



Parliament

Revision pack

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Examination-style questions

Stimulus Question

Study the following data and answer the questions which follow :

Political Make-up of Parliament – June 2010*			
House of Commons		House of Lords	
Conservative	305	Labour	242
Labour	255	Conservative	219
Lib Dem	57	Crossbenchers	183
Green	1	Lib Dem	94
Others	32	Bishops	26
Total	650	Total	764

*May require updating

- (a) From the source, identify three ways in which the political make-up of the House of Lords differs from that of the Commons ?

Specimen Answer 1

. Strong Answer

“ First, it is clear that a different party has the largest group. In the Commons the Conservatives are the largest party, but in the Lords, Labour is the biggest. Second, there are a large number of crossbenchers (neutral peers) in the Lords, but all members of the Commons belong to a party. Third there are 26 Bishops in the Lords, not in the Commons. Fourth there is one Green MP but none in the Lords as far as we know.”

Marks

The response actually gives four differences which is not necessary but does no harm. All the differences are accurately described. The student has found several differences and explained each briefly but clearly.

Weak Answer

“The Conservatives have a majority in the Commons but not in the Lords. There are also many crossbenchers in the Lords who are not in the House of Commons. There are bishops in the Lords but not in Commons

Marks

The first aspect of the answer is wrong as the Conservatives do not have a majority in either House. They are the *biggest* party in the Commons, but it was not a majority. The comment on crossbenchers is correct but the student should have stated (as the A grade answer did) that they are neutral as the question refers to the *political* make-up of Parliament. The observation about the bishops is true, but is not a political point as the question asks. So there are three answers but none are fully correct.

(b) From the source and your own knowledge, how representative is Parliament? (10 marks)

Strong Answer

"The source shows that the Conservative and Labour parties are over-represented in the House of Commons. They have a higher proportion of the seats than the votes they won. The Conservatives won about 36% of the votes in the general election, but won nearly half the seats. Labour won 29% of the votes but about 40% of the seats. The Lib Dems won 22% of the votes but only about a fifth of the seats. So the Commons is not representative of the party strengths. The Lords is even worse as there are more Labour peers than Conservatives. However there are more Liberal Democrats in the Lords so they are better represented. The coalition Government represents a majority in the House of Commons, but this is not possible in the Lords. In the House of Lords there are 26 bishops which shows that the Church of England is well represented, but this is false because the other main religions in the UK are not so well represented.

In the Commons all 650 constituencies are represented by an MP but peers do not represent a constituency. MPs do represent their constituencies well on whole and every individual can feel that their MPs will take up their cause. Many of the peers, however, have a special knowledge of one aspect of society or represent groups and pressure groups in society such as medicine, education, industry, finance, religion and the law. Many of these are crossbenchers and so are independent and able to represent groups instead of parties. MPs tend to toe the party line and so are less representative. In this sense we can say that the Lords, although it is not elected, is actually more representative than the Commons."

Marks

There is a good balance between the material in the source and the student's own knowledge. For example use is made of the party strengths in Parliament, but the answer also refers to the votes cast for the parties at the last election (this question could only have been attempted by a student who had studied Unit 1 already). The student also notes that many peers have no party allegiance, as shown in the data from the number of crossbenchers, but the student knows, from their own knowledge, what kind of groups are represented by these kinds of independent peers. The student also writes about constituency representation which is not shown in the source. So, very good marks for AO, not quite full because the candidates should have described a little more fully party representation in the Lords. Full marks for AO2. This is because there is both good analysis – why the two Houses can be described as representative or unrepresentative, and good evaluation – the extent to which each House is or is not representative. A good evaluative aspect is comparing the two houses in this respect.

