1.2 Direct versus Representative Democracy and Debates on Reform: 10-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be answered in notes or bullet points; for levels-marked questions write in full sentences and construct a developed argument.

1 Define 'representative democracy' as it operates in the contemporary UK political system.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 State two legal or constitutional constraints that limit the use of referendums as binding instruments of law in the UK, explaining each constraint and giving an example.

(Total for Question 2 is 5 marks)

3 Explain two reasons why turnout at UK general elections might fall, referring to political participation literature and the UK context since 1997.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

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Question 1

identifies that representative democracy involves electing representatives to make decisions on behalf of citizens	**B1**
development, e.g. mentions regular elections to the House of Commons and accountability via Parliament	**B1**

Answer: Representative democracy is a system where citizens elect representatives, such as Members of Parliament, to make laws and govern on their behalf, with accountability maintained through regular elections and parliamentary scrutiny.

Question 2

one accurate constraint, e.g. parliamentary sovereignty means Parliament can legislate contrary to a referendum outcome	**B1**
development of that constraint, e.g. referendums are advisory unless Parliament provides that they are binding	**B1**
a second accurate constraint, e.g. lack of constitutional codification means there is no entrenched procedure requiring respect for referendum results	**B1**
development of second constraint, e.g. Parliament can change law after a referendum unless a statute says otherwise	**B1**
a final small development or example, e.g. the 2016 EU referendum was advisory in law though treated as politically authoritative	**B1**

Answer: Any two of: parliamentary sovereignty, meaning referendums are normally advisory unless Parliament legislates to make their result binding; and the absence of a codified constitution or entrenched referendum rules, meaning there is no legal barrier to Parliament later changing the law even after a referendum result.

Question 3

identifies one plausible reason, e.g. voter apathy or disillusion with parties and politicians	**B1**
development or example, e.g. falling trust in politicians and low mobilisation in certain elections	**B1**
identifies a second plausible reason, e.g. structural barriers or perceived lack of meaningful choice	**B1**

Answer: Turnout can fall because of voter apathy or disillusion with parties and politicians, reflected in lower trust and weaker mobilisation, and because of structural factors such as a perceived lack of meaningful choice between major parties in some constituencies, which reduces the incentive to vote.

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