2.6 The Relationship Between the Executive and Parliament: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For extended, levels-marked questions write full sentences and construct a developed response.

1 Evaluate the extent to which Parliament is able to control the executive in the contemporary UK, using examples such as the 2010 coalition, the 2017 Conservative-DUP arrangement, and the 2017-2019 Commons votes. Your answer should make a reasoned judgement.

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(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.6 The Relationship Between the Executive and Parliament: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of Parliament and executive relations, with little or no sustained analysis or evaluation. Examples, if present, are generalised or inaccurate.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear, mostly accurate knowledge of relevant examples and mechanisms. Some analysis of how Parliament can control the executive is present, but evaluation is partial or one-sided and the judgement may be unsupported.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge deployed in a sustained analysis that weighs evidence for and against Parliament's capacity to control the executive, using well-selected examples such as the 2010 coalition, the 2017 Conservative-DUP arrangement and the 2017-2019 Commons votes. A reasoned judgement is reached though it may lack full sophistication.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, wide-ranging knowledge and analysis that directly engages with strengths and limits of parliamentary control, discussing institutional mechanisms, party factors and key case studies, and reaches a balanced, well-supported judgement.	**19-24**
Level 5 Excellent, comprehensive knowledge and evaluation using a wide range of precise examples and theory. The answer synthesises evidence about party unity, majorities, formal agreements and constitutional conventions to produce a nuanced, clearly justified and well-evidenced judgement on the extent of parliamentary control.	**25-30**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that Parliament can control the executive: parliamentary arithmetic matters, as seen in 2017-2019 where small majorities and cross-party voting defeated government motions and forced concessions; formal agreements such as the 2017 Conservative-DUP confidence-and-supply deal constrained policy freedom and required negotiation.
- 2010 coalition example: a coalition government required continual compromise with the Liberal Democrats, shared cabinet posts and constrained unilateral executive policy making, showing Parliament and party agreements can limit executive dominance.
- Mechanisms of constraint: defeats in the Commons, meaningful votes, amendments, the threat of no confidence, the role of backbench committees in shaping debate, and the power of whips and the payroll vote as countervailing influences that can either strengthen or weaken Parliament's control depending on context.
- Arguments that Parliament cannot reliably control the executive: strong party unity and disciplined whipping often allow the executive to pass its agenda even with narrow margins; the executive controls the legislative timetable and patronage, which it can use to limit dissent and manage MPs.
- Nuance: even when Parliament constrains the executive, outcomes can be limited or temporary. For example, the Miller prorogation judgment constrained executive action but was fact-specific; the executive retains significant prerogative powers and resources for negotiation with external actors like the EU.
- Political factors: the effectiveness of parliamentary control depends on party cohesion, electoral incentives, the size of majority, public opinion and the role of external partners; in some contexts Parliament is an effective check, while in others it is a forum for executive dominance.
- Conclusion: a reasoned judgement might argue that Parliament is capable of meaningful control over the executive under certain conditions, notably small or no majorities and strong backbench organisation, but that routine control is limited when the executive commands a large, united parliamentary majority and extensive patronage, so Parliament's ability to control the executive is conditional and variable.

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