Weak answer

"The House of Commons is not very representative at all. This is mainly because of the electoral system that favours the two main parties but discriminates against the Liberal Democrats. We can see that the Lib Dems have far too few seats and that Labour in particular has too many. In the House of Lords there is a much better balance with the Lib Dems having nearly 100 seats which is closer to their true representation. We can also see that, at last the Green Party has some representation, but not enough because of the unfair electoral system. In the Lords the crossbenchers hold the balance of power, which is representative because it prevents one party being able to dominate completely. This means that peers can be really representative because they cannot be so dominated by the Government as happens in the Commons. If we turn to the Bishops we can possibly say that the Christian religion is over-represented. This is because it is the established religion in the UK but does not reflect the religious make-up of the country any more. The House of Lords is not representative, of course, because it is not actually elected, unlike the Commons. Finally we can see that Labour has the biggest group in the House of Lords and this is clearly unrepresentative because they actually lost the 2010 election."

Marks

The main problem with this answer is that not enough 'own knowledge' has been used. Note the contrast with the A grade answer, where the candidate was aware of how and why the Commons is so politically unrepresentative. This answer also fails to examine and analyse whether the House of Lords is representative, even though it is not elected. The answer is reasonable at looking at the data shown, but does not go very much beyond it. Therefore 'own knowledge' is not enough. There is some analysis and evaluation, but not strong enough for the top AO2 mark. The A grade answer scored well on AO2 by comparing the two Houses and was a little more critical.

(c)How could the representative role of Parliament be improved ? (25 marks)

Strong Answer

“Before considering this question, it is necessary to consider what the term ‘representative role’ actually means in the context of Parliament. It can mean a number of different things. First, it means that Parliament is a true reflection of the party strengths in the country. Second it refers to how well constituencies are being represented by their MPs. Third it means that Parliament should perhaps be a microcosm of society as a whole. This is called social representation. Fourth it can mean whether Parliament represents the national interest. Parliament obviously does some of these things well and others badly. This essay will consider how matters can be improved in each case. (Comment : a good start. The student is deconstructing the question and defining the term representative. Now for the main answer).

The main problem with the House of Commons is that party representation is distorted. In order to make it more representative of the parties we would have to change the electoral system. Ideally this would be to proportional representation so that the votes cast would be represented accurately by the number of MPs for each party. However this is unlikely because it would lead to constantly hung parliaments which most people fear (comment : this last remark is unnecessary. The question is not asking for evaluation). It could be that only the House of Lords will be elected by PR so that is a representative body. Even if it is appointed, the membership of the Lords could be made to represent the party voting strengths more closely.

MPs have a good reputation for representing their constituencies on the whole so little needs to be done. A proposal to allow constituents to recall unsatisfactory MPs could be used, as in parts of the USA. Otherwise perhaps, if the electoral system were changed MPs might be made to be more accountable (comment : this is a good point but ideally needs to be explained). Perhaps Parliament could set aside more time for MPs to raise constituency business.

Making Parliament more socially representative is different. Some have argued for women quotas to ensure more are elected to the Commons, but this has always been opposed. It is easier to make an appointed second chamber more socially representative so there is room for improvement there. The Appointments Commission could ensure that more members from ethnic minorities, younger people and people from diverse backgrounds could be chosen as well as more women.

Finally, how to make Parliament represent the national interest more ? The House of Lords can do this now as it is more independent of party control. MPs, on the other hand, tend to be slaves to the party line. The only way would be to weaken the control that party whips have over MPs which is not easy. If MPs had an alternative career path to simply becoming a minister, they would be more free of the power of patronage and so could think more independently. Perhaps also there should be more free votes when the whips are called off and MPs can follow the national interest. But party leaders are reluctant to do this.

So we can see that there are a number of measures that could be adopted. These include a change to the electoral system, controlling membership of the House of Lords, women quotas, the power to recall MPs who do not represent constituencies well and the use of more free votes in the Commons. The most important of these has to be a change in the voting system to make the Commons more politically representative. (comment : a good conclusion, summing up the content and picking out one key idea).

Marks

The main strength of this answer is its very clear structure, with a good introduction, followed by logical content and a sensible conclusion. It lost two marks on AO2 mainly because it did not fully develop the electoral reform argument enough and was not able to explain more fully how to introduce more diverse candidates. It could have been a little fuller with knowledge and understanding, perhaps by including more material on the representative role of the House of Lords which was a little weak.

