



Answer guidance

Component 2 UK Government

General advice on essay plans

Before you start attempting possible essay answers, there is one key difference to note between Component 1 and Component 2 answers. In Component 2 it is a requirement that you make some use of relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1. Apart from this, the techniques and structures are exactly the same. Don't let the additional requirement throw you. As long as you have made some use of knowledge and understanding from Component 1 — if you discuss the issue of democracy, group activity, party positions or roles, rights protection or elections and voting behaviour — you will have met the requirements. You would probably do this anyway, as, for example, nearly all constitutional reforms also act as democratic reforms, while the work of parties is closely linked to the work of Parliament, and rights protection is clearly linked to the work of the Supreme Court. However, it is important that you make the connection explicit and clearly visible in your essay, so that it can be recognised and credited by an examiner.

Practice questions

Chapter 5 (pp. 212–13)

- 1 At first glance, both extracts may appear to be suggesting problems with the constitutional reforms. But if you look closely at what is being said, Part A is suggesting that the reforms did not go far enough, in that they raised questions without producing answers, and therefore further reform is needed to resolve the issues. Part B contains comments and announcements by Conservative ministers who felt that the reforms had in fact gone too far and that the solution was to remove the reforms, not add new ones. On this basis, the debate is between the view that reforms have 'not gone far enough' and the counter view that they have gone too far. Based on these two views, you should pair up points from each part and then, using your own criteria and political understanding, consider the merits of each case and decide which side of the debate is the more convincing while asserting your own reasoned judgement.

Possible pairings include:

- Marked pressure 'between the different administrations across the UK', meaning issues over the relationships between devolved bodies and Westminster, *versus* 'During a 2020 Zoom call with northern Conservative MPs, Boris Johnson described devolution as "a disaster north of the border" and "Tony Blair's biggest mistake"', suggesting that devolution has in fact gone too far.
- Marked pressure 'between government, parliament and the courts', referring to conflict over rights protection that need to be resolved through further reform, *versus* 'Suella Braverman, as attorney general, said it was "a national priority" to extricate the UK from the influence of the European Court of Human Rights, and that the court's interventionist approach on rights issues potentially jeopardised democracy', suggesting that reforms had in fact gone too far.
- 'The less than four years since the 2019 general election have seen three prime ministers and a rapidly changing cast of ministers', which was causing problems and required more reform to ensure stability and accountability, *versus* 'We will get rid of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act — it has led to paralysis at a time the country needed decisive action' (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2019), which suggests that reforms had gone too far and that the situation would be made more stable by repealing the Fixed-term Parliaments Act.



- 2 The key word here is 'should'. While it might be a nice thing to adopt a codified constitution, why should the UK adopt one? What would make it essential? To answer this, you will need to consider the current situation and whether or not the adoption of a codified constitution would solve anything. You should identify points in the source and use them as the basis for an argument and a challenge to that argument, to help develop a clear judgement on the stated view. You will use details from your own knowledge to help you develop your explanations.

Introduction: state the key arguments, the points you will make, how you define 'should' and what your judgement will be.

Main body

A sample section together with other possible pairings is given below.

- 'One argument present in the source which suggests that perhaps the UK should adopt a codified constitution is that "The flexible nature of uncoded constitutions means that they could be subject to multiple interpretations." This did appear to be an issue during the process of withdrawing from the EU as there was a lack of clarity and this in turn led to clashes and conflict between the three pillars of government, especially the executive and legislature, over how the process was to be conducted and achieved. This in turn led to wider division and arguments across society, relating to devolution, rights and many other aspects. It is possible that a codified constitution might have resolved these issues by providing greater clarity over who could do what, but given the exceptional nature of Brexit and the fact that, in the end, constitutional principles remained intact and a conclusion was reached, suggests that in fact the argument for a codified constitution is not that strong. Far more persuasive is the view from the source that "One of the main advantages of an uncoded constitution is that it is more dynamic and flexible." This is because it is that very flexibility that allowed Brexit to happen and, as with so many other constitutional issues, the UK system is able to find an effective method or adaptation to move forward, which might be more difficult under a codified system. Therefore, the argument against a codified constitution is far more persuasive as, fundamentally, flexibility is what allows the UK system to adapt more easily and respond to public opinion and the democratic will more effectively than an entrenched set of possibly outdated laws. Therefore, the view that the UK should adopt a codified constitution is not very convincing.'
- Uncoded constitutions can lead to uncertainty with regard to whether something is or is not constitutional within the legal system, leading to disputes and disagreements, *versus* As an unwritten constitution has the capacity to incorporate a country's customs and traditions over time, this can help to consolidate and further strengthen a country's cultural identity.
- Another disadvantage is the lack of clarity, leading to greater difficulty in enforcing the law, *versus* There may be more room for interpretation with an uncoded constitution, allowing judges and law-makers to be more creative in how they make legal decisions.
- In the absence of a clear set of rules, an uncoded constitution may be more vulnerable to an abuse of power, *versus* Rather than going through the often difficult and lengthy process of constitutional amendment, it is often easier to change the interpretation of a legal principle or rule.

Conclusion: reassert your comparative judgement, developing a supported reason for coming to this judgement on the stated view.

- 3 This question is essentially asking you to compare one problem, the lack of an English Parliament, with other problems that have arisen as a result of devolution. As the question asks if the lack of an English Parliament is the greatest problem, you will need to structure your answer by comparing the problems caused by the lack of an English Parliament to three other problems arising from devolution. The most straightforward way to do this might be by picking three themes, or ways in which the lack of an English Parliament might be a problem, and comparing each one to a separate problem. It may be useful to



have a criterion for defining what ‘the greatest problem’ would look like in your analysis. Do note that the question asks if the greatest problem is the lack of an English Parliament, not what the greatest problem is, so make sure you answer the question asked.

