1.6 Proportional Systems and Electoral Reform Debates in the UK: 10-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief but must be accurate. For levels-marked questions write a structured, developed response using named systems, accurate facts, and clear argument. The final 30-mark essay requires a judgement and evaluation.

1 State the voting method formerly used for electing the Mayor of London and give its common abbreviation.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Explain briefly how the Supplementary Vote (SV) operates in a single winner contest and give one critique of the system in terms of proportionality.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Explain two arguments commonly advanced against adopting a more proportional system for UK general elections, focusing on governance and local representation concerns.

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.6 Proportional Systems and Electoral Reform Debates in the UK: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies the Supplementary Vote, SV cao	**B1**

Answer: Supplementary Vote, SV.

Question 2

identifies that voters mark a first and second preference	**B1**
explains that if no candidate has over 50% of first preferences, all but the top two are eliminated and second preferences of eliminated candidates are redistributed to top two	**B1**
gives one critique, e.g. SV is not proportional because it elects a single winner and does not reflect party vote shares across multiple seats	**B1**
development of critique, e.g. smaller parties struggle to convert support into seats under SV	**B1**

Answer: SV allows voters to name a first and second preference; if a candidate wins over 50% of first preferences they win, otherwise all but the top two are eliminated and second preferences from eliminated candidates are added to the top two. A critique is that SV is not proportional, since it elects a single winner and does not aggregate party vote shares across seats, so smaller parties find it hard to gain representation compared with proportional systems.

Question 3

identifies one con argument, e.g. proportional systems may produce coalition or minority governments, reducing decisiveness	**B1**
development of that point, e.g. potential for instability and frequent negotiations	**B1**
identifies a second con argument, e.g. weaker constituency link if larger multi member districts or regional lists are used	**B1**
development of that point, e.g. voters may be less able to hold a single MP accountable for local issues	**B1**
further development or example, e.g. SV and AMS debates highlight trade offs between proportionality and clear local accountability	**B1**
additional nuance, e.g. some proportional systems can be designed to preserve strong local links but often at cost to proportionality	**B1**

Answer: Common arguments against more proportional systems include that they can produce coalition or minority governments that require constant negotiation and may be seen as less decisive, and that multi member districts or regional list systems can weaken the direct constituency link, making it harder for voters to hold a single representative accountable; while some systems try to preserve local links, this often involves trade offs with the degree of proportionality achieved.

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