1.12 The SNP, Plaid Cymru and Classifying the UK Party System: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief but must be clear. For levels-marked questions, write a developed response using accurate political knowledge, examples and precise terminology. The two final questions are levels-marked extended responses. Write full sentences for the two levels-marked questions (the 12-mark source-based and the 30-mark essay).

1 Evaluate the view that the UK no longer has a two-party system.

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(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.12 The SNP, Plaid Cymru and Classifying the UK Party System: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of UK party developments with little or no developed analysis or evaluation. Responses are mainly descriptive or assertive without substantiation.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear knowledge of changes in UK party politics with some developed analysis. Evaluation is present but partial or one-sided, relying on limited examples or lacking sustained judgement.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed and accurate knowledge used to construct a sustained analysis addressing the extent and limits of the view. Evaluation weighs evidence on both sides with a reasoned judgement, though development may be uneven across AO1, AO2 and AO3 strands.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, wide-ranging and accurate knowledge used to construct a tightly argued evaluation that integrates conceptual discussion of party-systems, precise evidence (including electoral data and examples like the Lib Dems, SNP and Plaid Cymru), and a clear, balanced final judgement on whether the UK still has a two-party system.	**19-30**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that the UK no longer has a two-party system: the rise and temporary prominence of the Liberal Democrats (2010 coalition) and the SNP's 2015 landslide show that more than two parties can exert national influence; the fragmentation of party competition on issues such as Brexit produced multiple significant parties (UKIP, Brexit Party, Liberal Democrats) in vote terms.
- Use of evidence: 2010 coalition showed third party influence in government; 2015 SNP result (56 of 59 Scottish seats) and strong Westminster presence gave a third-party bloc with real parliamentary power; post-2015 volatility in third-party fortunes undermines a simple two-party label.
- Arguments for continued two-party character: Conservatives and Labour have continued to dominate UK-wide vote shares and historically alternate in government; at many general elections most seats are contested primarily between these two parties and FPTP tends to produce two-party outcomes in many English constituencies.
- Electoral system and measurement issues: classification depends on whether one focuses on vote share, seat share, or government formation; FPTP amplifies two-party outcomes in seats even when vote shares are more fragmented, so the two-party idea retains analytical purchase in terms of governance.
- Regionalisation and complexity: regional parties produce subnational party systems (Scotland and Wales) that are not captured by a single UK-wide two-party model; party-system classification may need to be multi-level, recognising England-dominated two-party contests alongside Scottish and Welsh multi-party dynamics.
- Evaluation and judgement: a strong conclusion might argue the UK no longer fits a simple two-party label unambiguously, because regional parties and episodic third-party surges have produced moments and areas of multi-party competition, but also that two-party features persist nationally due to FPTP and sustained Conservative-Labour dominance, so the best view is that the UK is partially de-aligned from strict two-party norms but not fully transformed into a stable multi-party system.
- Credit answers that locate nuance and make a supported judgement, for example arguing the UK has moved towards multi-party competition in some respects and periods, while retaining important two-party institutions and outcomes in others.

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