emotionally suggests that the quality of representation offered is actually less effective. Therefore, referendums are less effective than elections.

Conclusion: clear evaluative judgement with a reason.

- 6 There are a number of ways to approach this question, such as a thematic approach or by looking at three key referendums. Here we will plan it by looking at three key referendums.

The key for the debate is to recognise that the question says 'nothing but disadvantages'. When you have an absolute term like 'nothing' it makes the conclusion much easier to reach: no matter how much you may dislike referendums, it would be hard to say that there have only been disadvantages in their use. Therefore, the central argument is likely to be that, while referendums may have caused some disadvantages, there have been some positives, so the view that referendums have caused nothing but disadvantages since 1997 is largely inaccurate.

Introduction: set out the key referendums and what your judgement is likely to be.

Main body

- Devolution, 1997: possible problems from the referendums (including calls for more devolution and independence), but they have helped semi-entrench the constitutional reforms and did motivate public engagement.
- AV, 2011: seemed like a waste of money, low turnout showing lack of public engagement and a bit pointless. However, it did allow a public debate to happen and showed that the public, largely, was not in favour of national electoral reform, thus revealing the public's attitude.
- EU referendum, 2016: it led to major political upheavals and divisions within and between the parties and, in the way it was set out, offered no clear plan for a no vote. It also undermined the



principle of parliamentary sovereignty. However, it did allow public opinion that had been largely ignored to be recognised, saw higher turnout than the 2015 general election (or any election since 1992) and was a strong example of popular sovereignty, ensuring Parliament delivered the will of the people.

Sample conclusion

‘While referendums since 1997 have brought some significant disadvantages, by undermining Parliament, making it more difficult to remove some constitutional policies and potentially causing apathy among the public, and also some outright hostility in the case of the EU referendum, it would be wrong to say they have brought nothing but disadvantages. By allowing the public to voice clear opinions on major issues in a way elections do not, by engaging the public in major debates and galvanising political discussions, they have brought some advantages to the UK political system. Therefore, the view that referendums since 1997 have caused nothing but disadvantages is inaccurate.’



Chapter 4 (pp. 170–71)

- 1 The focus of this question is on social factors, but it is essentially a debate about the relative importance of social factors and political factors in determining election outcomes. You should consider what might make one side more important than the other and consider a criterion for judging this. Essentially the debate comes down to whether long-term social groupings, like class, age, gender and race, play a more important role in determining election outcomes than short-term political actions, such as manifestos, the performance of the leader, the media and the election campaign itself. This will be a personal opinion and you will need to justify it. To help with the debate, in each pairing, try to set out ways in which the weaker side (in your opinion) might explain election outcomes, then counter this with why the other side is a better or more convincing explanation. This will lead you to a comparative analysis and a comparative judgement.

Introduction: set out the debate, your criteria for judging 'most important' and what your judgement will be.

Main body

- Political factors could be seen as more important than social factors as the role of the leadership is suggested to have been an important factor in 2019: 'defeated MPs have blamed the party's Brexit position and Corbyn's leadership; and Boris Johnson's performance as, throughout, his leadership ratings were substantially higher than Corbyn's'. However, more convincing is the view in Part B, because it deals with clear and demonstrable proof that social factors were more important than political: 'Ipsos MORI estimates Labour won the votes of 64% of all Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voters, while 20% voted for the Conservatives. Labour won in 113 seats that had a larger-than-average BME population, while the Conservatives won 53.' While this does not explain the final outcome, it does suggest that social factors are more important than political ones in determining how people vote.
- Part A makes the case that political factors like policies and manifestos are the most important factor: 'the Tories' message was much more focused than Labour's, concentrating on a small number of core pledges; the Conservative manifesto was short on eye-catching policy offers and avoided controversial pledges'. However, more convincing is the view in Part B which suggests that it was more the appeal of policies to the social grouping of class that explained the election outcome: home ownership is 'usually a sign of the A, B and C1 classes...315 of the Conservatives' 365 seats (86%) had home ownership levels above this average, compared with 53 of Labour's 202 seats (26%).' Therefore, social factors do play a more important role than political ones.
- Part A suggests that political factors are more important than social ones as the campaigns failed to inspire the core voters to turn out: 'traditional Labour voters appeared to have stayed home or voted for the Brexit party'. However, Part B makes the more convincing argument that social factors were more important: 'In 2019, age was a strong predictor of how people voted. Labour performed better in constituencies that had a younger population', but generally the younger electorate has a lower turnout, which makes social factors more convincing as an explanation of electoral outcomes.

