1.10 Party Funding, Internal Factions and Political Consensus in the UK

Total Marks

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short questions require concise sentences. Levels-marked extended questions should be answered as developed paragraphs with relevant named examples and a clear judgement where required.

1 This question tests knowledge of UK regulatory institutions for political finance: identify the independent body primarily responsible for regulating party donations and campaign finance in the UK.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 This question concerns internal Labour factions and their policy tendencies: identify two named Labour factions (post-war to present) and give one policy tendency or belief for each faction.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Using the two-source extracts below about proposals for state funding of political parties, analyse the arguments for and against introducing public funding in the UK. Source A: 'Proponents of modest state funding argue it would reduce the influence of wealthy individual donors, increase transparency and level the playing field between parties with differing private donor bases. They propose funding linked to votes won in the previous general election and strict spending limits.' Source B: 'Critics warn that state funding risks taxpayer money being used to prop up parties that many citizens oppose, creates incentives for parties to depend on the state rather than build grassroots support, and may entrench incumbents if funding is tied to past electoral performance.'

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

4 This question asks for application: explain two ways in which large private donations can influence party policy or behaviour in the UK, and illustrate one way with a contemporary or recent example.

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

5 Evaluate the extent to which UK political parties are internally united in the contemporary period, considering funding pressures, ideological factions and the legacy of post-war consensus.

(Total for Question 5 is 30 marks)

6 This question asks for an explanation linking political consensus and its change under Thatcherism: explain two ways in which the post-war political consensus in the UK was altered or broken by the policies of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s.

(Total for Question 6 is 5 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.10 Party Funding, Internal Factions and Political Consensus in the UK

Question 1

names the Electoral Commission cao	**B1**

Answer: The Electoral Commission.

Question 2

names Old Labour or its equivalent and gives one correct tendency, e.g. strong trade union links and support for nationalisation	**B1**
names New Labour or its equivalent and gives one correct tendency, e.g. more market-friendly reforms and emphasis on third way public service modernisation	**B1**
names Corbynism or hard-left current and gives one correct tendency, e.g. renationalisation, high public spending and grassroots democracy	**B1**
names another distinct Labour faction correctly or awards full marks for any two complete faction+belief pairs	**B1**

Answer: Examples: Old Labour, historically close to trade unions and supportive of nationalisation; New Labour, associated with market-friendly reforms and public service modernisation; Corbynism, associated with renationalisation, high public spending and emphasis on grassroots participation.

Question 3

Level 0 No relevant material from the sources or own knowledge.	**0**
Level 1 Limited use of the sources, identifying simple points for or against state funding with little or no development or independent knowledge.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some accurate use of both sources and some own knowledge, making developed points about advantages and disadvantages of public funding, but analysis may be partial or unbalanced.	**4-6**
Level 3 Good use of both sources combined with relevant independent knowledge, analysing the strengths and limits of the arguments and considering practical consequences.	**7-9**
Level 4 Sophisticated, well-supported analysis driven by the sources and supplemented by detailed independent knowledge, weighing the credibility and implications of arguments for and against state funding and reaching a clear, supported conclusion.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Source A argues state funding reduces wealthy donor influence, increases transparency and levels the playing field, with practical proposals such as payments linked to previous votes and spending limits.
- Source B counters that state funding uses taxpayer money to support parties some voters oppose, risks creating dependency and may entrench incumbents if linked to past performance.
- Independent knowledge: how other countries use state funding and lessons from them, for example proportional public funding in some European states, and whether that reduced private influence.
- Independent knowledge: practical design issues, such as whether funding tied to past votes disadvantages new parties and whether matching small donations encourages grassroots engagement.
- Analysis of tradeoffs: transparency and reduced donor influence versus democratic legitimacy concerns about taxpayer funding; potential benefits for smaller parties in some models versus risks of incumbency.
- Consideration of safeguards and compromises: conditional funding tied to transparency, caps on donations combined with partial public funding, or funding for campaign broadcasts rather than core party activity.
- Conclusion should weigh the relative merits and risks in light of the sources and independent evidence, for example supporting limited, conditional public funding to reduce undue donor influence while protecting democratic choice and encouraging grassroots mobilisation.

