1.1 Political Parties

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 65 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Read Source A, then 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 1 (9PL0/01), Section A: UK Politics.

Source A: Two approaches to party funding (a fictional case study)

Source written for Revision Library as a representative example for teaching purposes. 'The Renewal Party' and 'the Common Ground Party' are invented, fictional organisations, not based on any real UK political party, and no quotation is attributed to any real politician.

The Renewal Party was formed twelve years ago and now holds a small number of seats in the House of Commons. It has no large membership base and relies heavily on a handful of wealthy individual donors and business supporters, each contributing sums close to the legal maximum permitted without triggering the Electoral Commission's public reporting requirements for smaller donations. Its leadership argues this is simply prudent fundraising: 'We do not have deep historical roots, so we have to build support where we can find it.'

The Common Ground Party, founded over a century ago, has a large paying membership and, in some regions, retains a formal affiliation with local trade union branches, whose members' subscriptions include a small political fund contribution (from which individual members may opt out). It also receives short money, the public funding available to opposition parties in the Commons to support their parliamentary work. A party officer noted: 'Our funding is broader-based, but it still depends on institutions most ordinary voters have no say over joining.'

Both parties' income and larger donations are published by the Electoral Commission, the independent body that regulates UK election finance and conduct under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

1 This question tests basic knowledge of the functions of political parties.

(a) State two functions performed by political parties in a representative democracy. **(2)**

(b) Explain one way in which political parties contribute to political participation. **(3)**

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

2 This question is about the regulator of UK party and election finance.

(a) State the name of the independent body that regulates UK political parties' finances and the conduct of elections. **(1)**

(b) State the Act of Parliament, and its year, that established this body. **(1)**

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 This question is about party manifestos.

(a) Explain the purpose of a party manifesto. **(3)**

(b) Explain one criticism of the effectiveness of manifestos as a guide to future government policy. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

4 This question is about the UK party system.

(a) Identify the type of party system most commonly used to describe UK general elections before 2010. **(2)**

(b) Explain one piece of evidence that the UK party system has become more fragmented since 2010. **(4)**

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

5 This question is about the regulation of party funding in the UK.

(a) Identify two legitimate sources of income for UK political parties. **(2)**

(b) Explain how the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 regulates political donations. **(4)**

(Total for Question 5 is 6 marks)

6 This question is about internal party democracy.

(a) Identify one method by which UK political parties select their parliamentary candidates. **(2)**

(b) Explain one criticism of how party leaders are elected within UK political parties. **(4)**

(Total for Question 6 is 6 marks)

7 Explain one example of ideological factionalism within a UK political party.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Analyse the arguments for and against introducing a cap on the size of individual donations that a UK political party may accept.

(Total for Question 8 is 9 marks)

9 Using Source A and your own knowledge, evaluate the extent to which the current system of party funding in the UK is fair to smaller and newer political parties.

(Total for Question 9 is 12 marks)

10 Explain, using both a strength and a limitation, why party unity and discipline can be an electoral advantage for a UK political party.

(Total for Question 10 is 6 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.1 Political Parties

Question 1

(a) one accurate function, e.g. recruiting and selecting candidates for public office **B1**

(a) a second accurate function, e.g. aggregating and representing interests, providing policy choices to voters, or providing political education **B1**

(a) Answer: Any two of: recruiting and selecting candidates for public office; aggregating and representing a range of interests into coherent policy programmes; providing voters with a clear choice of governing programmes at elections; political education/mobilising participation; forming and sustaining government (or organised opposition).

(b) identifies a relevant channel of participation, e.g. party membership, campaigning, or candidate selection processes **B1**

(b) development, e.g. members can attend local party meetings, campaign during elections, and vote in internal selection or leadership contests **B1**

(b) explains the wider significance, e.g. this gives ordinary citizens a structured route into political activity beyond simply voting **B1**

(b) Answer: Political parties provide structured opportunities for participation beyond voting, such as joining as a member, campaigning during elections, and taking part in internal candidate-selection or leadership contests; this gives ordinary citizens an organised route into political activity that would otherwise be harder to access individually.

Question 2

(a) the Electoral Commission cao **B1**

(a) Answer: The Electoral Commission.

(b) the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA 2000) cao **B1**

(b) Answer: The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA 2000), which received Royal Assent in 2000, with the Electoral Commission beginning operation in 2001.

Question 3

(a) identifies that a manifesto sets out a party's policy programme/commitments ahead of an election **B1**

(a) identifies that it gives voters a basis for comparing the parties' offers **B1**

(a) identifies its constitutional significance, e.g. under the Salisbury Convention, the unelected House of Lords does not usually block legislation that implements a governing party's manifesto commitments **B1**

(a) Answer: A party manifesto sets out its policy programme and commitments ahead of an election, giving voters a clear basis for comparing what each party is offering. It also carries constitutional significance: under the Salisbury Convention, the unelected House of Lords does not usually block legislation that implements a governing party's stated manifesto commitments.