Conclusion: beginning with 'While', set out your comparative judgement and give a clear reason for your choice.

- 2 For this question, it is important to note that the argument is whether or not opinion polls undermine the UK's system of democracy. To undermine really means it makes the system worse or damages it in some way. This is not the same as being pointless or having no impact; it should actually cause harm to the system if it undermines it. On this basis, think about the pairings and whether the argument that they undermine the system of democracy is more or less convincing than the view that they do not.



Introduction: set out your definition of ‘undermining the UK’s system of democracy’ and what arguments you will consider before asserting your judgement.

Main body

Analyse and compare the paired points, focusing on why one side of the debate is more convincing than the other.

- Between elections ‘polls act as a feedback mechanism which could affect parties’ policy choices’ *versus* ‘they are too easy to manipulate’.
- ‘...nearer to an election, they are feedback mechanism on how the campaign is going’ *versus* powerful non-democratic forces can ‘create and publish opinion polls in ways that achieve a desired outcome, rather than contributing to the political debate’.
- ‘...their main use is prior to elections, where politicians use polls as a tool to inform their campaigns and to craft messaging’ *versus* ‘parties and the media often create opinion polls to suit their own agenda’.
- ‘Polling remains the most effective way of obtaining voters’ opinions or concerns on key issues or voting intention’ *versus* ‘the media seek instant polling, without the usual rigorous academic processes that would be expected of traditional polls’.
- ‘Since the 2015 election...the industry does appear to be in safer hands’ *versus* ‘From the phrasing of the question, to who is being asked, to how the data are presented, opinion polls are clearly dangerous and subject to political manipulation and should therefore be banned, at the least at a time of a major vote.’

Conclusion: reassert your initial judgement, making sure it is comparative and that you provide a reason why your judgement on the view is more convincing than the alternative.

- 3 Here, it is important to note that the question says ‘remains’ and requires you to use your case studies of general elections, so in the course of your essay you will need to consider the idea of change and continuity; whether class remains the most important social factor or if, over time, something else has replaced it as the most important social factor in explaining voting behaviour.

The fact that you are given a key factor (class) means you should focus on comparing the importance of class to three other social factors to help reach your judgement, though you could also have one section that argues that class is important but has become less important. You will be fine, as long as, in your essay, you are comparing the importance of class to other social factors.

Introduction: set out the key arguments and your judgement.

Main body

- Class was perhaps the most important factor up to 1997 as most people clearly identified with one class. It remains an important factor as people still identify with class and therefore vote according to class-based economic interests. However, age has actually become more important as there is more of an ideological and economic divide between young and old than between different classes. Therefore, class is no longer the most important factor.
- Class was traditionally important because it related to partisan voting and with strong class identity there was a corresponding loyalty to a particular party, or partisan alignment. However, since 1997, the breakdown in class-based partisan voting means that class is no longer the main determinant of how people will vote. Instead, parties appeal to other social dynamics, like age, race and gender, by adopting specific policies to appeal to these groups. Therefore, class no longer remains the most important social factor affecting voting.
- Traditionally, class also impacted turnout in voting, with more affluent classes being more likely to turn out to vote. However, while class since 1997 has remained in line with this tradition, age and



race have also become important in determining turnout, which suggests that class no longer remains the most important factor.

Conclusion: for this line of argument, the judgement would be made that, while class remains an important factor, it is no longer the most important factor as other social factors have become more important. Of course, you could argue the opposite point of view and reach a different conclusion. It is just important to be consistent.

- 4 With this question, you are simply being asked to evaluate the importance of election campaigns in determining election results. Unlike questions which ask if a stated factor is the most important, this question is simply asking you 'how important' one thing is: election campaigns. Therefore, while you may mention other things, you are not being asked to compare election campaigns to other factors. You need to plan your response by considering three ways in which election campaigns play a role in determining election results, and in each section, consider the extent of their importance. As the view in the question is stating that they have little importance, you must choose whether to agree or disagree in your judgement.

For this plan, we are going to agree and suggest they are of little importance, but the opposite view is equally valid.

Sample introduction

'Election campaigns, which can last up to six weeks before the election is held, are traditionally seen as a crucial event in determining the election result as parties campaign by appealing to voters through media appearances, leadership debates and producing manifestos. While the media frenzy around them makes election campaigns seem important, in truth, most people have already decided how to cast their vote long before the campaign, so it is likely that the campaign itself has little importance in determining election results.'