Introduction: set out the points you will discuss, state your criterion for judging ‘the greatest problem’ and give an indication of what your final judgement will be.

Main body

- Asymmetrical devolution: one problem with devolution is the fact that different areas have different powers and roles, and this creates confusion and a lack of consistency. In a sense, this inconsistency is most prominent in the lack of an English Parliament, unlike the devolved regions in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. However, given that parts of England already have devolution, the greater problem with devolution is the inconsistency in powers awarded to the differing bodies. This suggests that the asymmetrical nature of devolution is a greater problem than the lack of an English Parliament.
- Potential break-up of the Union: instead of ending nationalist calls for independence, devolution, especially in Scotland, seems to have led to more demands for it. In this sense, the lack of an English Parliament could be seen as a problem, as it may explain some support for nationalist groups in England who feel that England is missing out and being under-represented, especially given the West Lothian Question. However, English nationalism and demands for an English Parliament are not particularly strong, and a far greater problem is the increased demands for Scottish independence which have resulted from the rise of the SNP and increased devolved powers. This suggests that the lack of an English Parliament is not the greatest problem as there is a much greater problem caused by the growing calls for Scottish independence. (SNP and party positions links to Component 1.)
- Lack of equality in democracy: a final problem with devolution is that it has led to different laws and practices in different parts of the country, meaning not everyone in the UK is treated the same. This can be seen in different provisions for student loans, healthcare, the response to Covid and even Sunday trading laws. In a sense, the lack of an English Parliament reflects this as it means the English cannot vote for or demand specific rights and privileges enjoyed in other parts of the country. However, this is not as great a problem as the fact that this is an inevitable aspect of devolution. Even if there were an English Parliament, devolution, to be worth anything, would have to lead to variations across the country. Therefore, the greatest problem is not the lack of an English Parliament, but the fact that devolution in any form will create an inconsistent experience for the population. (Ideas about democracy link to Component 1.)

Conclusion: a clear comparative judgement with your reason.

- 4 This question is asking you to compare constitutional reforms before and after 2010 and decide whether or not those before 2010 were more important than those that occurred afterwards. It is essential to define what you mean by ‘important’ and use that to reach your judgement. It is also essential to note that you need to compare reforms directly, not simply look at reforms before and after. The best way to do this would be to start with three big areas of reform and match specific reforms that relate to each theme before and after 2010, as suggested in the plan below.

Sample introduction

‘The periods 1997–2010 and from 2010 onwards have seen many constitutional reforms that have changed the nature of UK politics. In many ways, the reforms before 2010 were important because they created many of the major issues that would be dealt with or resolved in the period after 2010. However, the most important reforms should be those that have had the most impact on the working of the country and directly impacted the most people, and in this case, reforms since 2010 have been more important than those of 1997–2010, rather than the view given in the question.’



Main body

- Devolution: reforms before 2010 created it in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London; however, metro regions and the expansion of powers to existing bodies since 2020 have been more important.
- Parliament: reforms before 2010 were important for the removal of most hereditary peers from the Lords and the strengthening of the Select Committee system; however, reforms since 2010 have been more important, because the adoption of the Wright reforms have given the Commons more of a voice, while the House of Lords Reform Acts – though less sweeping than the removal of hereditary peers – have helped make the Lords a more professional body.
- Use of referendums: before 2010, the widespread use of referendums to help facilitate devolution was important. However, the use of nationwide referendums and the significance of the outcomes since 2010 make them far more important.

Conclusion: a clear reasoned judgement on the view, mirroring your introduction and the judgements made at the end of your key points.

- 5 This question is looking at constitutional reforms and their consequences. Rather than being specific, try to start by looking at a general area of reform and see how it has evolved and developed since it was introduced. It will be up to you to define what ‘too far’ means, but it may be useful to consider what the original intentions were and if what has resulted has indeed gone beyond what was originally intended.

Introduction: Set out the arguments, your definition of ‘too far’, and what your initial judgement might be.

Main body

A sample section on parliamentary reforms, together with notes on two other areas of constitutional reform, is given below.

- ‘When it comes to parliamentary reforms, it may appear that constitutional reforms since 1997 have gone too far. This is because reform of Parliament has, in some ways, made effective government much harder. With the removal of most hereditary peers since 1999, the Lords has increasingly been filled with supporters of the main parties and has become much more willing and able to defy the government of the day. This raises concerns for democratic practices, if a democratically government has plans, such as the Rwanda Bill, rejected in part or full by an unelected Lords. Equally, reforms like EVEL, though now removed, added additional bureaucracy to the process of legislation, in attempting to deal with the West Lothian Question. This issue, which arose from devolution, had meant that Scottish MPs were, for example, able to cast votes to reject legislation (such as Sunday trading reforms) even though it did not affect their constituents. All this may suggest that constitutional reforms to Parliament have gone too far.

However, the far more convincing argument is that, instead of going too far, they have not gone far enough. The removal of most hereditary peers means that 92 still remain, which is an ongoing issue in a democracy, while the main problem with the Lords is lack of democratic legitimacy and weakness in defying the Commons. For democracy to be effective, a democratically elected and accountable second chamber that can challenge the Commons is essential, suggesting that constitutional reforms of Parliament have not gone too far; rather, they have not gone far enough. Equally, the West Lothian Question and the failure of EVEL show again they have not gone far enough to resolve issues, while the central problem remains the ability of the government to dominate all parliamentary proceedings and votes. These unresolved issues are far greater than the current consequences of constitutional reform of Parliament, and therefore, far from going too far, constitutional reform since 1997 has not gone far enough, meaning the view is not very convincing.’



