2.4 The Structure, Composition and Functions of Parliament: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief. For levels-marked questions write a clear, developed response with accurate political knowledge and precise terminology. The source-based question requires answers driven by the extracts provided.

1 Evaluate the extent to which the House of Lords is an effective second chamber in the UK Parliament. In your answer, consider composition, methods of scrutiny and the constitutional limits on Lords powers. Use knowledge and reach a reasoned judgement.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 2.4 The Structure, Composition and Functions of Parliament: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic, generalised statements about the House of Lords with limited factual support and little or no developed evaluation. Work may be descriptive without clear judgement.	**1-7**
Level 2 Clear knowledge of the Lords composition and some methods of scrutiny with some developed analysis. Evaluation is present but may be one-sided, and judgement is asserted rather than substantiated with balanced evidence.	**8-15**
Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge of the Lords used to construct a sustained analysis of its effectiveness, considering strengths such as expertise and revision and weaknesses such as democratic deficit and limited powers. Evaluation weighs evidence and reaches a supported judgement.	**16-23**
Level 4 Sophisticated knowledge and analysis across composition, scrutiny methods and constitutional limits used to build a tightly argued, balanced evaluation. The response integrates precise examples, addresses counterarguments and reaches a clearly substantiated, nuanced judgement on the extent of the Lords effectiveness.	**24-30**

Indicative content:

- Composition strengths: large number of life peers appointed for expertise and experience across professions such as law, medicine, academia and business, which can strengthen technical scrutiny and amendment of legislation.
- Composition weaknesses: lack of democratic legitimacy because most peers are appointed rather than elected, presence of bishops and remaining hereditary peers, and political patronage in appointments can undermine claims to impartiality.
- Methods of scrutiny strengths: the Lords revises bills in detail during committee and report stages, can propose amendments that improve clarity and remove unintended consequences, and its expertise supports specialist scrutiny; Lords committees can produce influential reports.
- Methods of scrutiny weaknesses: the Lords lacks the power to permanently block most government legislation due to the Parliament Acts and the Salisbury Convention, so its influence is limited to delay and persuasion rather than veto in most cases.
- Constitutional limits: the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 allow the Commons to override the Lords in many circumstances after delays, and the Salisbury Convention restrains the Lords from blocking manifesto commitments, both reducing the Lords capacity to frustrate government policy.
- Practical considerations: the Lords can be effective in improving legislation where government accepts amendments, and in detailed committee work, but effectiveness depends on political context, the government's willingness to accept revision and public pressure.
- Reform and evaluation: arguments for reform include introducing an elected or partially elected chamber to increase legitimacy, while arguments against full election stress the value of appointed expertise and cross-party independence; a balanced judgement weighs legitimacy against practical scrutiny benefits.
- Possible conclusion: the Lords is an effective second chamber in technical and revising terms, providing valuable expertise and improving legislation, but its democratic deficit and constrained constitutional powers mean its overall effectiveness is limited and contested, so it is partially effective rather than fully authoritative as a second chamber.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk