# 3.2 Core Ideas and Principles of Liberalism: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

**Answer ALL questions. Short-answer items may be brief phrases or sentences where asked. For levels-marked questions write a developed response with accurate political knowledge, clear analysis and, for the 30-mark essay, an explicit judgement.**

**1** Evaluate the extent to which liberals agree on the role of the state, focusing on shared core ideas such as consent, constitutional limits, individualism and liberty.


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**(Total for Question 1 is 24 marks)**

**2** Analyse two liberal ideas about human nature for Edexcel 9PL0 Core Political Ideas: describe how liberals view human nature and explain political consequences of each idea.

**(Total for Question 2 is 10 marks)**


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# Mark scheme · 3.2 Core Ideas and Principles of Liberalism: 30-minute Pack

## Question 1

| | |
|---|---|
| **Level 0** No relevant content. | **0** |
| **Level 1** Basic, limited knowledge of liberal ideas about the state, with little or no analysis or evaluation. Points may be general and unsupported. | **1-6** |
| **Level 2** Clear, accurate knowledge of liberal principles relevant to the role of the state, with some developed analysis of agreement and disagreement. Evaluation is present but may be one-sided or partial. | **7-12** |
| **Level 3** Detailed, accurate knowledge of a range of liberal arguments and relevant institutional implications, with balanced analysis comparing points of agreement and divergence. Evaluation is developed and reaches a provisional judgement. | **13-18** |
| **Level 4** Sophisticated, comprehensive and precise use of relevant liberal ideas and examples to produce a tightly argued, balanced evaluation that directly addresses the question and reaches a fully substantiated, discriminating judgement on the extent of agreement among liberals about the role of the state. | **19-24** |

**Indicative content:**

- Areas of clear agreement among liberals: the state must be legitimate, grounded in consent via representative institutions and free elections, and must be constrained by constitutional mechanisms to protect individual liberty and prevent arbitrary power.
- Agreement on protecting basic rights and civil liberties, since individual autonomy and freedom from coercion are central to liberalism, leading to support for legal protections, independent courts and a bill of rights or similar safeguards.
- Shared commitment to foundational equality of status, meaning the state should guarantee equal legal and political rights, though not necessarily equal socioeconomic outcomes, so the state has a role in ensuring equal opportunity rather than enforced material equality.
- Key areas of disagreement: the scope and scale of state intervention to secure liberty and equal opportunity - some liberals favour minimal state intervention (emphasising negative liberty and free markets), while others accept a larger role for the state to provide education, basic welfare or regulations that enable real freedom, sometimes justified in terms of positive liberty.
- Tension between individual autonomy and collective action: disagreements over whether the state should prioritise protecting individual choice even at the cost of social inequality, or should use redistributive measures to secure conditions for meaningful liberty for all.
- Different liberal strands give different weight to rationalism and fallibility: some stress individual rational capacity and therefore trust private arrangements and markets; others stress human limitations and support state institutions to correct market failures and protect the vulnerable.
- Institutional implications: agreement on constitutional checks and consent contrasts with divergent views on economic policy, the welfare state and regulation. A strong answer should cite illustrative modern examples or hypothetical policy contrasts to show how disagreement plays out in practice.
- Evaluation and judgement: a balanced conclusion could argue that liberals broadly agree on the state's fundamental legitimacy and the need for constitutional limits to protect individual liberty, but disagree substantially and meaningfully about the state's proper size and redistributive role, so the extent of agreement is strong at the level of principles but weak at the level of policy and institutional detail.


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## Question 2

| | |
|---|---|
| **Level 0** No relevant content. | **0** |
| **Level 1** Basic identification of one or two ideas about human nature with limited explanation of political consequences. | **1-3** |
| **Level 2** Clear knowledge of two liberal ideas about human nature with some developed explanation of how each idea leads to particular political arrangements or policies. | **4-7** |
| **Level 3** Detailed, accurate explanation of two distinct liberal ideas about human nature, each linked to well-developed political consequences and specific institutional implications, reaching a reasoned conclusion about their significance. | **8-10** |

**Indicative content:**

- Idea 1, rational and autonomous individuals: liberals see humans as capable of reasoned choice and moral judgement, which justifies individual freedom, representative government and the protection of private conscience. Political consequence: emphasis on free speech, toleration, education to cultivate reason, and institutions that enable informed choice such as free elections and pluralist civil society.
- Idea 2, self-interested but mutually cooperative: liberals often depict individuals as motivated by self-interest yet able to cooperate for mutual benefit. Political consequence: support for markets and voluntary association tempered by rules to prevent harm and protect rights, and a limited state role to secure the conditions for exchange and contract rather than to plan outcomes.
- Alternative idea, fallibility and need for checks: some liberal thought recognises human error and bias, which justifies constitutional safeguards, separation of powers and decentralisation so no single actor can impose mistaken decisions. Political consequence: legal protections, independent judiciary and checks on majoritarian impulses.
- Evaluation point: the two ideas may complement each other in liberal theory, since faith in reason supports freedom while recognition of fallibility supports institutional constraints; a strong answer considers tensions and how different liberal strands emphasise one idea over another.


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