**Higher Essay Examples – UK Politics**

**Essay One – Powers of Parliament**

One question in the exam may focus on the powers of Parliament and how they can challenge the government. You need to know about the following:

* The powers and role of the UK Parliament.
* Ways in which Parliament can challenge the government
* The effectiveness of these powers

In the exam essays on this topic may look like the following:

**Evaluate the effectiveness of parliamentary representatives in holding the government to account. (12)**

**Evaluate the effectiveness of Parliament in holding the Government to account. (12)**

**To what extent can Parliament effectively scrutinise the work of the Government? (20)**

**These questions are all asking the same point – to examine the powers of the UK Parliament and how they can scrutinise the work of the government. Below is an example essay on this topic.**

The UK Parliament can challenge the work of the government in various ways. It is the aim of this essay to discover if Parliament is effective in scrutinising the government.

One method used by Parliament is Select Committees. Select Committees are small groups of MPs who exist to shadow Government departments. They can examine their work and may produce reports of their performance. Committees can also question and challenge Government Ministers on key issues. Compared to the Commons more constructive debate and discussion usually occurs in Committees. Committees are often regarded as being very effective in challenging the Government as they have more time and focused expertise. In 2014 David Cameron had to appear before the Liaison Select Committee about his plans for migration to the UK. In addition, in 2012 the culture and sport Committee produced a report making suggestions on how to tackle racism in British football. Although Select Committees can make recommendations the Government does not have to act on them and may reject them after a period of 60 days. As a result, it could be argued the work of committees is limited in holding the government to account. Despite the criticisms above Select Committees are very effective in challenging the government as they have more time and expertise to question the government.

Another power held by Parliament is Prime Minister’s Question Time. PMQT is very important for Parliament. It gives them a chance to directly challenge the PM. A poor performance at PMQT can embarrass the PM and lower party morale. Many believe that PMQT can make or break a Prime Minister and determine how influential they might be. Backbench and opposition MPs are given the chance to criticise the Government and question their policy/decisions during Question Time. Backbench MPs on both sides will often support their leader by asking supportive questions and cheering at the answers given. PMQT is important as the PM and Government is held to account in a very open and intense environment. Brown made a massive mistake when at question time he quoted that ''Labour had saved the world''. He meant to say banks but this mistake was picked up by the opposition and the media – Brown was torn to shreds for making this mistake. May has faced numerous questions over the lack of funding for NHS services. However, in some cases PMQT is not always effective because PMQT may really be just a show for the media – it is too noisy and many argue that nothing is achieved in that 30 minute period. It is clear to see that PMQT can be effective in placing the PM under pressure. However, due to the lack of time available for PMQT Select Committees are more effective as they have more time to challenge the government.

Another way Parliament can challenge the government is through the use of debates. This gives MPs a chance to express their views and opinions on legislation. Backbench MPs have the opportunity to influence decision making. The opposition can criticise Government policy – the Government then must respond to this criticism in order to have their bill passed. Parliament can aim to have legislation scrapped/altered. MPs have the final say on government policy as they have the chance to vote – a majority of MPs must agree. Overall, debates are a good chance to challenge the government and put ministers ‘on the spot’ – they have to respond to some tough questions. Recently MP’s voted against military action in Syria and David Cameron had to accept the decision of Parliament. May has also faced challenges in Parliament over the government’s slow response to Brexit – she has been accused of not having a clear plan. However, many take the viewpoint that debates in the Commons lack control, are too noisy and nothing much gets achieved. They believe that it is more about ‘gaining points’ rather than discussing key issues. Furthermore, the whip system controls MPs and this limits the power of MPs in Parliament. They have to vote the way the whips tell them. Despite this negative point Debates give the opposition a chance to question the government and put them on the spot. This makes them effective as method to scrutinise the government.

The powers of Parliament all hinge on one key issue – the majority of the Government. If a Government has a high majority then it is less effective. However, a low majority means Parliament has more power. The previous Coalition Government meant that David Cameron found it more demanding to push legislation through Parliament. Currently, May has a low majority and this makes Parliament more effective as the government can be challenged.