Weak Answer

“The main way in which the representative role of Parliament could be improved would be to change the electoral system (comment : there is no introduction, which is an important failing). The first past the post electoral system favours parties with concentrated support such as the Conservatives and Labour. It also means that small parties such as the Lib Dems, the Greens and the BNP or UKIP do not have chances to win many seats. This means that Parliament

is unrepresentative because small groups and parties are underrepresented. If we introduced proportional representation as we have for European elections, there would be many parties represented in Parliament. PR might also increase the number of women and MPs from ethnic minorities because, if a list system was used there would be opportunities for the parties to include such people. PR could also be used for elections to the House of Lords in the future. This would help it to become less elderly and male-dominated.

If STV was adopted as a system each constituency would have as many as six MPs. This would significantly increase representation by allowing citizens to choose which MP should represent them. As things stand constituents have to accept the MP who has been elected. Voters do not have any say in which candidates should be adopted. If there were a primary system, as in the USA, voters would feel better represented (these are interesting and unusual points. There are plenty of marks for such originality, as long as it is accurate and relevant. It is in this case).

We could make the House of Lords more representative if we ensured that the appointments to the Lords took account of the different groups in society, such as different religions, women and ethnic minorities. The House of Lords could also then represent the national interest more effectively. It might be possible to have quotas for such different groups. E could also introduce quotas for women and ethnic minorities in the selection of party candidates for the House of Commons.

In conclusion we can see that there are a number of measures which could be adopted to make Parliament more representative.

Marks

This barely makes a grade C. It has strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are that it has a number of original points and relates them well to the question, hence the relatively high AO2 mark. It also explains the suggestions well and covers both houses of Parliament. Its weaknesses are that the structure is poor with no introduction and a weak conclusion, there is also no sense of development, hence the low AO3 mark. On AO1 its range is not wide enough. It does not tackle the really key issue of how MPs can carry out their representative role more effectively. It concentrates excessively on social rather than functional representation.

Essay Style Question

Assess the arguments in favour of an elected, or partly elected House of Lords (40 marks)

Strong Answer

“Since the 1990s there have been many calls for an elected House of Lords. The main groups in favour of such a move have been the Liberal Democrat Party, many members of the Labour Party, the pressure groups Liberty and Unlock Democracy and a small number of members of the Conservative Party. Then in 2010 David Cameron came out in favour and the reform of the House of Lords was included in the coalition agreement. The main arguments in favour of an elected or partly elected chamber have been : to make it more democratic to make it a better balance to the power of the government and because it could bring into politics more of the smaller groups and parties who cannot get into the House of Commons. This essay will examine these and other arguments and will assess their strengths and weaknesses (comment : an excellent introduction that sets the scene, sets out the ground and states how it will be approached).

The first argument is that the current House of Lords which is a mixture of appointed life peers and hereditary peers plus some bishops is hopelessly undemocratic. In fact it has no legitimacy at all. The Lords is part of the legislative process and scrutinises legislation and government policy, but none of its members have been elected and none of them are accountable. Although the Lords cannot veto legislation or force through amendments, it has no democratic right to act on behalf of the people. (comment : here the writing is very good with excellent use of concepts –legitimacy, democracy and accountability). Holding elections for the Lords (which would probably have to change its name, perhaps to the Senate) would correct this problem. However there are problems with this. Most important is that the second chamber might simply be a mirror to the House of Commons. What is the point of having two elected chambers ? One answer is to elect the second chamber by a different system to first past the post. This would mean that the second chamber would have a different political make-up to the Commons. It would almost certainly guarantee that the governing party would not have a majority and so Parliament would have a balance.

