The Government and Politics of Wales
Questions for discussion and case studies

Chapter 3 – Wales in Westminster and Europe
Pages 45–71, Author Russell Deacon

Teacher’s guide – in conjunction with the text book

Timing: Students should read the relevant chapter before undertaking the exercise questions and case studies, and discuss their answers. There are answer note suggestions behind all questions. The questions can be undertaken in class or at home with questions/answers and activities being undertaken in the classroom. The material is teaching material and NOT specifically material for answering examination questions.

Tutor guide: Tutors should familiarise themselves with the text, questions and answers before undertaking the activities in the classroom. For any unfamiliar terms an extensive glossary of key terms is provided on pages 206–22 of the book. The questions and case studies do not cover all of the material in the chapters. If tutors wish to cover this, they will need to set additional stimulus questions. Tutors and students may also wish to add material not provided in either the suggested answers or the text to the answers. Welsh politics is constantly changing, so answers provided now may well alter as these changes take place.

The questions for discussion and the case studies are found at the end of each chapter. The suggested answers and some ideas for teaching these are provided on the following pages. Tutors should seek to draw these answers from the students and also discuss their merits.

Suggested answers

Chapter 3 Questions for discussion

*These questions cover some elements of the WJEC AS Government and Politics Specification 1.2 The Government of the UK, specifically ‘The Cabinet systems in the UK: composition; roles and functions’ with specific reference to Wales. They also cover 1.2.2 How Parliament works in the UK with specific reference to ‘The structure, role and powers of Parliament’ and ‘the work of committees’ in the context of Wales.*
1. To what extent has Westminster been adapted to reflect the interests and governance of Wales?

*Answer points:* There are a number of ways in which Westminster has been adapted to cover political issues relating to Wales. In the Government the central change is that of the establishment of the post of Secretary of State for Wales, with Cabinet status, and their junior ministers. There are also Question Times for the Welsh Secretary in the Commons and the Wales Office Minister in the House of Lords. At a Parliamentary level there is a Welsh Day Debate, Welsh Grand Committee, Welsh Parliamentary Party and most importantly the Welsh Affairs Select Committee. The political parties also have Welsh Whips and some have a Welsh Parliamentary leader. The Welsh government and government in Westminster also have a number of Joint Ministerial Committees, concordats and Memorandums of Understanding to help deal with intergovernmental relations. Not all political processes, however, have been adapted. The House of Lords, for instance, does not have any specific arrangements for Wales beyond questioning the Wales Office Minister.

2. What is the Welsh Secretary’s role in Westminster?

*Answer points:* Box 3.6 details the role and function of the Welsh Secretary. In Westminster amongst other things they are seen in theory as being the ‘voice of Wales’ in the UK government. There they deal with other government departments, parliamentary scrutiny, negotiations over budgets for Wales and a Welsh input to policy development. Tutors should also note, however, that the Welsh Secretary is normally regarded as one of the most junior posts in the Cabinet and it normally goes to an MP with no prior Cabinet experience.

3. Wales only has four MEPs. With such a small number can they still play any significant role?

*Answer points:* The role of Wales’ four MEPs will end after March 2019 when Wales and the rest of the UK leave the European Union (Brexit). In the meanwhile their roles are shown in Box 3.8. Students might like to look at the web profile of one or more of these MEPs and match their profile to the description of tasks shown in Box 3.8, to see the extent to which theory matches reality.

**Case study: do we still need a Welsh Secretary?**

This case study covers the WJEC AS Government and Politics Specification Element 1.3.1 How the Government Works in Wales – Collective and Ministerial Responsibility. It relates to the structures and powers of the Westminster government in the context of Wales in the form of the Welsh Secretary.

Read the text in the case study in Box 3.7, then answer the following questions:
1. **Who believes that the post of Welsh Secretary should go and why?**

*Answer points:* In a report by BIICL in 2015, Plaid Cymru and the former New Labour government suggested scrapping all of the territorial Secretaries of State and replacing them with a single ‘Secretary of State for the Union’, mainly because most of their powers have now been transferred to the Welsh Assembly.

2. **Give three reasons why you think no Westminster government has scrapped the post of Welsh Secretary.**

*Answer points:* Box 3.7 provides five full and comprehensive answers. The tutor can go through these and discuss with the students which they feel to be the most important and why. It may also be useful to reflect on topical issues such as, does the priority change according to circumstances, such as Brexit?

3. **Examine the career of a recent Welsh Secretary and try to find a story in which they have ‘fought for Wales’ corner’ and another where they seem not to have done. For each story give a reason as to why the Welsh Secretary sought this course of action.**

*Answer points:* This is a research piece for the students to undertake. Stories can be found in the Wales Office website news section or through searching for stories on Walesonline, BBC Wales, S4C or ITV Wales.

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**Summary – Reflective learning questions**

These should be used either at the end or between the questions for discussion and the case studies to reflect on what has been learned. The students should be given sufficient time to discuss their answers.

1. What do you feel you have (or have not) learnt in this topic?
2. In what ways has your mind been changed by what you have learned?

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