



Learning Grids for AS and A Level Edexcel

Component 2: UK Government
and Non-core Political Ideas

Prime Minister and Executive

2022 Edition

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Teacher's Introduction

The following learning grids cover the Prime Minister and the Executive module of the Edexcel A Level specification. These learning grids are designed to test the basic foundation of knowledge about the prime minister, the cabinet and the government departments. Learning the intricacies of the executive can be complicated, but these learning grids will help to ensure that all students have the foundational understanding of the important concepts and examples for the module.

This set of learning grids is designed to help students develop their AO1 knowledge for the Prime Minister and Executive module of the Edexcel A Level Politics specification. The questions and answers provided here should give the students a comprehensive grasp of the facts before moving on to the analysis and evaluation needed for AO2 and AO3 marks in the exams.

The learning grids are split into three sections in line with the specification: the structure, role and powers of the executive, the concept of ministerial responsibility, and the prime minister and cabinet. The final learning grids evaluate the main features that affected the power of the six prime ministers from Margaret Thatcher to Theresa May. The idea of this additional section is to widen the pool of evidence the students can draw from to illustrate what may otherwise be a theory-heavy chapter. You can decide whether students study all or some of these case studies – bearing in mind the requirement in the specification for students to study “the influence of one Prime Minister from 1945 to 1997 and one post-1997 Prime Minister”. References are provided for the resources below which feature detailed case studies for each – none of these cover all in detail.

The second edition of these learning grids has been updated to reflect recent developments, contemporary debates and new political contexts that have emerged since their initial publication. In relation to the Prime Minister and Executive, this includes (but is not limited to) political developments since the 2017 general election, discussion relating to the outcome of the 2019 general election, and changes in the positions of prominent political figures. These changes have been made through the addition of new questions, activities and model answers.

Third edition, November 2022

Cross-referencing updated for Course Companions (ZigZag Education 2022) and added for additional Hodder textbook (2021); new summary page of cross-referencing added. New pages on Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's premierships (pages 22–23). Tony Blair pages reformatted to fit to one (page 17); minor updates also made to questions (pages 8, 9 and 10) and answers (pages 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10).

This resource is cross-referenced to:

- *Edexcel GCSE Politics AS and A Level Student Book*, Goodlad, Mitchell, Colclough, Levinson, Laycock, Schindler and Tomes, Pearson Education, 2017, ISBN 978-1292187020
- *UK Government and Politics for AS/A Level (Fifth Edition)*, Lynch, Fairclough and Cooper, Hodder, 2017, ISBN 978-1-4718-89233
- *UK Government and Politics for AS/A Level (Sixth Edition)*, McNaughton and Cooper, Hodder, 2021, ISBN 978-1-3983-1133-6
- *A Level Edexcel Course Companion: Component 2: UK Government: PM and Executive*, Murphy and Glover, 2022, ZigZag Education (MORE/11850)

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Selected Question and Answer Pages

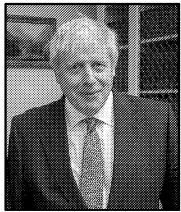
For demonstration only, the sample answer pages immediately follow their corresponding question pages

Questions		Answers	
The Role of the Executive	<p>Explain these three major roles of the executive:</p> 	Proposing Legislation	
		Where could you find a government’s ideas for legislation?	
		Does the executive propose all legislation? Explain your answer.	
		Proposing the Budget	
		Which department proposes a budget to other cabinet members?	
		Implementing Policy	
		Name two factors that may limit a policy’s implementation.	

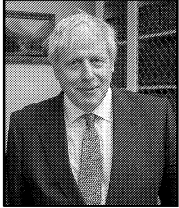
Questions		Answers	
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">The Role of the Executive</p>	<p>Explain these three major roles of the executive:</p> 	<p>Proposing Legislation</p>	<p>The executive introduces legislation to Parliament. This means that they propose new laws or changes to existing laws to fit their policies, but they cannot pass these laws; that must be done by the legislature.</p>
		<p>Where could you find a government’s ideas for legislation?</p>	<p>In their manifesto which often states the policies each government wishes to implement</p>
		<p>Does the executive propose all legislation? Explain your answer.</p>	<p>No, the legislature can propose their own ideas through private members bills. However, the majority of legislation is proposed by the government from the prime minister or a cabinet member.</p>
		<p>Proposing the Budget</p>	<p>The government puts forward the budget, which is the plan of how the government will raise money, and how the money will be spent, throughout the year. It must be approved by the Commons, but it is the government’s responsibility to make and propose the budget.</p>
		<p>Which department proposes a budget to other cabinet members?</p>	<p>The chancellor at HM Treasury</p>
		<p>Implementing Policy</p>	<p>It is the role of the government to put their policies into effect using the money raised according to the budget, and their workforce in various departments.</p>
		<p>Name two factors that may limit a policy’s implementation.</p>	<p>The budget may not be big enough. New policies may counteract current legislation. Civil servants are unable to implement the policy effectively. (Choose any two from the above.)</p>



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Questions		Answers
Boris Johnson	<p>Which side had Boris Johnson supported in the referendum on membership of the European Union?</p> 	
	<p>What action did Boris Johnson take against 21 pro-EU Tory MPs who voted against the government in August 2019?</p>	
	<p>Which decision by Boris Johnson was ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court in September 2019?</p>	
	<p>What was the Conservative slogan in the 2019 general election?</p>	
	<p>The Conservatives secured their largest majority at the 2019 general election since when?</p>	
	<p>Which major event disrupted Johnson’s premiership?</p>	
	<p>Give two examples of constitutional reform undertaken by Johnson’s government.</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>
	<p>How did Johnson try to regain control of events in 2022?</p>	
	<p>What was the reason for Boris Johnson’s resignation?</p>	

Discuss: Do you think Boris Johnson was a powerful prime minister? How did the 2019 general election alter his ability to govern? What were the main constraints on his power?

