

Higher Politics Paper 2 – Comments on Specimen Answer 1

Question: Using appropriate examples, compare and contrast the effects of introducing proportional electoral systems into the United Kingdom. **(20 marks)**

Answer 1

The candidate's descriptions of each of the three systems he chooses as examples vary in their detail and accuracy:

- The list system is not given its proper name but the response does correctly relate it to the European elections. The description though is not very clear in terms of how the party list system actually leads to an MEP being elected.
- His description of the STV system is closer in one sentence to describing the alternative vote than STV. Several key points are missing, particularly in relation to the quota and reallocation of second preferences once the quota is reached.
- The description of AMS is again patchy and does not actually identify the different systems in use for each vote. Constituency representation is there but the proportionality aspect is inferred rather than clearly explained.

In terms of the effects on the UK:

- The Green Party example is valid but is not linked to the European elections and the European parliament and this lack of precision prevents the candidate from gaining higher marks.
- Mentioning Germany and Italy in a question about the UK is not to be recommended, although relating a specific UK example to them could be considered showing wider knowledge and understanding.
- Once Scotland is introduced the answer improves - although the partnerships and changes in policies mentioned are not explored or exemplified.
- The possible issue of instability is dealt with in the second last paragraph and there is a good example from Wales given in support but it does not really explain why proportionality might lead to instability.
- The example of the Conservatives in Scotland is valid.

Overall the candidate does introduce three relevant proportional electoral systems and mentions fairer representation of small parties, coalition governments and political instability. There are a couple of examples to back up points made but there are no references to Northern Ireland or England. Qualitatively the answer is weak and quantitatively there are about 390 words which is reasonable in approximately 30/35 minutes.

A low C would be awarded for this essay – 11/20