**Essay Two – Powers and Checks on Prime Minister**

Another question in the exam may focus on the powers of the Prime Minister. The essay may also ask you about the checks on these powers. You need to know about the following:

* The role and powers held by the UK Prime Minister.
* The ways in which these powers can be checked.
* The effectiveness of these checks

In the exam essays on this topic may look like the following:

**Evaluate the effectiveness of the political system in challenging the powers of the Prime Minister. (12)**

**To what extent can the powers of the PM be checked by the UK political system. (20)**

**Both of these questions are asking the some question – what are the powers of the PM and can these powers be checked? Below is an example essay on this topic.**

The UK Prime Minister has various powers. However, these powers can be challenged in various ways. It is the aim of this essay to examine this important issue.

One key power of the UK Prime Minister is the power to make appointments. The PM can select members of their cabinet which help them to run the country. The PM can use their powers to select people who support them and will help them create a strong government. The PM can also re-shuffle their cabinet and change the way it works. This helps to keep the Cabinet fresh and focused. For example, David Cameron used his powers to appoint George Osborne as chancellor. In addition, Theresa May appointed Phillip Hammond to Chancellor and Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary in August 2016. However, despite this key power the PM can be challenged. They have to be careful when they make appointments as they can’t just choose who they want. If they always select their close allies then they will be heavily criticised. They may face a rebellion from MP’s if they continue to do this.

Overall despite this check the power of appointment is a key power as the PM has the individual choice to select who they want in their Cabinet.

The UK PM is also responsible for leading the party in Parliament. This is a very important power as a strong PM will make the party more effective. The PM is responsible for answering questions during PMQT and also responding to any policy issues that may come up. The PM is also in charge of leading policy for the government and has the important job of encouraging Parliament to vote and pass any policy ideas. For example, David Cameron used his powers to pass legislation that introduced tuition fees in England and Wales. In addition, Theresa May needs to use her powers to manage Brexit discussions inside and outside Parliament. However, Parliament has a range of chances to check the powers of the PM in parliament. PMQT is a great chance to embarrass the PM and place them on the spot. For example, Gordon Brown made a mistake where he said ‘Labour saved the world’ and he was heavily criticised for this mistake. In addition, MPs can rebel and vote against the party in Parliament – if this happens this is a major check on the powers of the PM.It can be stated that a strong, organised PM will be more powerful and can control Parliament easily if they have a high majority of MPs on their side.

One final power of the PM is that they are responsible for controlling and using the media effectively. The PM needs to use their powers to use social media well and engage with members of the British public. The PM realises that using the media well can make or break their time as PM and could make them more or less popular with voters. For example, David Cameron had a blog called webcameron and this helped him gain more support. In contrast to this Theresa May has been accused of being dull and this may gain her less support. The media can be a major check on the powers of the PM as any mistake by themselves or their party can seriously impact on the success of the government. For example Gordon Brown called a women a bigot and this was recorded by the media – this resulted in a loss of support for Labour. Overall the PM has to use their powers well to control and utilise the media – it could be the difference between winning and losing a general election.

The Prime Minister has the job of leading the Cabinet, leading Cabinet policy and meetings. This is a key power as an effective PM can dominate the Cabinet and can also heavily influence decisions. The PM needs to lead Cabinet meetings and decide on key policy direction. A powerful PM should control their Cabinet well and ensure that all Ministers agree with policy and don’t criticise the PM and Cabinet decision making. For example, Tony Blair was said to have organised ‘Government by Sofa’ - this meant that he relied less on the Cabinet and listened more to special advisers. Many people believe that in UK politics today the Cabinet is becoming less influential as the PM just relies on their own staff and advisors. May has appointed a number of politicians who support her and this ensures that she has tight control over Cabinet decision making. However, the Cabinet can make or break a PM. If the PM loses the support of Cabinet Ministers then they will face pressure and criticism from the party and the media. In November 2016 May was challenged by Cabinet ministers like Boris Johnson for approving the building of another runway at Heathrow.

In conclusion the UK PM has a range of individual powers that if used well can make them stronger and effective. The ability to appoint close colleagues to top positions will benefit the PM. However, the PM has to remember that the ultimate check on their power is from the UK public – the PM answers to them and needs to remember this when organising and devising policy.

