2.1 Prime Minister and Executive: Test Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 15 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For levels-marked questions, write a well-structured, developed response using accurate political knowledge, named examples and precise terminology. This pack forms part of Edexcel Paper 2 (9PL0/02), Section A: UK Government.

1 This question tests basic knowledge of the composition of the UK executive.

(a) State two components of the UK executive branch, in addition to the Prime Minister. **(2)**

(b) Explain the difference between the Cabinet and the wider government. **(3)**

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

2 This question is about collective ministerial responsibility.

(a) State the constitutional convention that requires Cabinet ministers to publicly support government decisions, or resign. **(2)**

(b) Give one historical example of a minister resigning because of collective responsibility, with the date. **(3)**

(Total for Question 2 is 5 marks)

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3 This question is about the civil service and special advisers.

(a) Explain the constitutional principle of civil service neutrality. **(3)**

(b) Explain one way in which special advisers (SpAds) differ from permanent civil servants. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.1 Prime Minister and Executive: Test Pack

Question 1

(a) one accurate component, e.g. the Cabinet **B1**

(a) a second accurate component, e.g. junior ministers, the civil service, or special advisers (SpAds) **B1**

(a) Answer: Any two of: the Cabinet; junior ministers (outside the Cabinet); the permanent civil service; special advisers (SpAds).

(b) identifies that the Cabinet is the senior group of ministers (typically department heads) chaired by the Prime Minister **B1**

(b) identifies that the wider government includes many more junior ministers (e.g. ministers of state, parliamentary under-secretaries) who are not Cabinet members **B1**

(b) explains the consequence, e.g. only Cabinet ministers regularly attend Cabinet meetings and are bound by the convention of collective responsibility in that forum **B1**

(b) Answer: The Cabinet is the senior group of ministers, typically the heads of the main government departments, chaired by the Prime Minister; the wider government includes many additional junior ministers (such as ministers of state and parliamentary under-secretaries) who are not members of the Cabinet and do not normally attend its meetings, meaning Cabinet-level collective responsibility applies specifically to Cabinet members.

Question 2

(a) identifies collective (ministerial) responsibility cao **B1**

(a) brief accurate development, e.g. it is an unwritten convention, not a codified law **B1**

(a) Answer: The convention of collective (ministerial) responsibility, an unwritten constitutional convention rather than a codified statutory rule.

(b) names an accurate example, e.g. Robin Cook **B1**

(b) correctly identifies the role/office and issue, e.g. Leader of the House of Commons, resigning over the decision to invade Iraq **B1**

(b) correctly dates the resignation, March 2003 **B1**

(b) Answer: Robin Cook resigned as Leader of the House of Commons in March 2003, in protest at the government's decision to join the invasion of Iraq, stating he could not support the decision collectively as a member of the Cabinet.

Question 3

(a) identifies that civil servants are expected to serve the government of the day impartially, regardless of its political party **B1**

(a) identifies that civil servants are permanent, remaining in post across changes of government, unlike ministers or special advisers **B1**

(a) explains the purpose, e.g. this is intended to ensure continuity, institutional expertise and objective policy advice rather than political loyalty to a particular party **B1**

(a) Answer: Civil service neutrality is the principle that civil servants serve the government of the day impartially, whichever party is in office, and remain in their posts as permanent officials across changes of government (unlike ministers or special advisers, who leave office with the government). This is intended to provide continuity, institutional expertise and objective policy advice, rather than advice shaped by loyalty to a particular political party.

(b) identifies that special advisers are politically appointed, temporary appointees, rather than permanent, politically neutral officials **B1**

(b) identifies that special advisers can offer explicitly political advice/support, which permanent civil servants are not permitted to do **B1**

(b) explains the consequence, e.g. special advisers leave office when the minister or government that appointed them leaves office, unlike permanent civil servants **B1**

(b) Answer: Special advisers (SpAds) are politically appointed, temporary appointees who can give explicitly political advice and support to a minister, which permanent, politically neutral civil servants are not permitted to do; unlike permanent civil servants, special advisers leave office when the minister or government that appointed them leaves office.

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