

Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 1

Question 8

'Deterrence is the most important function of punishment.'

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland and any other country/countries you have studied.

Analysis

This response was awarded **7 out of 8 marks** because the candidate makes excellent analytical comments throughout, for example, 'This is most likely due to the fact that harsh sentences which try to serve deterrence only go on to exacerbate the underlying causes of crime'. High-quality exemplification is used throughout, alongside integrated international comparison. There is impressive use of the ideas of others, such as quotes from Jamie Santa Cruz, James Chalmers and Jeanne Hirschberger, among others. However, despite the candidate's wealth of knowledge, there is a tendency to drift away from the specific question. Deterrence is only discussed in the first paragraph of the response, and the rest of their answer has more of a focus on rehabilitation. This means that the candidate does not have the in-depth understanding of the question that is required for full marks in this section.

Comparison

This response was awarded **5 out of 6 marks** because there are high-quality examples of international comparison throughout the response. The candidate compares the UK to the US, Norway and Canada, comparing aims of criminal justice, prison costs and crime rates. The extent of similarity/difference is discussed, for example, '...both these facts show a high degree of similarity...' and 'Contrastingly, in England...'. However, international comparison does not form a key part of the argument, with no mention in the overall conclusion, limiting the candidate to 5 marks in this section.

Evaluation

This response was awarded **7 out of 8 marks** because there are excellent examples of evaluation throughout the response. The candidate writes in an intelligent and insightful way, making well-reasoned judgements. For example, 'Ultimately, retribution is shown to be an unimportant function of punishment...' and '...rehabilitation is shown to be the most effective purpose of punishment in its ability to serve other purposes of punishment simultaneously...'. Alternative arguments are clearly considered and evaluated, and points of evaluation are well-integrated throughout the response. However, the candidate fails to use reasons for accepting or discounting alternatives in their overall conclusion as there is a lack of consideration of the key factor, deterrence, in their conclusion.

Synthesis

This response was awarded **7 out of 8 marks** because this is a high-quality response that shows a clear understanding of the theories of punishment. There is a convincing line of argument throughout the response that rehabilitation is the most important function of punishment, and this is supported by detailed reasons and evidence. However, the candidate is prevented from achieving full marks due to a lack of focus on the named factor in the question; deterrence. Excluding the first paragraph, deterrence is not mentioned in sub-conclusions and there is only a cursory mention of it in the overall conclusion. While several judgements are made, and the overall conclusion is extremely well-written, these judgements are focused on rehabilitation, retribution, denunciation and incapacitation with deterrence only being mentioned in reference to denunciation. Therefore, the candidate is prevented from achieving full marks in this section as their overall judgement does not make several points of analysis or evaluation that refer to deterrence.

Overall, this response was awarded **26 out of 30 marks**.

Candidate 2

Question 1

‘Smaller political parties have too much influence on policy making.’

Discuss, with reference to the UK/Scotland and any other country/countries you have studied.

Analysis

This response was awarded **5 out of 8 marks** because the candidate analyses a range of factors relevant to the question, including Scotland’s use of AMS giving smaller parties more influence, coalitions helping to hold the government to account, two party systems limiting influence of smaller parties, the argument that smaller parties should not get such a say in policymaking, and the effect on passing legislation quickly. However, while the candidate makes valid analytical comments linked to evaluation, and includes evidence from two international comparator countries, the response does not include sufficient analysis or evidence of the policies influenced by smaller parties. If the candidate had included some examples of what the Green Party managed to change because of the Bute House Agreement, or how smaller parties have influenced policy change by larger parties, this would show a better understanding of the question. There is some relevant, contemporary evidence present, but the response would benefit from more of this, and there are some errors in the evidence that is presented, such as the confusion over the percentage of seats/votes won by the Labour party in the 2024 General Election. Analytical comments are not integrated in-depth with international comparators, or with the ideas and arguments of others.

Comparison

This response was awarded **4 out of 6 marks** because the candidate draws comparisons between the UK, Germany and the US. The candidate compares the FPTP system in the UK, where the two largest parties dictate what policy is made, with the two-party system in the US. Similarities are explored in terms of minority government in Scotland and coalition government in Germany. The points of

comparison could be further evidenced and could form a greater part of the line of argument throughout the response, rather than as two distinct short paragraphs.

Evaluation

This response was awarded **5 out of 8 marks** because, while there are points of evaluation used to make an overall judgement on the question, there is not enough reasoned evaluation on alternative arguments. The candidate briefly considers alternative arguments that smaller parties have too much influence because 'smaller parties should not get such a say in policy making', and because 'it takes policy longer to be passed', but fails to provide evidence and detail to exemplify these points and solidify this line of argument. The majority of this response only considers the arguments that smaller parties do not have too much influence, and neglects to explore the influence they do have on policy or on larger parties changing their policies because of the growth of smaller parties.

Synthesis

This response was awarded **5 out of 8 marks** because there is a clear overall conclusion that is developed from a line of argument. The overall conclusion explains that smaller parties ensure government is well-rounded, which strengthens democracy, and that 'small party influence on policy making is essentially beneficial'. However, there is a lack of detail in the conclusion, and throughout, that reflects on smaller parties having too much power. The conclusion refers to them being incompetent due to their size and less experience, but this is not reflected in the main body and does not deal with the counterargument that smaller parties exert control over and change specific policy or ideas for policy.

Overall, this response was awarded **19 out of 30 marks**.