(b) identifies a relevant criticism, e.g. that manifesto commitments may not survive coalition negotiation, or may be abandoned/changed due to unforeseen events **B1**

(b) accurate supporting detail, e.g. the 2010-2015 Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition required both parties to compromise on manifesto commitments to reach the Coalition Agreement **B1**

(b) explains the consequence, e.g. voters cannot always rely on a manifesto as a reliable prediction of the government's eventual policy programme **B1**

(b) Answer: A common criticism is that manifesto commitments may not survive contact with events in office, most clearly where coalition government requires negotiation: after the 2010 general election produced no outright majority, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos had to be reconciled through negotiation into a single Coalition Agreement, meaning neither party's original manifesto was implemented in full. This shows a manifesto cannot always be relied upon as an accurate guide to the government's eventual policy programme.

Question 4

(a) identifies a dominant/two-party system cao **B1**

(a) brief accurate development, e.g. Labour and the Conservatives alternated in forming single-party majority governments **B1**

(a) Answer: A (dominant) two-party system, in which the Labour Party and the Conservative Party alternated in forming single-party majority governments.

(b) identifies relevant, accurate evidence, e.g. the 2010-2015 Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, or the strength of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland **B1**

(b) accurate supporting detail, e.g. the 2010 general election produced no single party with a Commons majority for the first time since 1974, leading to a coalition; or the SNP won 56 of the 59 Scottish seats at the 2015 general election **B1**

(b) further supporting detail, e.g. smaller parties (Liberal Democrats, Greens, Reform UK) have won growing vote shares even where this is not always reflected proportionately in seats under First Past the Post **B1**

(b) explains the significance, e.g. this shows voter support is no longer concentrated in just two parties to the extent it once was, even though FPTP still limits how far this is reflected in seats **B1**

(b) Answer: The 2010 general election produced no single party with a Commons majority (the first hung Parliament since 1974), leading to a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010-2015); at the 2015 general election, the SNP won 56 of Scotland's 59 seats, illustrating how support has become more regionally concentrated in smaller/nationalist parties, even though FPTP continues to limit how far rising vote shares for smaller parties translate into seats.

Question 5

(a) one accurate source, e.g. membership subscriptions, or donations from individuals **B1**

(a) a second accurate source, e.g. trade union affiliation fees, corporate/business donations, or state support such as Short money for Commons opposition parties **B1**

(a) Answer: Any two of: membership subscriptions; donations from individuals; donations from businesses/organisations; trade union affiliation fees (for parties with union links); state support such as Short money, available to opposition parties in the Commons.

(b) identifies that the Act (PPERA 2000) established the Electoral Commission as an independent regulator **B1**

(b) identifies that donations above a set threshold must be declared/reported to the Electoral Commission **B1**

(b) identifies that donations from foreign or anonymous sources above a set threshold are restricted or banned **B1**

(b) explains the purpose of this regulation, e.g. to increase transparency about who is funding political parties and to reduce the risk of undue foreign or hidden influence **B1**

(b) Answer: The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA 2000) established the Electoral Commission as an independent regulator of party and election finance. It requires donations above a set threshold to be publicly declared, and restricts donations from foreign or anonymous sources above a set threshold, with the aim of increasing transparency about party funding and reducing the risk of undue or hidden influence over UK politics.

Question 6

(a) identifies a valid method, e.g. selection by a vote of local party members, or via a shortlist drawn up by a local party committee **B1**

(a) brief accurate development **B1**

(a) Answer: Local party members typically select their parliamentary candidate, often from a shortlist drawn up by a local party selection committee, sometimes with an approved national list of candidates to choose from.

(b) identifies a relevant criticism, e.g. that the party membership choosing a leader is small and unrepresentative of the electorate as a whole **B1**

(b) development, e.g. party members tend to be more ideologically committed than the average voter, so may not choose the candidate with the broadest general-election appeal **B1**

(b) further development, e.g. a party in government can change Prime Minister through an internal leadership contest without a general election being held **B1**

(b) notes a possible counter-consideration for balance, e.g. supporters of member-based leadership elections argue they give ordinary members, not just MPs, a genuine say **B1**

(b) Answer: A common criticism is that party members, who elect the leader in most current UK party rules, are a small and often more ideologically committed group than the electorate as a whole, so may not select the candidate with the broadest general appeal; because the leader of the governing party becomes Prime Minister, this can mean a change of Prime Minister occurs through an internal party contest rather than a general election. Supporters of member-based elections respond that this nonetheless gives ordinary party members, rather than only MPs, a genuine and democratic say in choosing their leader.

