

AP[®] COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8

7 points

Part (a): 2 points

One point is earned for **each** correct description of a function exercised in both the House of Commons and the Duma. Acceptable functions include:

- Makes laws and passes bills.
- Conducts votes of no confidence.
- Debates policy issues.
- Represents the people.
- Appropriates funds and makes budgets.
- Approves/elects (NOT selects) the prime minister.

Part (b): 2 points

One point is earned for correctly identifying the electoral system in Great Britain. Acceptable identification is:

- Single-member district (SMD).
- First past the post (FPTP).
- Plurality.
- Winner-take-all.

One point is earned for correctly explaining the electoral system's effect on party representation. Acceptable explanations include:

- Encourages a two party system.
- Overrepresents largest parties.
- Underrepresents smaller parties.
- Discourages voters from choosing third party.
- Regional parties have the opportunity to be represented if they win a plurality of votes in a district.

Note: If the student incorrectly identifies the electoral system in parts (b) or (c), no point is awarded for the effect on party.

Part (c): 2 points

One point is earned for correctly identifying the electoral system in Russia. Acceptable identification is proportional representation with threshold.

Note: Thresholds of 5 percent and 7 percent are acceptable for credit; other percentages are not.

One point is earned for correctly explaining the electoral system's effect on party representation. Acceptable explanations include:

- United Russia/single party dominates.

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Question 8 (continued)

- Reduces representation of small parties.
- Fosters nonideological or catch-all parties.

Part (d): 1 point

One point is earned for each correct explanation of why the House of Commons is more effective than the Duma in limiting the power of the executive. Acceptable explanations include:

- The majority party in the House of Commons can ask the prime minister to step down without calling for new elections, whereas the president in Russia can eventually dissolve the Duma if the president disagrees with a vote of no confidence.
- There is fusion of power in Great Britain, where the prime minister sits in Parliament, whereas in Russia there is separation of power and the president does not sit in the Duma.
- A vote of no confidence in the House of Commons is relatively easy to conduct, but it is difficult to impeach the Russian president.
- The majority party in the House of Commons selects the prime minister, but the president in Russia selects the prime minister, who is more accountable to the president than to the Duma.
- The Russian president can dissolve the Duma if the Duma rejects the same prime minister candidate three times, but this is not the case in Great Britain.
- Britain has Question Time, but the Duma cannot hold cabinet members accountable.

A score of zero (0) is earned for an answer that earns no points.

A score of dash (—) is earned for a blank answer.

8. Great Britain and Russia have bicameral legislatures with a much stronger lower house, but with different relationships to the executive.
- (a) Describe two functions exercised by both the House of Commons in Great Britain and the Duma in Russia.
 - (b) Identify the electoral system in Great Britain and explain its effect on party representation in the House of Commons.
 - (c) Identify the electoral system in Russia and explain its effect on party representation in the Duma.
 - (d) Explain why the House of Commons is more effective in limiting the power of the executive in Great Britain than the Duma is in limiting the power of the executive in Russia.

a) Both the House of Commons in Great Britain and the Duma in Russia create new legislature and control their countries' budgets. Creating new legislature involves voting for and passing laws that will be instituted ~~throughout the~~ ^{throughout the} entire country. Controlling budgets involves approving ~~of~~ taxes and granting their respective executive leaders, the president in Russia and the Prime minister in Great Britain, funds needed for any programs.

b) The electoral system in Great Britain ~~uses~~ utilizes a plurality system. This provides for single-member districts in which the candidate with the most votes wins. Plurality systems often greatly reduce the representation of smaller parties. For example, in Great Britain the Liberal Democrats often win over 20% of the popular vote, but because

of the plurality system they receive much less than 20% of the seats in Parliament. The plurality system instead favors major parties in Great Britain like the Conservatives and the Labour Party, who receive a greater proportion of seats than their percentage of the popular vote.

c.) Vladimir Putin recently changed the electoral system for the Russian Duma to entirely proportional representation, but each party must gain ~~at least 7% to receive any seats~~. a minimum percentage of the popular vote to receive any seats in the Duma. Proportional representation usually encourages multi-party systems by providing representation to smaller parties. Putin's minimum percentage stipulation, however, prevents small parties from receiving any representation. Instead, this electoral system allows for United Russia, Putin's party, to dominate the Russian Duma. ~~along with~~ very few other parties, like A Just Russia or the Communist Party of Russia receive

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representation in the Duma equal to their considerable popular support.

d) The House of Commons more effectively limits the power of the Prime Minister than the Duma limits the power of the president. First of all, the House of Commons is able to hold a vote of confidence that could force the Prime Minister and his cabinet to resign, or if the vote is held and found to be a vote of no confidence, the entire Parliament is re-elected. The Duma has no such power in regard to the president. Also, the British Prime Minister, as a member of the House of Commons cannot dissolve the House of Commons. In Russia, the President retains the power to dissolve the Duma. In addition, the Russian president appoints the Prime

ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 8.