- Rights reforms: reforms like the HRA, Equalities Act and reforms to the Supreme Court have changed and developed rights culture in the UK, to a point where some people argue it has gone too far. However, the lack of an entrenched Bill of Rights and the presence of parliamentary sovereignty means rights reforms remain quite weak. Therefore, far from going too far, constitutional reforms since 1997 have not gone far enough.
- Devolution: devolution has certainly expanded greatly since 1997 and there is concern that the growing powers in Scotland and Wales and demands for independence may have gone too far and might lead to the break-up of the Union. However, the real problem is the lack of full English devolution and the limitations on English regional devolution. Therefore, far from going too far, constitutional reforms around devolution have not gone far enough.

Conclusion: make a clear comparative judgement and support it, in line with your previous arguments; in this case, the view is flawed as, rather than going too far, devolution has not gone far enough.

- 6 With this type of question, make sure you are comparing the balance of the problems, not problems against solutions. The argument is between the problems outweighing the solutions and the solutions outweighing the problems. To plan this, try to think of three aspects of devolution and then consider one side of the debate then the other in regard to each, before reaching a comparative judgement.

Introduction: set out the central arguments and what the final judgement will be.

Main body

- Weakening the Union: the solutions in place in Northern Ireland and attempts to address Welsh and English nationalism are outweighed by the growing calls for Scottish independence, therefore the problems outweigh the solutions.
- Party representation: in many ways, devolution and the use of alternative electoral systems have solved the issues of two-party domination in the UK, with the SNP gaining control in Scotland and other parties gaining seats that they did not have before devolution. However, this has led to single-party dominance in Wales and Scotland and made the regions far more adversarial towards the UK Parliament, as was seen during the Covid pandemic. Therefore, the problems caused by devolution outweigh the solutions, making the view very convincing.
- Improving democracy: in many ways, the increase in local representation and experiments in democratic representation, such as lowering the voting age for local elections in Wales and Scotland, have improved democratic representation across the UK. However, this is outweighed by the fact that devolution has led to different levels of rights and experiences for the people, mostly as a result of asymmetric devolution. These problems are far greater than the solutions, therefore the view is very convincing.

Conclusion: make a comparative judgement and provide a reason for that judgement, in line with what you have argued.



Chapter 6 (pp. 249–50)

- 1 With this question, you need to think about the different aspects of democracy and whether, in any way, the existence of the House of Lords can be justified. The question offers an absolute view, asking if it the Lords can be justified or not, not how far or how convincing certain arguments are. This means you need to think if the arguments against the House of Lords really demonstrate that there is no justification for it. If there is any justification, then you are likely to disagree with the view. Once you have decided how you will be defining ‘cannot be justified’, you can then select your paired points and use these to structure your analysis. Sometimes, it can be useful to start with a quote and use that to develop your idea.

Main pairings could include the following:

- ‘It is undemocratic and totally unacceptable that a bunch of unelected peers should be flouting the will of the people expressed through the Brexit referendum’, referring to the idea that peers lack democratic legitimacy as they are unelected and yet have great power over major issues, including referendum results, *versus* ‘With the minds of their lordships uncluttered by concerns about re-election (or, in Labour’s case, deselection), they have been able to dwell on the quaint notion of the national interest’, which means that, due to the very absence of the threat of re-election and accountability, the Lords are free of populist passions and can focus on the national interest in a way that elected chamber cannot, which may be beneficial in a modern democracy.
 - ‘In most democratic countries the second chamber enjoys the legitimacy of direct or indirect election’, suggesting that the UK is out of step with most modern democracies by having the House of Lords, *versus* ‘Many of these votes reasserted constitutional principles that were being compromised. “Taking back control” means asserting parliamentary authority, not an overweening executive’, which means that, while the Lords may be out of step with modern democracies, this gives it an advantage in upholding traditional constitutional principles that protect the people from an overpowerful government at a time of political upheaval.
 - ‘The government has a nuclear option: to create a vast number of new Conservative peers to swamp any opposition, thereby making the biggest chamber in the world’, which suggests the government in the Commons could dominate the Lords and make it a party-dominated chamber with little desire to effectively scrutinise the government, *versus* ‘Brexit legislation has been subject to far more forensic, well-informed and rigorous scrutiny in the Lords than the Commons’, which suggests that, in fact, scrutiny of government legislation, for the time being at least, is much more effective than in the Commons due to the lack of single-party control.
- 2 To help guide you in what to identify from the source, think about the function of select committees and use this to help you pair your points. Remember, the question is asking if they lack the power necessary to be effective, which is not the same as being unwilling to enforce that power. Bear in mind that a committee may not have enforcement power, but its power to publicise recommendations and scrutinise the government may mean that it nevertheless has sufficient power to fulfil its role of holding the government to account. More power might be better, but that does not mean that the system is currently ineffective. Consider how you would define ‘power necessary to be effective’ and use your definition to analyse and evaluate your arguments, on the basis of points derived from the source.

Introduction: set out the key points you will argue, how you will define ‘power necessary to be effective’ and what your judgement will be.

Main body

- The source suggests that the committees do have some relevant power, because ‘To report from time to time, including the power to report on matters beyond the immediate remit of the committee’ could be seen as effective. However, the more convincing view is that ‘Select



committees can report but lack a corresponding enforcement power', and without such enforcement powers, the reports lack the power necessary to be effective.

- The source identifies an important power in that the committees can 'send for persons, papers and records' — this is the key evidence-gathering power and includes the power to call witnesses', which certainly goes some way in enabling the committees to do the important work of scrutinising the government. However, the more convincing view is that this power is not sufficient to be effective because 'Their power to send for witnesses is limited by the fact that it cannot be used to compel' members of the government to attend, which limits their ability to scrutinise.
- The source suggests that the committees can be effective to some degree because they have the power 'To appoint specialist advisers, often academics in the committee's field of interest', which can help them gain a wide variety of information and understanding to help them be effective in their roles. However, it is more convincing to argue that this is not truly effective because 'Select committees usually rely on good will, alongside political and reputational pressure', which means they can be ignored and this, in turn, can undermine their very legitimacy and ability to carry out their role effectively.