The second argument is that the second chamber would become a more effective balance to the power of government

(comment: notice how the content is following the structure referred to in the introduction). As I have said above the government would not have a majority in the second chamber and so could not simply steamroller legislation through with the whips forcing MPs to follow the party line. A more independent second chamber could look more critically at proposed legislation. Government would have to ensure that there was a consensus of support for a measure. This is very much how things work in the USA where the President has to secure support for legislation from both houses of Congress which represent all elements of political opinion. This does have a major problem. It could be that government would simply find it too difficult to pass legislation and there would be a lengthy deadlock (comment : here the student is assessing the point critically). One of the advantages of the British system of executive dominance is that government can be decisive and efficient. For example it can easily pass its budgets and most foreign policy measures are supported. As we said in the USA this can be difficult and much reform has been prevented because of such deadlock (for example over health reform or gun control).

The third main argument is that it would bring in smaller groups and parties. This would depend on PR being used. PR would bring such parties as the Greens, UKIP, Nationalists etc. These parties are mostly excluded from the Commons (though the Greens won one seat in 2010). The second chamber would then better represent such views as environmentalism, nationalism and anti-European ideas. These views are under-represented as things stand. However, there is major problem. PR might also bring into politics some extreme parties such as the BNP. This would give publicity to ideas which we might not find acceptable, though some would argue all political views should be heard, even if we don't like them. We have to ask, what would happen if an extremist Islamic Party gained some seats in the second chamber ?

One additional, perhaps weaker argument, is that elections to the second chamber could act as a mid-term opinion poll for the people, demonstrating how they feel about the government's performance. This is a role of mid term elections in the USA. It is, however, a weak argument, because people nearly always tend to express opposition to governments in mid term, even though they still support them broadly. So there might be 'false' results in elections to the second chamber.

On the whole an elected or partly elected second chamber seems to be very attractive, but there are a number of serious drawbacks. For example it may be that people would grow tired of too many elections and turnout would be very low. We would also lose many of the very effective appointed peers that we have now, such as Lord Winston, who speaks about medicine or Lord Putnam who knows so much about the film and TV industries. These people would probably not stand for election and so would be lost to politics. (comment : the question requires a concentration on the arguments in favour, but, to assess them, some of the opposite arguments need to be mentioned, but briefly, as is done here).

In conclusion we can see that there are some very powerful arguments in favour of an elected second chamber. There is also a case for a partly elected chamber as this might act as a compromise between the present situation and a totally elected chamber. There are also some important problems with these proposals. However the strengths of an elected chamber seem to be overwhelming. In particular it is the need for an effective check on government, properly elected which tilts the argument in favour of reform.

Marks

Full marks for this near perfect answer. It has a logical structure, it covers as much of the ground as is reasonable in 40 minutes (there are other points to be made but not all could possibly be discussed in the time available), and answers the question by assessing the arguments. It uses plenty of political language and concepts and uses illustrations to good effect. Finally it has a strong and decisive conclusion.

Weak Answer

"The arguments concerning an elected or partly elected chamber are quite evenly balanced. There are three main arguments in favour of reform and three main arguments against. This essay will examine these arguments and decide finally which side of the argument should prevail. (comment : a problem immediately. This is not quite the same question. The student is doing a pros and cons of reform instead of assessing the arguments in favour – compare this with the A grade answer's approach).

The first argument is to make the second chamber more democratic. At the moment the Lords is appointed with some hereditary peers and so cannot be called a democratic chamber. The peers do not really represent anyone and are not accountable for their actions. The Lords are often required to pass legislation and amendments to legislation, but they do not have a democratic right to do this.

The second reason for an elected second chamber is that it would act as a balance to the 'elective dictatorship' which operates in the House of Commons. The Government can get its legislation through the Commons because it is able to control its own majority. Even with a coalition the government was in complete control. If the second chamber did not have a government majority, the government would have to 'win the argument' and persuade the members of the Lords to support them. This would improve the democratic legitimacy (comment : good use of language here) of the whole process.

The third reason is that it would give an opportunity for the people to express their feelings about the performance of the government between general elections. By electing opposition members or people from small parties the electorate would be saying that they were dissatisfied (the same kind of thing happens in America every two years).