**Essay Three – Voting Attitudes – factors which influence voting behaviour**

Another question in the exam may focus on the different influences on voting behaviour. The following factors are important in influencing how we vote:

* Social Class
* The media
* Gender
* Age
* Location
* Race
* Party policies and leadership
* Issue voting

**In the exam essays on this topic may look like this:**

**To what extent are some factors more important than others in influencing voting behaviour? (20)**

**Evaluate the important of a range of factors that influence voting behaviour. (12)**

**Analyse the importance of the media (or other factors) as a factor in influencing voting behaviour. (12)**

**These questions are all asking the same – to describe and analyse the factors which influence how we vote. Below is an example essay on this topic:**

There are a range of factors which are important in influencing voting behaviour. Many politicians take the view that social class and the media are the most important factors. This essay will examine the factors which shape how we vote in UK elections.

Social class is an important factor which will affect the way a person votes. Society is divided into different classes depending on a person’s status. It is defined based on occupation, income, education and home ownership. Classes are divided into A, B, C, D and E, with those in A and B usually in a professional occupation such as accountants or surgeons. Those in groups D or E would include the poorest who may be in unskilled work or unemployed. Historically election results have shown that those in A and B often support the Conservatives, whilst DE voters support Labour because Labour policies such as Tax Credits and the National Minimum Wage have benefitted the poorest. However class dealignment means that there is an increase in middle classes and so the role of social class is less influential. People are making more money, changing class and this could alter the way that they vote. In 2010 40% of DE voters, voted Labour. Therefore social class is an important factor, but not as important as it used to be. Researchers believe that the media has more influence.

Another factor that can affect how someone votes is the media. The media includes newspapers, television and radio as well as ‘new media’ such as social networking. The media plays an important role in how a leader or a political party and their policies are portrayed and parties such as the Labour Party, the Conservatives and the SNP clearly believe that the media plays a part in influencing how people vote as they spend a lot of money on party election broadcasts to ensure that the public are aware of their policies. This shows that the media can be a factor in influencing voting behaviour. The rise of social media has been important in influencing younger people to vote.

Social media has grown dramatically over the last few years and plays a huge role in influencing who we vote for. Political parties use Facebook and Twitter to connect with voters and use social media to highlight their key policies. Social media is very important in connecting with young voters and encouraging them to vote. Politicians also take part in live web chats in order to gain votes. Overall, social media is everywhere and plays an important role in influencing voting behaviour. Television also plays an important role in influencing who we vote for. Parties spend a lot of money on creating policy broadcasts and these are aired on TV. TV must be important if political parties are willing to spend millions on campaigns. In the 2011 and 2015 elections TV debates were held between the main political party leaders. This was important because millions of people watched these debates and this had an impact on who these people might vote for. Finally, if a politician makes a mistake it could be reported on TV and this could have a negative impact on their campaign. However, many people believe that other factors such as issue voting and party image are far more important than the media. These factors may be important in influencing ‘floating voters’.

Issue voting is also important as a voting factor. People base their vote on the main policies and which parties will meet their needs. People may also judge the performance of a party and if they view that party as weak or disorganised they are less likely to vote for that party. Education, health and defence are always key policy areas in any election and voters may select parties which have the most positive policies in these important areas. UK politics is becoming more like US politics as people base their vote on the image and success of the party. A strong leader of a party is more likely to gain more votes as people can trust them more. For example, in the 2015 election Ed Miliband was seen as weak and not assertive and this lost him votes. Floating voters are very important in UK politics and they might base their vote on the image and identity of a party. Therefore it is clear to see that issue voting and party image is crucial as it influence voters in the days before an election takes place. If a party leader makes a mistake this could ruin the image of the party and result in less votes.

The topic of voting behaviour is a complex issue as many factors shape how we vote. Social class used to be the most important factor but in recent years the rise of the media has really influenced how people vote. The rise of floating voters also means that party performance and issues is an extremely important factor.

**Essay Four – Voting Systems – Arguments for and against different voting systems**

There may be a question in the exam about different voting systems in the UK. You need to be aware of the following topics:

* First Past the Post – arguments for and against
* Additional Member System (AMS)
* Do certain voting systems in the UK offer fairer representation?

**In the exam essays on this topic may look like:**

**Evaluate the effectiveness of an electoral system you have studied in providing fair representation. (12)**

**Electoral systems do not always provide fair representation. Discuss. (20)**

**You should refer to electoral systems used in Scotland or the United Kingdom or both in your answer.**

**Both questions are asking you the same point – to discuss arguments for and against different voting systems in the UK. Below is an example essay on this topic:**

There are a number of voting systems used in UK elections. This essay will examine First Past the Post (FPTP) and the Additional Member System (AMS) and evaluate which system is fairer.