		Questions	Answers
Boris Johnson	<p>Which side had Boris Johnson supported in the referendum on membership of the European Union?</p> 	Leave	
	<p>What action did Boris Johnson take against 21 pro-EU Tory MPs who voted against the government in August 2019?</p>	He withdrew the Conservative whip from them, thus expelling them from the party	
	<p>Which decision by Boris Johnson was ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court in September 2019?</p>	Five-week prorogation (suspension) of Parliament	
	<p>What was the Conservative slogan in the 2019 general election?</p>	<i>Get Brexit Done</i>	
	<p>The Conservatives secured their largest majority at the 2019 general election since when?</p>	1987	
	<p>Which major event disrupted Johnson’s premiership?</p>	The coronavirus pandemic crisis	
	<p>Give two examples of constitutional reform undertaken by Johnson’s government.</p>	<p>The UK left the European Union in January 2020</p> <p>The Fixed-term Parliaments Act was repealed in 2022 (accept ar</p>	
	<p>How did Johnson try to regain control of events in 2022?</p>	He became a close ally of the Ukrainian President after Russia	
	<p>What was the reason for Boris Johnson’s resignation?</p>	His party lost confidence in him due to the Partygate scandal a to resign after mass resignations from government.	



Discuss: Do you think Boris Johnson was a powerful prime minister? How did the 2019 general election alter his ability to govern? What was the impact of Brexit on his power?

Additional Selected Question Pages

Unit 3.3

Fill in the Blanks: The Relationship between the Prime Minister and the Cabinet

Fill in the blank spaces in the paragraphs below using the keywords:

The prime minister’s relationship with the cabinet can be greatly affected by their personal _____ skills. Some prime ministers have been famously good at managing their cabinet. In the early years of his government, _____ had close allies in the cabinet, but as the years went by his relationship with his chancellor, _____, deteriorated to the point where the chancellor was one of the main forces behind the prime minister’s resignation.

The prime minister also has significant support from the prime minister’s office located at _____, and is a dedicated branch of the _____, a department with considerable resources. This strengthens the position of the prime minister relative to their cabinet colleagues. Under David Cameron an additional _____ further strengthened the prime minister’s ability to influence departments.

The prime minister also has a greater ability than other cabinet members to _____. The prime ministers chair the _____ and control the overall direction of _____. The prime minister can also use _____ to make decisions, and fill these committees with their political allies.


The most important factor that affects the relative power of the prime minister and cabinet is the larger political and economic context. A prime minister will be considerably more powerful after a _____ election victory, such as that won by Tony Blair in 1997, than a prime minister without a majority in Parliament and with a divided party, such as _____ after June 2017. The power of events over the prime minister is central to understanding their relative strength. The economic context is equally important. A prime minister who has presided over a severe economic **crisis**, such as Gordon Brown after 2008, is much less likely to have political freedom to manoeuvre, particularly because their _____ popularity is also likely to be in decline. When the economic and political context is severe, the prime minister is much more at risk of being challenged by a cabinet colleague, as was the case with _____ in 1995.

<i>John Major</i>	<i>policy</i>	<i>10 Downing Street</i>	<i>Gordon Brown</i>
<i>policy and implementation Unit</i>	<i>management</i>	<i>set the agenda</i>	<i>cabinet meetings</i>
<i>crisis</i>	<i>cabinet committees</i>	<i>landslide</i>	<i>Theresa May</i>
<i>personal</i>	<i>cabinet office</i>	<i>Tony Blair</i>	

The Powers of Prime Ministers



Pearson Education: pp. 190–202
 Hodder: pp. 150–152
 Hodder 2021: pp. 278–287
 ZigZag: p. 33

	Questions	Answers
Margaret Thatcher	<p>What was the nickname given to Thatcher due to her uncompromising nature and leadership?</p> 	
	<p>When was Thatcher elected as Conservative leader? When did she become prime minister?</p>	
	<p>What ideology is Margaret Thatcher associated with?</p>	
	<p>What economic policies did Thatcher introduce in accordance with her ideology?</p>	
	<p>Which overseas conflict saw a sharp rise in Thatcher's popularity after its initial low point due to economic recession?</p>	
	<p>How many seats did Thatcher's Conservative Party win in the House of Commons in 1983? How many did the next largest party have, and which party was this?</p>	
	<p>What impact does having a large majority have on the strength of a government?</p>	
	<p>What about after the 1987 election?</p>	
	<p>Who initiated a leadership challenge over the issue of Europe?</p>	

	Questions	Answers
Margaret Thatcher (cont.)	What does the initiation of a leadership challenge indicate about Thatcher’s control?	
	What controversial policy led to riots on the street due to its implementation?	
	What made her reverse the policy above? Give two examples	
	Who replaced Thatcher in the leadership election and when?	

Discussion: Do you think Margaret Thatcher was a powerful prime minister? Do her popularity and her time as leader indicate that she was able to control events?