Question 4

identifies one mechanism of influence, e.g. direct access to leaders or policy makers	**B1**
develops that mechanism, e.g. donors may gain meetings, influence appointments or input into policy drafts	**B1**
identifies a second mechanism, e.g. agenda shaping through targeted funding for campaigns or media	**B1**
develops that mechanism, e.g. funding can support specific policy research, advertising or think tanks aligned to donor interests	**B1**
gives one contemporary or recent illustrative example with some accurate detail, e.g. high profile donations to the Conservative Party in the 2010s and 2020s linked to access or association, with approximate timing	**B1**
explains how the example illustrates the mechanism identified	**B1**

Answer: Large private donations can buy influence by creating direct access to party leaders and policy makers, for example via private meetings or hospitality that allow donors to press priorities, and by shaping the agenda through targeted funding for campaign materials, research or favourable media. An illustration is high profile donations to the Conservative Party in the 2010s and early 2020s which critics argued increased access for certain business figures and funded campaign adverts and events; this example shows how funds can translate into opportunities to present policy preferences to decision makers.

Question 5

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic and generalised knowledge of party organisation, with limited analysis. Arguments are undeveloped and evaluation is minimal or absent.	**1-7**
Level 2 Clear knowledge of funding pressures, factions and consensus with some developed analysis. Evaluation is present but may be one sided or lack depth, and examples may be general rather than precise.	**8-15**
Level 3 Detailed and accurate knowledge of internal party divisions, funding influences and historical context, used to construct a sustained analysis weighing unity against division. Evaluation is balanced and supported by named examples and evidence.	**16-23**
Level 4 Sophisticated analysis integrating strong, wide-ranging AO1 knowledge, developed AO2 reasoning and careful AO3 evaluation. Responses compare multiple causes of unity and disunity, assess the relative weight of funding, factions and historical consensus, use precise contemporary and historical examples, and reach a clearly justified overall judgement on the extent of internal unity.	**24-30**

Indicative content:

- AO1 elements: description of main funding streams (membership subscriptions, trade union affiliation fees to Labour, large individual and corporate donations, Short Money and Policy Development Grants), and how these revenue sources differ between parties.
- AO1 elements: identification of major intra-party factions in Labour (Old Labour tradition, New Labour Third Way, Corbynism/hard left) and in the Conservatives (One Nation, Thatcherite New Right, pro-EU and Eurosceptic wings).
- AO2 analysis: how funding pressures shape internal unity, for example dependence on wealthy donors can align policy makers with donor preferences, while mass membership or union funding creates different internal incentives and accountability.
- AO2 analysis: how factions produce operational disagreement over policy direction, candidate selection and leadership, producing visible rebellions and leadership challenges; discussion of examples such as Corbyn-era tensions, the divisions over Europe including the 2016 EU referendum and its aftermath, and One Nation versus Thatcherite debates over austerity and public services.
- AO2 analysis: the legacy of the post-war consensus, its relative collapse under Thatcher and how that shifted the spectrum of acceptable policy, with resulting longer term polarisation on economic policy even if some consensus remains on core institutions.
- AO3 evaluation: weighing the argument that parties remain broadly united at the level of core institutions and electoral competition, for example both major parties accept the basic rules of parliamentary democracy and contest elections, against the counterargument that policy and funding pressures make internal unity fragile and episodically break down.
- AO3 evaluation: consideration of reform options and mitigations that affect unity, such as donation caps, transparency, state funding proposals and internal reforms to candidate selection and party democracy.
- Conclusion: a reasoned judgement considering whether unity is better described as conditional and strategic rather than deep and permanent, for example parties may show surface unity during elections but experience deep internal factionalism and funding-driven tensions in policy formation, so the answer should weigh these comparative strengths and provide a justified overall position.

Question 6

identifies one change, e.g. a move away from the post-war mixed economy and consensus on nationalised industries	**B1**
develops that change, e.g. privatisation of state-owned firms such as British Telecom and British Gas reduced the role of the state in the economy	**B1**
identifies a second change, e.g. a shift in industrial relations and weakening of trade unions	**B1**
develops that change, e.g. trade union reforms and confrontations such as the miners strike altered the previous consensus on labour relations	**B1**
offers a linked political effect, e.g. a more adversarial party system on economic policy and a redefinition of the welfare state role	**B1**

Answer: Thatcherism broke the post-war consensus by rolling back the mixed economy through extensive privatisation of state-owned enterprises, for example British Telecom and British Gas, and by transforming industrial relations through union reform and high profile confrontations such as the miners strike, weakening organised labour influence. These changes reduced cross-party agreement on state intervention and reshaped the political debate on the role of the welfare state, producing a more adversarial politics on economic policy.