First Past the Post is a winner takes all system in which the candidate wins a parliamentary seat and gets to represent their constituency if they win more votes than the person in second. The party with the most seats gets to form the Government. Many people, and businesses, believe that FPTP is a fair system of voting as it is likely to lead to only one party being in charge which will mean more economic and political stability as the Government don’t have to rely on the support of other parties. It also means that they can focus on carrying out their manifesto policies and run the country. This political and economic stability is good for our economy and jobs as companies are more likely to invest in countries that are stable and not in countries in which ruling parties are always falling out with each other. It is clear to see that FPTP is an effective voting system as it creates a strong government who can run the country effectively. However, parties like the Liberal Democrats believe that FPTP is not a fair voting system.

Despite the positives of FPTP many people believe that this voting system wastes votes. In FPTP only the winner takes the seat and there is nothing for those who finish 2nd or 3rd in an area. This could mean that these votes are being wasted and this is undemocratic. In some areas of the UK people are less likely to vote as they believe their vote won’t count. This could result in voter apathy where people may not vote. For example in the 2016 UK general election the Conservative party won with only 42.6% of the vote. This means that more than half of all voters voted against the winning party and this perhaps is undemocratic. Overall, many smaller parties believe that FPTP is not a fair voting system as the number of votes they gain doesn’t always match the seats they win. These parties support other systems such as the Additional Member System.

It could be said that AMS provides better representation as voters have two voters which creates wider choice. Voters have one vote for a constituency MSP and one vote for a regional MSP. This could mean that people are more likely to vote as voters have two choices and this is fairer. However, under FPTP voters has only one choice. Many believe that this creates wasted votes because under FPTP the winner takes all and second place gets nothing. Overall, many smaller parties support AMS as it allows voters more choice and creates a proportional result.

AMS is also said to help smaller parties gain more seats as it is proportional. For example, in the Scottish Parliament parties like the Socialists and Greens have gained power. However, some politicians believe that AMS has many flaws. For instance, it may cause voter confusion as voters don’t understand the system and this may result in spoilt papers. Regardless of this criticism AMS is supported by many political parties as they believe it is more proportional and creates a fairer election result.

Overall AMS has many supporters as it is said to produce a fairer, proportional result. It allows smaller parties to gain more power and gives voters a range of different choices. Many countries around the world use AMS so it must be effective. There are criticisms of the system – confusion and coalitions no-one voted for. Nevertheless, the positives outweigh the negatives – AMS is fairer in comparison to FPTP. FPTP is a dated voting system that benefits the two main parties in the UK. If we want a result that it is fairer and proportional then the UK should switch to AMS.

**Essays Five - Participation in Politics – How can UK citizens participate in politics and influence the political process?**

In the exam there may be a question about the different ways UK citizens can influence and participate in politics. You need to know about the following:

* How the public can participate in politics and influence decision making
* The effectiveness of these different methods
* How can groups influence the political process?
* Are pressure groups effective in influencing decision making?

**In the exam essays on this topic may look like:**

**To what extent can UK citizens effectively participate in the political system? (20)**

**Analyse the opportunities UK citizens have to participate in the political process. (12)**

**These questions all focus on the same issue – to look at how people and groups in the UK can influence decision making. Below are example essays on this topic.**

There are many ways citizens can participate in UK politics. Some examples are more effective than others.

UK citizens can participate simply by voting for representatives at various elections. An example of this would be the in the 2010 UK General Election when almost 30 million citizens voted in 650 constituencies and returned a coalition government made up of MPs from the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives. Scottish citizens also have the chance to vote in elections for the Scottish Parliament. However, many believe that the FPTP voting system gives citizens less influence as many votes are wasted and this gives voters less of a voice. Many people may not bother to vote as in some areas the result is a foregone conclusion. Overall, despite the criticisms of FPTP voting is the simplest way for citizens to participate in politics. It gives them the opportunity to change the government every 4/5 years. The government is always accountable to the UK public.

