2.12 Referendums as an Instrument of Constitutional Change in the UK: 10-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for levels-marked questions and for any extended explanation. Allow approximately 10 minutes for this pack.

1 Explain why the UK has developed a political convention that major constitutional changes should be put to a referendum.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 State three constitutional implications of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement referendum result for Northern Ireland and UK constitutional arrangements.

(Total for Question 2 is 5 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.12 Referendums as an Instrument of Constitutional Change in the UK: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

Identifies democratic legitimacy as a reason, that referendums provide direct public endorsement for major changes	**B1**
Identifies that referendums can help resolve contested questions between Parliament and regions or nations, e.g. devolution or independence	**B1**
Identifies that using referendums can strengthen the political acceptability and stability of reforms by showing popular consent	**B1**

Answer: Because referendums provide direct democratic legitimacy for major constitutional changes, can resolve contested questions between Parliament and constituent nations or regions, and help make reforms politically acceptable and stable by demonstrating popular consent.

Question 2

Identifies that the referendum endorsed the Good Friday Agreement, enabling the UK and Irish governments to legislate to implement it	**B1**
Identifies that the result led to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, creating the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive with devolved powers	**B1**
Identifies that the referendum entrenched the principle of consent for Northern Ireland's constitutional status, tying any future change to majority support among the people of Northern Ireland	**B1**
Identifies that the referendum demonstrated how international agreements, domestic referendums and parliamentary legislation combined to produce constitutional change	**B1**
Identifies that, despite popular endorsement, legal implementation required Parliament and the governments involved to enact powers and institutions, showing parliamentary sovereignty remains central	**B1**

Answer: The 1998 referendum endorsed the Good Friday Agreement and led to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 establishing the Assembly and Executive. It entrenched the principle of consent for any change to Northern Ireland's status, illustrated how referendums, international agreements and Acts of Parliament can work together to effect constitutional change, and showed that parliamentary legislation was required to implement the popular decision.

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