Conclusion: reassert your initial comparative judgement with a clear reason to support your decision.

- 3 For this question, try to identify three roles of backbench MPs. As a tip, the role of backbench MPs means the role of the House of Commons, so you should use three important aspects of their role to structure and then evaluate the extent to which they may be described as effective, according to your criteria.

Introduction: set out the three key areas, how you will define 'effective' and your overall judgement.

Main body

- Representing the people: how they are effective, what makes them less effective, your overall judgement on extent.
- Scrutiny of the government: how they are effective, what makes them less effective, your overall judgement on extent.
- Legislating: how they are effective, what makes them less effective, your overall judgement on extent.

Conclusion: a clear comparative judgement on the extent of effectiveness, with a clear reason to support your final judgement.

- 4 The key to understanding this debate is to focus on 'urgent need'. You may think that reform is a good idea and would be beneficial, but the argument is whether or not there is an urgent need for it, meaning it is essential that it happens immediately. This means your analysis and explanations need to focus on this, not just the pros and cons for reform. You may agree with the view or not, but for the purposes of this plan, we will debate that, while reform may be desirable and beneficial, it is not urgently needed. As a structure, we will look at three key aspects – membership, appointments and powers – and for each one suggest that reform may be desirable, perhaps even needed, but not urgently so, as the current system works and consequences need to be carefully considered.

Introduction: set out the areas to discuss, what would constitute 'urgent need' and your overall judgement.

Main body

- How the membership, in terms of heredity membership, special roles like the Lords Spiritual, the size of the body and party affiliation, may suggest that reform is desirable, countered by the idea that, actually, while not ideal, these aspects currently work and the membership of the Lords is



stronger and more professional than ever before. At a time of great uncertainty, the experience and range of opinions in the Lords is worth keeping. Therefore, reform is not urgently needed.

- How the process of appointments, being largely in the gift of the PM with advice from the Lords Appointments Commission and approval from the monarch, is outdated and subject to accusations of cronyism and political benefit, countered by the idea that, while not ideal, it has allowed the appointment of a number of specialists and experts who may not have been elected, and that the current system does offer some protections. Therefore, while not ideal, the process is not in urgent need of reform.
- How the powers of the Lords are both too limited to check the Commons effectively and too large to justify an unelected chamber, countered by considering that it does allow an effective check without creating the partisan gridlock that can be seen in other parts of the world. Therefore, though the situation is not perfect, there is not an urgent need for reform.

Conclusion: a clear comparative judgement reasserted in line with previous judgements and with a developed reason to support the decision.

- 5 For this question, focus on the phrase ‘fit for purpose’. This does not mean the processes need to be perfect and work every time, just that they do the job they need to and allow legislation to be passed in an appropriate manner. Note that the question asks about ‘Parliament’s legislative processes’, so you will need to include information about both chambers. There are a number of ways you can approach this, but in this example we will focus on three aspects of the process: the formal readings and votes, the committee stages in the Commons and the role of the Lords in amending and approving legislation. For a possible judgement, we will argue in this case that, while not always working perfectly, the processes are ‘fit for purpose’ in that they allow the government to pass effective legislation after careful consideration, with the potential to reject or remove problematic aspects.

Introduction: set out the criteria for ‘fit for purpose’, the points that will be discussed and the judgement you will reach.

Main body

- Issues with the reading stages and votes, explaining why they are issues, countered with arguments that show that, actually, the stages work and are therefore fit for purpose.
- Issues with the committee stages in the Commons, explaining why they are issues, countered with arguments that show that, actually, the committee stage does work and therefore is fit for purpose.
- Issues with the role of the Lords in the passage of legislation, explaining why these are issues, countered with arguments that show it works well most of the time and that, therefore, the process is fit for purpose.

Sample conclusion

‘While there are issues with the current legislative process in Parliament, especially if circumstances allow the government to undermine its principles through using a large majority, overall, the current systems *are* in fact fit for purpose because they work in ensuring that questions and discussions about legislation are raised and dealt with. They act as an effective check on the power of the government without hindering important legislative programmes that have been confirmed by an electoral mandate.’

- 6 For this question, you are being asked to evaluate the significance of the work of the leader of the opposition as a method of parliamentary scrutiny. There are two things you need to consider when answering this question. The first is the relative significance of the leader of the opposition in carrying out parliamentary scrutiny, in relation to three other methods of scrutiny. The second part is the element of prioritisation. You are not being asked what the most effective method of scrutiny is, but whether or not the work of the leader of the opposition is the most significant. If you think it is, you



agree with the view; if you think anything else is, you argue that the work of the leader of the opposition is not the most significant form of parliamentary scrutiny. This will allow you to keep a tight focus on the demands of the question.

Introduction: set out the other aspects of parliamentary scrutiny, how you will define 'most significant' and then your overall judgement.

Main body

- How the work of the leader of the opposition is significant in scrutinising the PM, but how the work of the Liaison Committee is more important, therefore the view is not very convincing.
- How the work of the leader of the opposition in leading a shadow cabinet that can scrutinise the work of government departments is significant, but how the role of departmental select committees is more important in this regard, therefore the view is not very convincing.
- How the work of the leader of the opposition in scrutinising legislation is important, especially at the King's Speech and during major debates, but how the work of legislative committees and the Lords is far more significant, therefore the view is not very convincing.

Conclusion: give your comparative judgement and develop a reason why, before giving a clear answer to the question.