Many citizens take part in pressure group activity in the UK. Some groups (insider groups such as the CBI and NFU) are effective in their activities and have close links to government. However, some “outsider groups” are less successful in their campaigns as they are seen as being hostile to government and are often demanding radical changes. A group such as Greenpeace has many thousands of members who are participating in the political process through their membership but their activities are often unsuccessful in changing government environmental policy. Groups like this have often taken part in activities which may be illegal thus reducing their effectiveness in winning over public and government opinion. Many citizens do participate in the political process, but not all methods and tactics are always effective. In conclusion, due to the expertise and wealth of insider groups they have more success in influencing government decision making.

The rise of social media in the past decade has created a higher level of political participation in the UK. This is especially the case in terms of young people – social media engages them and has led to an increase in both interest and participation in politics. Political parties use Twitter and Facebook to connect to younger voters – they may post ideas regarding policies and this facilities political discussion among young people. Perhaps, the lowering of the voting age to 16 in Scotland was a direct result of the impact of social media on political participation. Voters can also use TV to become involved in politics – they can watch the live debates on TV involving the main leaders and use social media to react to performances. However, it can be argued that newspapers are not as effective as they used to be – their sales are declining and people perhaps gain less of their news from papers. Overall, an active media in a democracy is crucial in encouraging participation in politics. It keeps parties in check and the media can make or break election success. Participating in politics is increased by the effective use of the media.

UK citizens can also participate in politics by joining a political party. They can join one of the main parties in the UK and play a role in promoting that party. Individuals have the chance to become heavily involved in democracy and decision making by being actively involved within a political party. Some people may work their work up in the party and become a candidate for local, UK or European elections. People can donate to a party and that money may be used for advertising and election campaigns. Finally, members of a party can also attend the yearly annual conference and may be given the chance to speak to ministers within that party. However, perhaps there are better, more direct ways to become involved in politics. Joining a pressure group, using social media or organising a petition may be more effective ways to influence politics. Despite this criticism, joining a political party is a great way for ordinary citizens to become involved in politics – it gives them the chance to gain more insight and knowledge into the workings of UK political parties.

In conclusion UK citizens have many rights in a democracy. One of these important rights is the chance to participate in the political process. Voting is one of the most effective ways for citizens to participate in politics and they can do so in UK, Scottish and European elections. However, due to the unfair nature of some voting systems this method of participation is not always effective. It can be stated that the growth of social media has given people the chance to become more engaged and participate in politics; this is especially the case among young people. The power of pressure groups can also be linked to the growth of the media in the past few decades. Overall, if UK citizens are interested and engaged in politics there are plenty of opportunities to become involved.

**Essay Six - How can groups in society influence politics?**

In the exam you may be asked a question about how groups in the UK can influence decision making in the UK. This is very similar to the essay above but you could focus on pressure groups. You need to know about:

* The ways in which different groups in society can influence decision making
* The impact of the media and pressure groups on decision making

**In the exam essays on this topic may look like:**

**Analyse the ways in which groups and society can influence government decision making. (12)**

**To what extent are pressure groups effective in influencing decision making? (20)**

**Below is an essay on how groups can influence government decision making**

There are many groups in society that can use their power to influence government decision making. Pressure groups and Trade Unions hold a lot of influence within UK politics. This essay will examine the effectiveness of different groups in influencing decision making.

The Government may involve insider groups in decision making as they tend to be very knowledgeable about their specific area of interest and as a consequence, the government will use their expertise when drafting policies or laws. For example, the government sought the advice of the CBI over the proposed increase in the National Minimum Wage as well as when the government were creating new legislation limiting the number of non EU workers doing various types of work in the UK. However, outsider groups often struggle to make the government listen or influence the decisions they make. It may be because the group’s demands are not in line with the government’s policies. For example, The Stop the War coalition against war in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated in London with over a million demonstrators protesting. Despite it being the largest demonstration ever in the UK, the government still went ahead and sent British soldiers to war. Therefore, this shows that some groups are more successful than others with insider groups often being more influential than outsider groups.

Other groups such as Trade Unions and pressure groups may influence government decision making because they use more effective tactics. If they use demonstrations or strikes that are well attended and supported by the public then they may be more effective. In addition, if they lobby MPs and have contacts in Parliament then groups may be more effective. If they use social media well then this increases their effectiveness. There was a massive, well organised campaign by fuel pressure groups to decrease/freeze petrol tax. This gained widespread support and made them more effective. UK uncut is a pressure group who have campaigned against public services cuts. They have organised mass demonstrations in major cities – these have been covered on BBC/Sky news and places pressure on the government. However, some pressure groups are perhaps less effective because they can’t afford to employ people to lobby MPs. Perhaps they lack the leadership to effectively use social media. Fathers for Justice have to rely on funding from their members and perhaps lack the resources to use effective tactics. Therefore, this shows that perhaps groups with more wealth and important members are in a better position to influence government decision making.