There are also strong arguments against. Firstly it might be possible that an election to the Lords would simply replicate the result in the Commons. This would cancel out the advantage of the second chamber acting as a check to executive power. This would not always happen and proportional representation could be used to prevent it (comment – a pity. This is a key point but the student does not develop it as the A grade answer did), but many say what is the real point ?

Second it would mean that many peers who now sit in the Lords and have special knowledge and experience would not stand for election and so we would lose their valuable input. These peers play a special role in proposing useful amendments and improving legislation.

Thirdly it may be that the electorate would not turn out in large numbers. They may not think that such elections are important and they may become tired of having to vote so often. If the Lords was elected on a low turnout it would not have democratic legitimacy. It is also true that people nearly always vote against the government in by elections and local elections and they would do the same in elections to the Lords. This would mean the government would nearly always do badly. Of course this has an advantage in that it would be a check to the power of the executive, but it might also cause a great deadlock (a good point, but the essay is now losing its structure – this should have been discussed earlier).

In conclusion we can see that the argument about an elected second chamber is very evenly balanced. An assessment is therefore to say that yes many argue for an elected second chamber, but there are equally strong counter-arguments.

Marks

There is a reasonably large amount of relevant information here so the mark for Knowledge and Understanding holds up quite well at 12 (it still lacks real world illustrations). However this response has three major problems. One is that it is producing a balanced discussion when the question requires concentration on the arguments in favour of an elected second chamber. A second is that it fails to analyse properly the implications of using proportional representation. Thus the analysis is weakened. Third there are only 5/8 for communication because the structure breaks down and there is no logical journey towards a firm conclusion, despite the use of some good political language.

June 2016

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Parliament

Committee work is an important aspect of Parliament's role; both Houses refer legislation to committees for detailed discussion and approval. These legislative committees are part of the process of making laws. House of Commons Select Committees are largely concerned with examining the work of government departments. There is a Commons Select Committee for each government department, examining three aspects: spending, policies and administration. Some committees have a non-departmental role that crosses boundaries, such as the Public Accounts or Environmental Audit Committees. Other Commons Committees are involved in a range of ongoing investigations, like administration of the House itself or allegations about the conduct of individual MPs.

Findings of the committees are reported to the Commons, printed, and published on the Parliament website. The government then usually has 60 days to reply to a committee's recommendations. Particularly influential have been the televised sessions and subsequent hard-hitting reports issued by the Home Affairs Committee concerning immigration, the performance of the Border Agency and the relationships between police, media and a high profile criminal investigation. Similarly, the Culture, Media and Sport Committee attracted much attention for its intense questioning of witnesses when it looked into phone hacking allegations by the media and in its pre-appointment hearing for the Government's preferred candidate as Chair of the BBC Trust, Rona Fairhead, CBE.

Following the adoption by the House of recommendations from the Reform of the House of Commons Committee (which was chaired by the former MP, Dr Tony Wright) the majority of Select Committee Chairs are now elected by their fellow MPs. This applies both to departmental committees and non-departmental ones, which include Political & Constitutional Reform, Procedure and Public Administration committees. There is also a Backbench Business Committee, which has been established with the ability to decide business in the Commons Chamber and in Westminster Hall on days, or parts of days, set aside for non-government business.

(Source: adapted from <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select/> (2014))

- (a) With reference to the source, outline **three** types of committees operating in the House of Commons. (5)
- (b) With reference to the source and your own knowledge, how effective are the Commons committees? (10)
- (c) Excluding committees, assess the means by which Parliament is able to control the executive. (25)

June

2015

Either

- 3** 'The House of Commons is in greater need of reform than the House of Lords.' Discuss.

June 2014

- 4 'Parliament carries out none of its functions adequately.' Discuss.

(Total for Question 4 = 40 marks)

- 4 'The House of Lords is now more effective than the House of Commons in checking government power.' Discuss.