Chapter 7 (pp. 286–88)

- 1 This question is asking you to compare a stated factor, the Cabinet, to other factors in determining the success of the prime minister. Therefore, each section in your main body should compare the stated factor, an aspect of the Cabinet, to another factor that may determine the success of a prime minister. The first task would be to work through the source and identify three possible arguments that suggest the Cabinet is an important factor in determining the success of a prime minister:

- ‘She refused to appoint anyone to government who had not supported her campaign, leaving her with a limited pool of MPs’, which shows a PM must make effective appointments with a view to unifying their party if they hope to be successful, suggesting the Cabinet is important.
- ‘There was an obvious lack of talent in her Cabinet’, which can be used to suggest that a PM’s success depends on the talent and ability of Cabinet ministers.
- ‘...she had to fire both her chancellor and home secretary — the two most senior ministers’, which suggests that Cabinet sackings or resignations can be deeply damaging and undermine the chances of success for a PM.

Then find three other factors that can impact on the success of a PM. For example:

- ‘Truss ended up in the final round of the contest as much by default as anything else and did not enjoy the enthusiastic support of her parliamentary party’, which suggests a more important factor is the unity and support of the wider parliamentary party.
- ‘She adopted an awkward “Thatcherite persona” in presentational terms and a “red meat” strategy in policy terms’, which suggests the leadership style and policies of the PM are possibly more important in determining a PM’s success.
- ‘The overall effect was a new prime minister who was badly misaligned with both the public and her party’, which suggests that wider party support and public opinion is more important in determining the success of a PM.

You should then try to pair up the Cabinet points with other points, as far as makes logical sense, and analyse why one side of the debate is more convincing than the other. State this first in the introduction, apply it consistently at the end of each section and then reassert it in the conclusion, with a developed reason.

- 2 You are being asked to prioritise and compare factors in Cabinet appointments. As with the previous question, you will need to compare individual ability to other factors and come up with a criterion for defining what the main consideration would be and whether it is, indeed, individual ability. Remember, the question is asking if individual ability is the main reason, not ‘what is the main reason’, so your judgement should always relate to the factor under consideration and whether or not that is the main reason. In this case, there may not be obvious pairings, but you can take a single quote and look at it from two perspectives to help you reach a judgement.

Introduction: set out your criterion and the key points you will make before asserting your comparative judgement.

Main body

- ‘...the break-up of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy’ suggests appointments have more to do with government business and structure than individual ability. However, the success of a department and the decision to break up a department or create a new one may be based more on the ability of the individual minister who ran, or will run, the department, so this suggests individual ability is most important.
- ‘The promotion of Claire Coutinho may reflect her close relationship with the PM — she was Sunak’s parliamentary private secretary (PPS) when he was chancellor and served as his special



adviser before being elected' suggests a close personal working relationship may be more important than individual ability. However, it is unlikely that a PM would appoint someone to such a high position simply as an ally, and it suggests that they showed ability in their previous role and that, therefore, individual ability is the main factor.

- 'Shapps, termed the "minister for the *Today* programme", has held five different secretary of state roles in the little over 4 years' suggests that media perception and ability, rather than individual ability to run a department, is more important in determining appointments. However, the ability to handle the media is still an ability and suggests that Shapps's ability to handle the press and be a government spokesperson is the main reason for his appointment to Cabinet positions, suggesting this is the main reason for appointments generally.

Conclusion: reassert your initial comparative judgement, with a developed reason for why.

- 3 For this question, you need to focus on the idea of 'completely dominate'. The powers and authority of prime ministers mean that they will usually dominate their cabinet, but to 'completely dominate' them, they would need to have total power and always get exactly what they want. Of course, this will also include ideas about circumstances, such as media image for the PM, events like Covid-19, electoral success and prospects of success, and party loyalty and unity, all of which mean that, at different times, different PMs may be able to dominate, but their domination is never complete for a prolonged period. The debate is essentially about the extent of power between the PM and Cabinet, but the judgement needed is whether or not the power of PMs is complete. The chances are that, while PMs may dominate in many ways, your judgement will suggest they do not completely dominate and certainly not all the time.

For a possible plan, you might structure your essay by looking at features or functions of Cabinet government and evaluate how completely the PM dominates the Cabinet for each, as long as your judgement remains consistent throughout.

Introduction: set out the points to discuss and what your final judgement will be.

Main body

- Meetings: PMs control the agenda, who can speak and if a vote on policy will be taken. However, Cabinet members are free to discuss policies and can resign if they do not agree with the policy, so a PM who needs support from the Cabinet may be forced to compromise. Therefore, they are dominant, but not completely so.
- Public voice: usually, the PM will announce major policies publicly and be the public face of the government. As such, they dominate the government's public relations, especially through their use of the Downing Street press office, something that is also helped by collective responsibility. However, at times, key Cabinet ministers will deal with major issues and set out their own policy agendas, and, if weakened, a PM may need to suspend collective responsibility and accept Cabinet ministers briefing against them. Therefore, they are dominant, but not completely so.
- Appointments: the PM appoints Cabinet ministers and can use this power of patronage to dominate. They can promote or demote in reshuffles and even sack ministers who they feel are not supporting them or doing the job well, suggesting dominance. However, PMs usually have to consider a range of factors including party support when making appointments and a minister may choose to resign, or even just threaten to resign, in order to weaken the PM and achieve their goals. Therefore, while PMs are dominant, they are not completely so.

Conclusion: reassert your judgement and give a developed reason to support it.

- 4 For this question you should try to define what you mean by a 'meaningful role' in the introduction and then use this to analyse and evaluate the concepts. You need to cover both individual and ministerial responsibility, but they do not need to be done together. You might have one section that deals with



collective responsibility and perhaps two sections that look at individual responsibility, and it would be fine to say that one plays a meaningful role but the other does not. As long as your overall judgement is consistent, you will meet the AO3 requirements. To help make it easier to evaluate and achieve the necessary range, you could try looking at collective responsibility, then break individual responsibility into personal conduct, meaning a minister's personal actions and behaviour, and individual professional conduct, meaning their responsibility for their department. You may want to refer to the case studies for examples and consider instances of when ministers have resigned, but also when they have not resigned despite pressure to do so. You can also consider examples where a minister has resigned, but then returned soon after, and decide if the resignation was meaningful. Do note that, as the question asks if the concepts 'continue' to play a meaningful role, you should consider recent situations, rather than older ones.