Question 7

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Identifies a relevant example of factionalism with limited or undeveloped explanation. **1-2**

Level 2 Clear, accurate explanation of a relevant example of ideological factionalism, described in neutral, factual terms. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- The Conservative Party has historically contained both a more centrist, One Nation-influenced wing and a more socially conservative or free-market-focused wing, reflecting the party's own long-running internal debate between one-nation and New Right conservative traditions (Section CPI1).
- The Labour Party has historically contained factions associated with a more democratic-socialist tradition (favouring greater public ownership and redistribution) and a more social-democratic/reformist tradition (favouring a mixed economy and gradual reform within capitalism).
- A strong answer describes the factional divide in neutral, descriptive terms - what each wing believes and why, in language its own adherents would recognise - rather than presenting either wing as objectively correct or as the party's only 'authentic' tradition.
- A strong answer explains a consequence of factionalism, e.g. that it can make collective decisions on policy or leadership more difficult, or that it can also be presented as a healthy sign of genuine internal debate within a broad-based party.

Question 8

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of party funding, with little or no developed analysis of a donation cap specifically. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear, accurate knowledge with some developed analysis of arguments for and/or against a donation cap, though the argument may be one-sided. **4-6**

Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge used to construct a sustained, balanced analysis of arguments both for and against a donation cap, reaching a supported judgement. **7-9**

Indicative content:

- Argument for a cap: large individual donations risk creating (or appearing to create) undue influence over a party's policy positions, which a cap could reduce, promoting greater political equality between wealthy and less wealthy supporters.
- Argument for a cap: a cap could reduce public perception of 'access' being available in exchange for large sums, which some argue undermines public trust in the fairness of the political system.
- Argument against a cap: political donation is a form of political expression and free association, and a cap could be seen as restricting a legitimate way for citizens and organisations to support a party whose values they share.
- Argument against a cap: a cap on individual donations, without a wider funding reform (such as increased state funding), could leave established parties with large memberships at a relative advantage over newer or smaller parties that rely more heavily on a small number of larger donors to become competitive.
- A balanced conclusion might note that the strength of either argument depends on whether a cap is introduced alongside other reforms (such as increased state funding or tighter transparency rules), since a cap alone could address influence concerns while creating new challenges for parties without a large membership base to fall back on.

Question 9

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic, limited use of the source and/or own knowledge, with little developed analysis or evaluation. **1-4**

Level 2 Clear, accurate use of the source and relevant own knowledge, with some developed analysis; evaluation present but may be one-sided or only loosely substantiated. **5-8**

Level 3 Detailed, accurate use of both the source and wider own knowledge to construct a sustained, balanced evaluation, reaching a supported judgement on the fairness of the funding system to smaller/newer parties. **9-12**

Indicative content:

- From the source: the fictional Renewal Party, as a newer party without deep historical roots or a large membership, relies on a small number of large individual/business donors, illustrating how newer entrants may need to rely on different, more concentrated funding sources than established parties.
- From the source: the fictional Common Ground Party benefits from a large historic membership base, trade union affiliation income and Short money (available specifically to established opposition parties in the Commons), illustrating how longer-established parties can draw on a wider, more institutionally embedded set of funding sources.
- Own knowledge, case for unfairness to smaller/newer parties: state support such as Short money is only available to parties that already hold seats in the Commons, meaning parties without existing representation cannot access this funding stream regardless of their public support, which can be argued to entrench the position of already-successful parties.
- Own knowledge, case for unfairness to smaller/newer parties: without a large, established membership or union affiliation income, a new party may have little choice but to seek a small number of large donations, which the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000's transparency rules make public but does not itself prevent, potentially exposing new parties more than established ones to criticism over donor influence.
- Own knowledge, case that the system is not simply unfair: the transparency and donation-restriction rules under PPERA 2000 apply equally to all parties regardless of size, and any UK citizen or eligible organisation can found and fund a new party; some would argue unequal funding capacity reflects unequal levels of public support and organisational effort rather than an unfair rule of the system itself.
- A balanced conclusion might argue the formal legal rules (transparency, donation restrictions) apply equally to all parties, so are not unfair in their design, but that some funding routes (particularly Short money, and the advantages of an established membership base) are structurally easier for already-successful parties to access, meaning the overall practical effect of the system may still disadvantage smaller and newer parties even where the rules themselves are neutral.

Question 10

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Identifies a relevant point about party unity with limited or undeveloped explanation of its electoral effect. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear, developed explanation of how party unity can be an electoral advantage, which also engages with at least one limitation, using accurate supporting detail. **4-6**

Indicative content:

- A unified, disciplined party can present a clear, consistent policy platform to voters, avoiding the impression of internal division that can be reported by the media as chaos or lack of direction, which research on voting behaviour suggests can damage a party's perceived competence.
- A disciplined parliamentary party makes it easier to pass a governing programme through the Commons, allowing a party in government to demonstrate it can deliver on manifesto commitments, which can be an electoral asset at the following election.
- Limitation: a very high degree of enforced discipline can be presented by opponents, and perceived by some voters, as suppressing legitimate internal debate or independent-minded representation, which can itself be an electoral liability if voters come to see the party as unresponsive to scrutiny.
- Limitation: strict discipline may make it harder for a party to accommodate genuine policy disagreement among its elected representatives, which can eventually produce more damaging splits or resignations than would have occurred with more tolerated internal debate.