June 2013

January 2013

2 Parliament

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

House of Lords

Since the general election, David Cameron has created 117 new life peers, according to a report from the Constitution Unit at University College, London. This leaves the House packed to the rafters and prompts 'a major concern that if appointments continue, the House of Lords will simply cease to be able to function'. This will be because it is too large and cumbersome. The figures in April 2011 were that, compared to Labour's 243 peers, there were a total of 311 representing the coalition partners. But added together this only accounted for 554 of the total 792 peers. The rest were a mix of crossbenchers, Bishops and others.

But is the Prime Minister doing anything other than adjusting the political balance in the Lords to reflect the will of the people at the last election? Certainly, the House of Lords, with its 792 members, eclipses the size of the Commons. The coalition's Programme for Government of 2010 stated: 'Lords appointments will be made with the objective of creating a second chamber that is reflective of the share of the vote secured by the political parties at the last general election. The current system of appointing peers will therefore remain until the Government's reforms are in place.'

An angry Ed Miliband accused David Cameron back in November 2010 of filling the Lords with Conservative Party donors – and claimed the move was undemocratic. Downing Street was unapologetic, saying: 'The Government will be bringing forward a draft Bill proposing a wholly or mainly elected House of Lords.'

Source: Adapted from Cathy Newman article, Channel Four News online, 20 April 2011.

- 2 (a) With reference to the source, outline **two** criticisms of David Cameron's appointments to the House of Lords.

(5)

- (b) With reference to the source and your own knowledge, explain **three** considerations that are taken into account when appointing Life Peers.

(10)

- (c) Assess the arguments in favour of a largely or wholly elected second chamber.

(25)

(Total for Question 2 = 40 marks)

June 2012

EITHER

3 How effective are backbench MPs?

(Total for Question 3 = 40 marks)

January 2012

1 Parliament

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Select Committees

There is a House of Commons select committee for each government department, examining three aspects: spending, policies and administration. These departmental select committees have a minimum of 11 members, who decide upon a line of inquiry and then gather written and oral evidence. Findings are reported to the Commons, printed, and published on the Parliament website. The government then usually has 60 days to reply to the committee's recommendations.

Following the adoption by the House of Commons of recommendations from the Reform of the House of Commons Committee:

- Departmental select committee chairs are elected by their fellow MPs
- A backbench business committee has been established with the ability to schedule business in the Commons chamber and in Westminster Hall on days, or parts of days, set aside for non-government business.

Legislative committees

Both Houses of Parliament refer legislation to committees for detailed discussion and approval. These committees are part of the process of making laws. They scrutinise proposed laws and may consider amendments to improve the legislation. Amendments approved in legislative committees must be approved by the whole House.

Source: adapted from www.parliament.gov.uk, October, 2010.

- 1** (a) With reference to the source, why are legislative committees needed? (5)
- (b) With reference to the source and your own knowledge, explain the ways in which backbench MPs can call government to account. (10)
- (c) To what extent has the formation of a coalition altered the relationship between Parliament and government? (25)

(Total for Question 1 = 40 marks)

June 2011

2 Parliamentary reform

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Extracts from the document: *'The Coalition: our programme for government'*.

We will establish five-year fixed term Parliaments. We will put a binding motion before the House of Commons stating that the next general election will be held on the first Thursday of May, 2015. Following this motion, we will legislate to make provision for fixed term Parliaments of five years.

We will bring forward a Referendum Bill on electoral reform, which includes provision for the introduction of the Alternative Vote in the event of a positive result in the referendum, as well as for the creation of fewer and more equal sized constituencies.

We will bring forward early legislation to introduce a power of recall, allowing voters to force a by-election where an MP is found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing.

We will establish a committee to bring forward proposals for a wholly or mainly elected upper chamber on the basis of proportional representation.

We will bring forward proposals... for reform to the House of Commons... starting with the proposed committee for management of backbench business. A House Business Committee, to consider government business, will be established by the third year of the Parliament.

We will ensure that any petition that secures 100,000 signatures will be eligible for public debate in Parliament.

Source: *'The Coalition: our programme for government'*, Cabinet Office, May 2010
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- 2 (a) With reference to the source, describe **three** proposals that seek to strengthen parliamentary representation by increasing popular participation. (5)
- (b) With reference to the source, and your own knowledge, explain how **three** of these proposals seek to make government more accountable to Parliament. (10)
- (c) To what extent will the coalition government's proposals bring about an effective reform of Parliament? (25)

(Total for Question 2 = 40 marks)

January 2011

Answer TWO questions, ONE from Section A and ONE from Section B.

Section B starts on page 14.

It is advised that you divide your time equally between both questions.

SECTION A

Answer EITHER Question 1 OR Question 2.

1 House of Commons

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Extracts from three days proceedings of the House of Commons

January 12, 2010

- Questions to the Secretary of State for Health
- Third Reading of the *Personal Care at Home* Bill

January 13, 2010

- Questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland
- Questions to the Prime Minister
- Opposition Motion presented by the Leader of the Opposition: '*That this House notes with concern the increase in the number of young people not in employment, education or training...[continued]*'
- Report presented by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on global security in Afghanistan and Pakistan

January 14, 2010

- Public Bill Committee on the Financial Services Bill to consider proposed amendments to clause 26.

Source: www.parliament.gov.uk, January, 2010.

- 1** (a) With reference to the source, describe **two** functions of the House of Commons. (5)
- (b) With reference to the source, and your own knowledge, explain how the House of Commons can control the power of government. (10)
- (c) To what extent is the House of Commons effective in carrying out its various functions? (25)

(Total for Question 1 = 40 marks)

June 2010

3 To what extent does Parliament control executive power?

(Total for Question 3 = 40 marks)

January 2010

2 Parliament

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

White Paper on reform of the House of Lords

This White Paper sets out the government's proposals for a reformed second chamber of the UK Parliament.

The proposals are based on the House of Commons votes for an 80% or 100% elected second chamber and follow cross-party talks on how this could be achieved.

The White Paper makes proposals for reform in a number of areas:

- **Role and composition**

The House of Lords plays a valuable role in holding the government to account and revising legislation. The reforms would strengthen those roles and make the second chamber more accountable. The House of Commons would continue to be the primary chamber in the UK legislature.

- **Membership of the chamber**

The proposed reforms would create a second chamber with directly elected members, which would be smaller than the House of Commons. The remaining rights of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the second chamber would be removed.

- **Powers of the new chamber**

The government proposes no changes to the powers of a reformed second chamber.

- **The possible role of appointed members to ensure independence**

If it is decided that there should be a 20% appointed element, the government proposes that its key purpose would be to provide a significant independent element in the second chamber. A statutory appointments commission would seek nominations and applications for membership.

The government is also proposing changes to the arrangements for eligibility, remuneration and accountability.

Source: White Paper, *An Elected Second Chamber*, July 14, 2008.

- 2 (a) With reference to the source, what changes to the second chamber are proposed? (5)
- (b) With reference to the source, and your own knowledge, explain the arguments for a fully or partly elected second chamber. (10)
- (c) Make out a case *against* an elected second chamber. (25)

(Total for Question 2 = 40 marks)

June 2009

1 The role of Parliament

Study the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Citizens need an effective Parliament. They need a body that can call the government to account, that can ensure that government answers for its actions and the actions of civil servants. They need a body that can scrutinise and, if necessary, change the legislative proposals brought forward by government. They need a body that can ensure that their voice is heard by government when they have a grievance, be it about the impact of a policy or the absence of a policy. They need the security of knowing that, if there is a problem, there is a body to which they can turn for help, a body that can force public officials to listen.

Government needs an effective Parliament. It needs it because its authority derives from Parliament. The more government distances itself from Parliament, the more it undermines popular consent for the system of government. It needs Parliament to give its approval to measures and, prior to doing so, to scrutinise those measures.

Adapted from Report of the Commission to Strengthen Parliament.

- 1 (a) With reference to the source, describe **three** functions of Parliament. (5)
- (b) With reference to the source, and your own knowledge, explain why government needs an effective Parliament. (10)
- (c) Analyse the main factors that limit the effectiveness of Parliament. (25)

(Total for Question 1 = 40 marks)