2.5 Parliament's Legislative Process and Scrutiny of the Executive: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief but must be accurate. For levels-marked and source-based questions write a developed, well-structured response using accurate terminology and named examples where appropriate. Show any planning clearly.

1 Evaluate the view that Parliament is effective in scrutinising the executive and holding it to account.

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(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.5 Parliament's Legislative Process and Scrutiny of the Executive: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms with little or no developed analysis or evaluation. Examples, if present, are generalised or inaccurate.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear knowledge of several scrutiny mechanisms with some developed analysis of how they hold the executive to account. Evaluation is present but may be partial or one-sided, relying on general assertions.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed and accurate knowledge deployed in a sustained analysis of multiple scrutiny mechanisms, considering both strengths and limitations. Evaluation engages with efficacy and offers substantiated judgements, though some strands may be less developed.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, well-developed analysis using a wide range of accurate examples and named mechanisms; evaluation is balanced and reaches a clear, supported judgement on the overall effectiveness of Parliament in scrutinising the executive.	**19-24**
Level 5 Exceptional, wide-ranging knowledge and analysis deployed to construct a tightly argued evaluation that weighs competing perspectives, uses precise, well-selected examples and reaches a nuanced, well-substantiated final judgement on the extent to which Parliament is effective in scrutiny and accountability.	**25-30**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that Parliament is effective in scrutiny: departmental select committees conduct evidence-based inquiries, compel evidence, publish influential reports and secure ministerial responses and commitments; select committee inquiries have in some cases led to concrete policy revisions or resignations.
- Arguments that Parliament is effective in scrutiny: the Liaison Committee, which questions the Prime Minister and coordinates select committee work, can expose inconsistencies and bring sustained focus to major issues, while PMQs provides immediate public scrutiny and forces the executive to answer to Parliament and the media.
- Arguments that Parliament has important legal and procedural powers, such as votes on legislation, confidence motions and the ability to demand papers, which can constrain government actions and require ministerial accountability.
- Arguments that Parliament is limited: the government controls the legislative timetable and has a significant payroll vote, meaning that when the government has a strong Commons majority it can resist scrutiny and limit time for detailed examination of Bills and inquiries.
- Arguments that Parliament is limited: PMQs is often theatrical and party-driven, producing headlines rather than deep scrutiny; select committees lack direct enforcement powers and rely on the government to implement recommendations, limiting their practical effect in some cases.
- Arguments that Parliament is limited: the House of Lords is only a revising chamber and can be circumvented via the Parliament Acts; resource constraints on committees and the specialist expertise required to scrutinise complex modern policy can reduce effectiveness.
- Evaluation might discuss how effectiveness varies by context, for example being stronger when cross-party consensus exists, when select committees choose high-profile issues, or when media and public attention amplify parliamentary findings, and weaker when governments pack committees with loyalists or restrict time and access.
- A strong conclusion will reach a balanced judgement, for example arguing that Parliament provides multiple, complementary mechanisms that do deliver meaningful scrutiny in many circumstances, but that structural advantages enjoyed by the executive, especially a large Commons majority and control of the timetable, mean parliamentary effectiveness is conditional and uneven rather than absolute.

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