Introduction: set out the main areas to discuss, how you will define a 'meaningful role' and what judgement this is likely to lead to.

Main body

- Collective responsibility does still play a somewhat meaningful role as, mostly, ministers tow the party line, support government decisions and resign if they cannot support the official position. However, when a PM is weak, or during moments of high tension, ministers appear more willing to criticise and defy the PM, suggesting it only continues to play a meaningful role if the PM is in a strong position, and therefore, it is no longer as meaningful as it was.
- Individual responsibility does still play a meaningful role as it leads to public scrutiny and some ministers have been forced to resign due to personal misconduct. However, several high-profile cases have shown ministers refusing to resign for personal misconduct or resigning and returning to government positions soon after, which suggests that, while it still plays a role, it is no longer as meaningful as it used to be.
- Individual ministerial responsibility for professional conduct and the actions of their department does still play a meaningful role as ministers must still answer to Parliament and receive press scrutiny, and there have been some high-profile resignations as a result of failings in a department. However, government ministers seem more reluctant to take such responsibility, either passing blame to civil servants or refusing to resign if their actions or decisions have caused failures. Therefore, while it does continue to play a role, it is not as meaningful as it once was.

Sample conclusion

'While the concepts of individual and collective responsibility do appear to play some role in UK politics, they are no longer as meaningful as they once were, as ministers are much less willing to resign and accept responsibility, and even if they do, it is usually only in the short term. Therefore, the view that they continue to play a meaningful role is not very convincing because the consequences and sanctions no longer carry much threat and cannot be seen as serious.'

- 5 The key to this question is to define what you mean by 'sufficient limitations'. This will help you to analyse and evaluate. You can then pick three big limitations on the PM, such as the Cabinet, the House of Commons, the Lords, the public and the media, and for each one, perhaps suggest how they may limit the PM but whether or not, in your opinion, they can be described as sufficient checks. For example, at election time, the public have the power to hold a PM to account for their actions in the previous years, and even remove them, but with the PM once again able to choose the timing of elections, elections only needing to be held every 5 years and the issues with FPTP, does this really constitute a sufficient check on the PM? Maybe it does, if you feel a PM needs time and space to achieve effective government without risking populism, and if you think every 5 years is sufficient to keep them aware of public reactions. But maybe it is not a sufficient check, and some more effective



interim check is needed. The choice will be yours and your view needs to be consistent across your answer.

Introduction: set out the three key areas you will discuss, what you define as 'sufficient' and then what your judgement is likely to be.

Main body

- The role of the Cabinet as a limitation: how it can check the PM and how this might be seen as sufficient, countered with the idea (in this case) that, actually, the more convincing argument is that it is not a sufficient check and why you think that.
- The role of the House of Commons as a limitation: how it can check the PM and how this might be seen as sufficient, countered with the idea (in this case) that, actually, the more convincing argument is that it is not a sufficient check and why you think that.
- The role of the Lords as a limitation: how it can check the PM and how this might be seen as sufficient, countered with the idea (in this case) that, actually, the more convincing argument is that it is not a sufficient check and why you think that.

Conclusion: assert your judgement that (in this case) while there are checks on the power of the PM, they are not sufficient, and give one reason why. Then clearly answer the question about the view given, in this case arguing that it is very convincing.

- 6 You will need to consider what 'presidential' means and how far PMs since 1997 have become more, rather than less, presidential, and how in some ways they have become less, rather than more, presidential. The trick here is recognising that since 1997, different PMs have needed to conduct themselves in different ways, at different times, so it not a continuous process, but more a stop-start. You are looking more for a general trend, linked to personality, media focus, relationships with the Cabinet and so on. Remember also that you are arguing 'more rather than less' as against 'less rather than more', not yes or no, so ensure the argument is comparative. A thematic approach in areas relating to style of leadership may be the most straightforward for analysis.

Introduction: set out the key points, what 'presidential' means and what your overall judgement will be.

Main body

- Media focus: media have become more focused on the role of PM and party leader since 1997, but it was heavily focused on Thatcher in the 1980s and there are still big beasts. Overall, what has been the trend?
- Relations with the Cabinet: in some ways, some PMs since 1997 have been able to dominate their Cabinet in a presidential manner, as with Blair and 'sofa Cabinet', but Thatcher and Wilson both dominated previous Cabinets and Cabinets have been able to force out PMs. Overall, what has been the trend?
- Relations with Parliament: some PMs have placed themselves apart from Parliament and sought to dominate it. Blair did this for a long time and May and Johnson both attempted to. But with smaller majorities and less united parties, PMs have increasingly had to accommodate and work with Parliament, not dominate it as they perhaps tried to do in the past. Overall, what has been the trend?

Conclusion: assert your overall judgement in a comparative way, explaining why you have reached that judgement and clearly answering the stated question.



Chapter 8 (pp. 324–26)

- 1 You need to focus on the word ‘drastically’. There is a pretty good case to make that the principle of parliamentary sovereignty was at least challenged in some way, if not undermined, by EU withdrawal, considering the various processes at work, the result of the referendum meaning a majority of MPs felt obliged to vote for something they did not support, the PM appealing directly to the people against Parliament, attempts by the PM to trigger Article 50 without a parliamentary vote, and the various attempts to impose a second referendum or challenge the result in the law courts. Nevertheless, for parliamentary sovereignty to have been drastically challenged, it would perhaps mean that the principle was terminally wounded or replaced, which is not the case. Despite the challenges, EU withdrawal was ultimately all conducted and passed by Parliament in accordance with parliamentary rules, so it may be easier to make a case that, while challenged, the principle was not drastically undermined — but that will be a personal opinion. The plan below features three key pairings from the two parts of the source provided, but others are possible to argue.

Introduction: set out the key arguments, defining terms and stating what your judgement will be.

Main body

- The 2016 referendum, referred to in Part B, could be said to have undermined the principle as it forced the majority of MPs to accept popular sovereignty despite their own views. However, the alternative view suggests that ‘Parliament [is] the supreme legal authority in the UK’ and the fact that the referendum result had to go through and be implemented by Parliament suggests that this remained the case, and therefore the principle was not drastically undermined.
- Part B suggests that the principle of parliamentary sovereignty was challenged by ‘the behaviour of both prime ministers’, who tried to force through their versions of Brexit despite opposition and defeats within the Commons, even suggesting that Parliament was the enemy. However, the argument in Part A that ‘Parliamentary sovereignty is the most important part of the UK Constitution’ is actually made far more convincing because the prime ministers found it so difficult to impose their will on Parliament and force through legislation. Far from the process undermining the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, this suggests that the principle remained very strong.
- Part B suggests that ‘In the process, the divisions over Brexit raised increasingly existential questions about sovereignty in the UK system, which remain raw and unresolved’, which could include the way devolved bodies raised objections to the process and Parliament’s authority, as well as the limitations of parliamentary sovereignty. However, Part A makes a much more convincing point that ‘These developments do not fundamentally undermine the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, since, in theory at least, Parliament could repeal any of the laws implementing these changes’, suggesting that there have been many moments when Parliament has ceded some degree of sovereignty but it always has the power to call it back and, in theory, could also choose to rejoin the EU at some future time. This suggests that, while questions were raised, the process did not drastically undermine the principle of parliamentary sovereignty.

Conclusion: reassert your comparative judgement with a developed reason for why you have reached it.

- 2 This question revolves around the issue of the Supreme Court being ‘too powerful’ and it will be up to you to define what that means to you. The first part of the source presents the view of the government of the day which, having suffered a defeat, argued that the constitutional reforms that set up the current Supreme Court bestowed too much power on it, and as a result the Court was hindering the working of an effective government. The second part of the source gives the view of the then opposition party that, actually, the Court had worked effectively in checking the power of the executive and the complaints and plans were merely a political attempt to undermine the power of the Court. This suggests that, in fact, it has either enough power or not enough power. You will need to pair



arguments and use them to analyse the nature of the power of the Supreme Court in the UK political system, reaching a reasoned and consistent judgement.

Possible pairings could include:

- ‘...curtailing the Court’s ability to become involved in constitutional issues’, suggesting that, on constitutional issues, it was too powerful as it could challenge the authority of the government, *versus* ‘The Conservative government is determined to do all it can to take power away from the courts and hoard it in No 10’, suggesting that, far from being too powerful, the complaints about the Court are a means of the government trying to take more power for itself, so the Court itself is not too powerful.
- ‘There’s a feeling that [Tony] Blair and [Charles] Falconer [the former lord chancellor] made a complete dog’s dinner of constitutional reform [in 2005] and that we are feeling the negative effects of it today’, suggesting that the reforms were unclear and ill-defined and, as such, have allowed the Court to expand its powers beyond the original intention, *versus* ‘“Not sure what’s wrong with number of supreme court judges. Same as in judicial [committee] of Lords. Not sure name supreme court misled judges as to their approach. Not sure who resolves legal constitutional issues if it’s not supreme court. Not sure much thought gone into these proposals” [sic]’, from Lord Falconer himself, pointing out that the complaints raised about the original reforms are flawed as they mirror the situation in the Lords before 2005, suggesting that the Court has remained at the same level as it was before and therefore not become too powerful.
- ‘Tory peers had warned about the dangers of “judicial activism”’, suggesting the current Supreme Court has become too powerful and is acting in a political manner against the government, *versus* ‘The idea that specialist judges should be drafted in to sit on cases could result in the court becoming more politicised, as speculation would focus on individual judges and their backgrounds’, which would actually make the situation far worse, suggesting that the current arrangements have not made the Supreme Court too powerful.

- 3 With this question, you need to focus on the legacy of the EU, not the EU itself. This means anything that has been impacted by the EU, from issues to institutions and processes, is fair to talk about, as long as you can clearly explain how the EU may have impacted on it at some point. Given this topic is about the links between institutions and the need to include knowledge from Component 1, perhaps the easiest thing to do would be to think of some big topic areas you have studied, such as parties, democracy, referendums, Parliament, devolution and rights, and use three of these to evaluate the legacy of the EU. Remember, the stated view is that it has left no lasting legacy, so even if it has left just a little legacy, then the view is inaccurate.

Introduction: set out the arguments, what you would consider a ‘lasting legacy’ and your judgement.

Main body

Include three sections and, for each, consider how it might be argued that it has not left a legacy and then how, in fact, it has left some legacy, and then give a judgement on the view in the question. A sample section on parties is provided.

Sample section

‘In some ways, it could be argued that the EU has left no lasting legacy on the UK political parties. As a result of the EU referendum in 2016 and the implementation of the withdrawal in 2020, the issue of membership of the EU has disappeared as a party-political issue. Most notably, UKIP has effectively ceased to exist as a political party and even its successor, the Brexit Party, was short lived and no longer plays a meaningful role in UK party politics. Beyond this, EU membership is no longer a source of debate within or between the political parties. The divisions that existed over membership of the EU within each party have effectively been removed, and most parties, with the possible exception of the



SNP, have accepted the referendum result and have no policy of the UK rejoining the EU. In this sense, it could be argued that the EU has left no lasting legacy on the UK political system.