Main body

- Importance of the media strategy in persuading voters *versus* the fact that much of the media content simply confirms existing views and there is little evidence it actually alters people's voting intentions.
- The leader, especially the leadership debates, can play an important role in inspiring turnout and enthusiasm among party members *versus* beyond inspiring the party activists, the leader plays a limited role and, in some cases, they seek to keep a low profile so as to avoid losing votes.
- Party manifestos can be important in producing key issues that become part of the debate and can inspire voters or discourage them to a particular way *versus* in truth most manifestos offer nothing new and simply promote established policies, and where they do have an impact, it is more about turnout of key supporters than actually winning over new voters.

Conclusion: clear judgement (in this case, that they do not play an important role) on the basis that they do little to change voting intention. You could, of course, have argued that impacting turnout could play an important role in impacting electoral outcomes. As long as your judgement is consistent, your answer will be credited.

- 5 Unlike question 4, this question is comparative, asking you to compare the importance of a stated factor (in this case, the media) to other factors in determining voting behaviour. So, for this answer, you need to compare the media to three other factors. You also need to ensure that your explanations clearly relate to voting behaviour and not general outcomes.

In this plan, we will argue that the media are the most important because they are the prism through which all other factors are seen. You could, of course, argue the opposite position.



Introduction: set out the arguments and the key judgement.

Main body

- In some ways, the role of the party leader could be seen as more important than the media because the leader's reputation, performance and ideas are what are being judged by the electorate. However, the media are the prism through which most voters relate to and form their opinion of the leaders, and so, because the media shape people's perception, they are the most important factor.
- In some ways, manifestos and party policies can be seen as more important than the media because it is these policies that are designed to appeal to voters and persuade them to vote for a particular party. However, during election campaigns, it is the media that shape the way in which the public respond to these policies and influence whether policies are popular or not. Therefore, the media are the most important factor because they determine how people perceive party policies.
- In some ways, party campaigning, with door-to-door canvassing, hustings and speeches, may be considered more important than the media because these traditional methods of campaigning are how politicians engage directly with members of the public and try to gain their votes. However, parties are increasingly relying on social media to facilitate this role and, more often, the majority of voters access such debates and speeches through media reporting on it. Therefore, the media remain the most important factor as they are the means by which politicians will engage with the majority of voters.

Conclusion: a clear judgement in line with your arguments.

- 6 There are two key things to note with this question. The first is that you must make reference to your three cases in the course of your essay. The second is that the question is not asking you to compare the role of the government with the role of the opposition. That is not the debate. The debate is that it is more government than opposition versus it is more opposition than government. So, your sections should not be comprised of 'the government v. the opposition' but rather 'the government more than the opposition v. the opposition more than the government'. The basic plan remains the same as for all essays, but a sample section has been provided to help you understand how to argue this.

Sample section

'In some ways, the view can be challenged as the role of the opposition in defeating a government is clearly important and plays a key role in governments losing elections. For example, in 1997, Tony Blair and New Labour had planned a careful campaign that contrasted their strengths to the government's weaknesses and, had they not done this so effectively, they might not have been able to defeat the incumbent government as heavily as they did. As with 1997, in 1979, the Conservative opposition offered an alternative ideology and way of doing things to the incumbent government and it was by doing this that they were able to win a clear victory. This is seen again in 2019, when the failure of Jeremy Corbyn to produce a manifesto that appealed to the majority allowed a government to achieve victory despite having already been weakened by divisions and changes in leadership, suggesting that the opposition plays an important role in election results.

However, while the role of the opposition is important in determining the extent of victory, in reality, the opposition is not as important as the performance of the government in determining the outcome of elections, supporting the view given in the question. In both 1979 and 1997 the party of government had suffered from years of internal divisions and economic problems, which undermined confidence in the government and made voters willing to seek an alternative government. In both situations, the opposition played an important role in offering such an alternative, more so in 1997, but they could only capitalise on the situation because people had lost faith in the government. On the issue of Brexit in 2019, people had not lost faith in the relatively new government of Boris Johnson, which explains



Labour's failure to exploit the government's weaknesses. Therefore, this suggests that elections really are lost by the government rather than won by the opposition, although the opposition does play a role in determining the extent of victory of the winning party. In this way, the view given in the question is very convincing and elections are lost by governments rather than won by opposition parties.'