Minister who leads the Duma. These powers given to the Russian executive give him or her tremendous power over the Duma that inevitably prevents opposition from the Duma toward the president. In contrast, the House of Commons has considerable power over the British Prime Minister that serves to limit his or her power.

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 - (d) Explain why the House of Commons is more effective in limiting the power of the executive in Great Britain than the Duma is in limiting the power of the executive in Russia.

- a. The House of Commons and the Duma are both responsible for drafting legislation and acted as a check on the executive power.
- b. Great Britain uses proportional representation and allows many parties to get their say in the House of Commons. This has lead to multiple parties represented, and has recently caused a coalition government between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, and neither the Conservatives or their main opposition, the Labour Party, won enough seats to have a majority.
- c. Russia uses proportional representation, but sets a higher threshold of the percentage a party needs to be represented in the Duma. Because of this less parties are represented, and the

United Russia party has a more stable control.

d. The chief executive in Great Britain, the Prime Minister, is a member of the House of Commons and his or her legitimacy is given mostly directly by the House of Commons, who are elected by the people. This makes him or her directly responsible to the House of Commons. In Russia, the chief executive, the President, is elected by the populace and is therefore given his or her legitimacy from the populace. They are not a member of the Duma, nor are they chosen by the Duma, which means the Duma is less effective in limiting their power.

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 - (d) Explain why the House of Commons is more effective in limiting the power of the executive in Great Britain than the Duma is in limiting the power of the executive in Russia.

a) Both the House of Commons and the Duma are responsible for drafting and passing legislation, and they also must approve appointments.

b) Great Britain has an electoral system that allows for a great deal of diversity in the House of Commons. With proportional representation, parties gain seats based on the percentage of votes they earned, meaning smaller minority parties still have a chance to win seats in Parliament.

c) While Russia also has a similar election system, a portion of the seats are elected by popular proportional representation vote while others are awarded by appointment, meaning that while there is still a bit of diversity, the variety of parties is not ~~quite~~ quite as vast.

ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 8.

d) Great Britain has a Parliamentary ~~the~~ system, whereas Russia has a semipresidential system. In Great Britain, the House of ~~Commons~~ Commons holds the Prime Minister directly accountable because he is a member of Parliament. If they wish to get rid of him, a simple no-confidence vote will dissolve the government.

In Russia, the President is elected by the people and is not directly accountable to the legislature, meaning he has more freedom in his actions. The impeachment process is much more difficult in Russia, so it is harder to remove the President from office if the Duma does not agree with him.

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Question 8

Overview

The intent of the question was for students to compare the Duma and the House of Commons. The skills tested were both descriptive and analytical: to describe two functions shared by both the Duma and the House of Commons, to identify electoral systems and examine the impact of electoral systems on party representation in the House of Commons and the Duma, and to explain why the House of Commons is more effective than the Duma in limiting the power of the executive.

Sample: 8A

Score: 7

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for stating that both legislatures “control their country’s budgets.” The response earned 1 point for stating that both legislatures are responsible for “passing laws.”

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for identifying the electoral system as “plurality ... single-member districts.” The response earned 1 point for explaining that “[p]lurality systems often greatly reduce the representation of smaller parties.”

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for stating that the Duma uses “proportional representation, but each party must gain a minimum percentage of the popular vote.” The response earned 1 point for explaining that “Putin’s minimum percentage stipulation, however, prevents small parties from receiving any representation.”

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining that “the House of Commons is able to hold a vote of confidence that could force the Prime Minister and his cabinet to resign.” By comparison, “[t]he Duma has no such power in regard to the president.”

Sample: 8B

Score: 4

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for stating that both legislatures are responsible for “drafting legislature [*sic*].”

In part (b) the response earned no points because it incorrectly identifies the election system in the House of Commons.

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for stating, “Russia uses proportional representation, but sets a higher threshold [*sic*] of the percentage a party needs to be represented in the Duma.” The response also earned 1 point for explaining that “less parties are represented.”

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining that “the Prime Minister, is a member of the House of Commons” and “[i]n Russia, the chief executive, the President, is elected by the populace They are not a member of the Duma ... which means the Duma is less effective in limiting their power.”

Sample: 1C

Score: 2

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for stating that both legislatures “are responsible for drafting and passing legislation.”

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Question 8 (continued)

In part (b) the response earned no points because it incorrectly identifies the election system in the House of Commons.

In part (c) the response earned no points because it does not refer to the threshold for getting seats in the Duma and incorrectly describes the impact of the election system on party representation.

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining that “[i]n Great Britain, the House of Commons holds the Prime Minister directly accountable because he is a member of Parliament.” By comparison, “[i]n Russia, the President is elected by the people and is not directly accountable to the legislature.”