5.12 Comparative US/UK Legislatures: Congress and Parliament: 10-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for extended answers and for any question marked 'Analyse' or 'Evaluate'. The final 30-mark essay should be well structured, use comparative evidence, and reach a judgement.

1 This question tests basic knowledge of the UK Parliament's chambers.

(a) State the two chambers of the UK Parliament as of the 2024 Parliament. **(1)**

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 This question concerns the UK constitutional principle where the executive is drawn from the legislature.

(a) Explain briefly what is meant by the 'fusion of powers' in the UK system between the executive and Parliament. **(2)**

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 This question asks about 'divided government' in the US and its effect on scrutiny.

(a) Explain one way in which divided government (different parties controlling the presidency and at least one chamber of Congress) can increase scrutiny of the executive. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

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4 Explain one strength and two weaknesses of using 'divided government' as an indicator of congressional capacity to check the executive in the United States, with brief examples.

(a) Explain one strength of using divided government as an indicator that Congress can check the executive, using a brief supporting example. **(3)**

(b) Explain two weaknesses or limits of divided government as an indicator of congressional capacity to check the executive, include brief supporting examples. **(3)**

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 5.12 Comparative US/UK Legislatures: Congress and Parliament: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

(a) identifies the House of Commons and the House of Lords cao **B1**

(a) Answer: The House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Question 2

(a) identifies that the executive is made up of ministers who are also members of Parliament **B1**

(a) identifies that this creates closer control of the legislature by the executive, for example through the party whip system **B1**

(a) Answer: Fusion of powers means the executive is formed from members of Parliament, so ministers sit in the legislature and the government depends on parliamentary support, creating closer integration of legislative and executive functions often enforced by party whips.

Question 3

(a) identifies a mechanism, e.g. congressional committees can launch investigations when controlled by the opposition **B1**

(a) develops the point, e.g. opposition committees can subpoena witnesses and hold televised hearings **B1**

(a) links to effect, e.g. this can expose executive errors or misconduct and constrain policy implementation **B1**

(a) Answer: When government is divided, opposition-controlled congressional committees can investigate the executive, issuing subpoenas, calling witnesses and holding televised hearings, which can expose mistakes or misconduct and place political pressure on the President and administration.

Question 4

(a) identifies a strength, e.g. divided government enables opposition committees to investigate the executive **B1**

(a) develops with an example, e.g. Watergate-era or 2019 House investigations into executive actions **B1**

(a) explains impact, e.g. investigations can produce political pressure, subpoenas and public awareness that constrain the President **B1**

(a) Answer: One strength is that divided government lets opposition-controlled congressional committees investigate and subpoena executive officials. For example, the 2019 House investigations into executive actions raised public scrutiny. Such investigations produce political pressure and factual records that can constrain presidential action.

(b) identifies a weakness, e.g. divided government can cause gridlock, preventing Congress from passing legislation to address problems **B1**

(b) develops with an example, e.g. budget standoffs and government shutdowns when House and Senate or presidency disagree **B1**

(b) identifies a further weakness, e.g. partisan investigations may be symbolic and fail to produce legal consequences **B1**

(b) Answer: Weaknesses include that divided government can produce legislative gridlock, making it hard for Congress to pass budgets or reforms and sometimes causing shutdowns when compromise fails, and that oversight can become partisan theatre which, even if politically damaging, may not lead to prosecutions or policy change.

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