However, this view is flawed and misses the point that the deep-seated divisions that the issue of EU membership caused both within and between the political parties have left a deep and lasting legacy. The issue of EU membership became the central dividing line within all the major parties and, even with the removal of the EU as a political issue, the legacy of these divisions can still be seen in the splits and divisions over many other policies, such as new economic relations with the rest of the world, market forces and rebuilding after withdrawal. Beyond this, issues about the EU settlement, most notably the Northern Ireland Agreement and the position of Northern Ireland within the UK but needing an open border, has caused deep divisions within the Conservative Party, while the SNP has not yet accepted the permanence of the result for Scotland. These divisions are, if anything, becoming more entrenched and pronounced, so while the issue of the EU membership may have been removed, the party divisions it helped create remain and appear to be a lasting legacy. Therefore, the view that the EU has left no lasting legacy on the UK political system is deeply flawed when we consider the party system.'

Conclusion: reassert your comparative judgement with a clear and developed reason to support it.

- 4 With this question, you need to focus on the extent of change in relation to sovereignty. What would 'fundamentally different' mean to you? Perhaps the situation would have to be very different from the situation before 1997. If you were to look at legal sovereignty, then, fundamentally, there has been no change as, legally, only Parliament retains legal sovereignty. However, we could argue that other versions of sovereignty, such as political and shared sovereignty (with the EU), have seen fundamental changes, with the growing importance of referendums, devolved institutions and the Human Rights Act and Supreme Court. This will give you a sense of the debate and it will be up to you to decide what you take as 'fundamentally changed' and whether you feel this applies to the location of sovereignty. For the possible plan outlined below, the argument will be made that, while political and shared sovereignty have seen some significant changes in location, to the people, devolved bodies and the courts, the fact that legal sovereignty remains with Parliament means there has not been a fundamental change in the location of sovereignty. You could just as equally argue the alternative view, if you chose to.

Introduction: set out the arguments, what you will discuss and how you will judge the fundamental change of location, then put forward your judgement on the stated view.

Main body

- Politically, some degree of sovereignty has been granted to the people in the case of referendums and their use has increased since 1997, suggesting a shift from Parliament to the people. However, legally, referendums can still only be held with the consent of Parliament, which does not legally have to follow the result. As legal sovereignty is of fundamental importance, in a way political sovereignty is not, the view is not very convincing.
- Politically, a degree of sovereign power has been delegated to the devolved bodies, as seen by their differing powers of taxation and the fact that Wales and Scotland have both reformed the voting age for local elections. However, these powers have only been granted by Parliament and, legally, could be returned to Westminster, meaning the more convincing argument is that there has been no fundamental change in the location of sovereignty because, legally, devolved bodies only hold their powers by the will of Parliament and only retain them due to political will. Therefore, the view is not very convincing.
- In terms of rights protection, it would appear that, politically, the location of sovereignty has changed, as statute law should be compatible with the HRA and the Supreme Court has the power to declare Acts of Parliament incompatible with the HRA and advise that they be reviewed or reformed. However, this power of the Supreme Court is only advisory and, while politically



Parliament may wish to make efforts to comply, it retains the power to suspend, repeal or ignore the HRA and Supreme Court rulings as only Parliament has legal sovereignty. Therefore, while political sovereignty may be seen as having changed in location, the more convincing view is that, legally, the location of sovereignty remains fundamentally unchanged and therefore the view is not very convincing.

Conclusion: reassert your comparative judgement, in this case that the view is not very persuasive, and support it with a reason that matches your arguments, in this case that legal sovereignty remains with Parliament.

- 5 This question depends on how you define 'effective'. Being able to question and raise concerns about the executive could be seen as an effective means of controlling, through influence, the actions of the executive, but you might argue that, without any powers to compel and force the executive to adopt or change proposals, there are indeed no effective checks. Two things to note. This question is asking only about Parliament's means or methods of controlling the executive, so don't talk about any other possible methods of control and make sure you refer to both chambers. The second point is that you could decide that there is at least one effective method of control. If this were the case, it would be a perfectly valid conclusion, but it still needs to be consistent across your essay. So, if you thought PMQs was the only effective means of controlling the executive, your concluding judgements on, say, the Lords might read 'While the Lords is not an effective means of controlling the executive, the fact that PMQs is, still means that the view presented is not convincing because there is at least one way in which Parliament can control the executive effectively.' This would allow you to remain consistent in your AO3 judgements.

Introduction: set out your key arguments, criteria and judgement.

Main body

- The committee system: how it could be seen as a check, but why this is not really effective, therefore the view is convincing.
- PMQs and Ministerial Questions: how these can be seen as a check, but why they are not really effective, therefore the view is convincing.
- The work of the Lords in scrutinising government legislation: how it can be seen as a check, but why it is not really an effective check, therefore the view is convincing.

Sample conclusion

'While Parliament does have a number of methods of checking the executive and controlling what it does through influence and building public and media pressure, in truth, none of these checks are really effective. This is because they lack enforcement powers and an executive with any sort of majority in the Commons can ignore or bypass them, meaning there are no effective checks and therefore the view is very convincing.'

- 6 For this question you need to define what you mean by 'sufficiently', which you would set out in your introduction. You also need to ensure that you cover both judicial independence and judicial neutrality. Rather than attempting to assess both together, it might be worth having a 2:1 split, so two ways in which the Supreme Court is neutral and one way it is independent, or vice versa.

Introduction: outline your definition of 'sufficiently', how you plan to answer the question and your judgement.

Main body

- Independence through appointments: how this works and why it might be sufficient, countered by how it may not really be sufficient, with your final judgement.



- Independence during cases: how this works and why it might be sufficient, countered by how it may not really be sufficient, with your final judgement.
- Neutrality through training: how this works and why it might be sufficient, countered by how it may not really be sufficient, with your final judgement.

Conclusion: reassert your comparative judgement with a reasoned support.