1.6 Proportional Systems and Electoral Reform Debates in the UK: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 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 two features of the closed regional list system used for Senedd (Welsh Parliament) elections from 2026 onward, introduced by the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

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2 Evaluate the view that the UK should adopt a more proportional electoral system for general elections.

(Total for Question 2 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.6 Proportional Systems and Electoral Reform Debates in the UK: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

one accurate feature, e.g. all 96 members are elected from closed party lists across 16 six-member regional constituencies	**B1**
a second accurate feature, e.g. seats are allocated within each region using the dHondt method, with no first-past-the-post constituency element	**B1**

Answer: Any two: all 96 Senedd members are elected from closed party lists across 16 six-member regional constituencies; seats within each region are allocated proportionally using the dHondt method; there is no first-past-the-post constituency component, unlike the Additional Member System it replaced.

Question 2

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of electoral systems and reform arguments with little or no developed analysis or evaluation. Claims are asserted rather than supported by evidence.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear, accurate knowledge of alternative systems and relevant arguments with some developed analysis. Evaluation is present but may be one sided or rely on generalised evidence.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed and accurate knowledge deployed in a sustained analysis of the implications of adopting proportional systems, drawing on relevant examples and evidence. Evaluation is balanced and begins to weigh trade offs and likely consequences.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, wide ranging and accurate knowledge used to construct a tightly argued evaluation comparing different proportional models and their likely effects on representation, governance and local accountability, with well-selected evidence and clear judgments.	**19-24**
Level 5 Exceptional response with precise, comprehensive knowledge and incisive evaluation that directly addresses counter arguments and reaches a fully substantiated, balanced judgement on whether the UK should adopt a more proportional system for general elections.	**25-30**

Indicative content:

- Arguments for adopting a more proportional system: fairer conversion of votes into seats reducing wasted votes; increased representation for smaller parties and minority groups; potential to increase political pluralism and reflect regional or ideological diversity more accurately.
- Evidence from UK devolved institutions: AMS in Scotland, the closed regional-list system used for the Senedd from 2026, and STV in Northern Ireland provide concrete examples where proportional mechanisms have produced more balanced party representation compared with single member systems, allowing parties like the Greens or smaller regional parties to gain seats.
- Practical design choices matter: systems range from compensatory AMS that preserve constituency links to full list PR which maximises proportionality but risks weakening local accountability; hybrid designs can balance proportionality and local representation.
- Arguments against: risk of fragmented parliaments and coalition or minority governments that may be less decisive; possibility of small parties holding disproportionate influence in coalition negotiations; public preference for clear single party government as evidenced by the 2011 AV referendum result.
- Local accountability trade off: single member constituencies create a clear link between voter and MP; more proportional systems often use larger districts or lists which can dilute that link, though designs such as mixed member models aim to retain constituency MPs while improving proportionality.
- Electoral culture and public views: the 2011 AV referendum saw a strong No vote, suggesting limited public appetite for change; political parties with effective local organisation can suffer under some proportional systems while others may benefit, changing party competition dynamics.
- Institutional and transitional considerations: think about the complexity of implementation, effects on party system, funding and campaigning, and whether reform should be national, phased or require thresholds to prevent fragmentation.
- Comparative evidence: cite examples where proportional systems have produced stable coalition governments with effective policy making, for example in some Scandinavian countries, and counter examples of fragmented systems with frequent elections in other contexts.
- Possible judgements: a reasoned conclusion might argue for cautious reform via a mixed or compensatory system that increases proportionality while retaining constituency links and avoiding extreme fragmentation, or alternatively conclude the costs to governability and public preference make major change undesirable without broad public mandate.

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