Pressure groups that are well organised and well led may be more effective. This is especially the cause if they have the support of a famous celebrity. They may use their public support and the media to raise awareness of a key issue. Many argue that a success of a pressure group is not down to the influence of a celebrity. Rather they believe that public support is actually the main reason. The government would find it impossible to ignore a large majority of public opinion on a certain issue.

UK citizens can use the media to influence and place pressure on the government. The rise of social media and new technology means that people can influence politics in different ways. The government and political parties have realised this and are using social media more to attract the votes of younger people. People may organise Facebook/Twitter campaigns to raise awareness of different political issues and topics. There are more and more young people becoming involved in politics due to the rise of the mass media. The government and parties have to use the media effectively in order to gain support for policies. For example, a local pressure group in Laurencekirk used Facebook effectively to pressurise the Scottish government into building a flyover on the A90. However, It all comes down to the point that the Government/political parties don’t have to pay attention to the media. You could spend ages organising social media campaigns but it doesn’t always mean that the government will listen to what you are saying.

Overall certain groups in the UK can influence the government. Perhaps the most effective way to influence government decision making is through the use of pressure groups. Insider groups have access to the government and play a key role in shaping policy. However, it is also worth remembering that the media can be used effectively by groups to influence the government.

**Essay Seven – Impact of European Union (EU) on the UK**

Another essay in the exam may focus on the impact of EU decision making on the UK. You need to know about:

* The different ways that the EU impacts on the UK
* The positives and negatives of UK membership of the UK

**Essays in the exam on this topic may look like the following:**

**Analyse the impact of EU membership on the UK. (12)**

**To what extent does EU membership benefit the UK? (20)**

**Below is an example essay in this topic:**

The European Union is a politico-economic union of 28 member states that are primarily located in Europe. The United Kingdom (UK) is part of the European Union (EU) and thus, the European Parliament and its laws influence the UK in numerous significant ways. This essay will evaluate the impact that the European Parliament has on decision making in the UK.

Perhaps one of the best – and most controversial - examples of the EU Parliament's impact on the UK, is the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The CFP (adapted in 1983) is a set of rules designed to manage European fishing fleets and to conserve fish stocks. The CFP is meant to protect the fishing industry, however this is not how it is perceived by the fishermen themselves. Fishermen have criticized the CFP, stating that it is wasteful as 75% of the stocks were overfished, compared to the 25% on average worldwide. As a result of overfishing on this scale in the EU, fish stocks are damaged and the fishing industry is left financially vulnerable. Nonetheless, neither the Scottish Government nor the fishermen themselves have a say in this policy and have very limited influence in this matter and what decisions are made regarding it as they have very little contact with the EU decision makers.

And thus, it is clear that the European Parliament has -in some areas- had a substantial impact on decision making in the UK. Despite the fact that neither the fishermen nor the Scottish Government want this policy, as it is a decision made by the European Parliament, they must follow it. This then impacts everyone involved with the fishing industry in Britain.

However, the EU also has a positive impact on the UK. As a member of the EU the UK has access to a huge common market. Many politicians take the view that this enhances the UK economy as it means that UK products are being bought in a large market. In addition, this common market may help local Scottish companies and also creates more jobs. It can also be stated that the UK, as a member of the EU, is charged less taxes and this may make goods cheaper. However, there are many Tory politicians who believe that the UK should be more like Norway and Switzerland and not be in the EU but still have access to the common market. They take the viewpoint that EU laws and regulations may limit UK growth and decision making. It is clear to see that membership of the EU creates many arguments. However, despite the criticism above the UK does benefit from the EU as it allows for economic growth and may also help to reduce unemployment.

The European Parliament however, also impacts the UK and its decisions in many advantageous ways. One of them being freedom of movement. Freedom of movement is a fundamental right guaranteed to every member of the EU which states that every citizen has a right to move to, live in and in certain circumstances, have access to the welfare system of the EU country they moved into. Despite the fact that this law is very beneficial for European citizens and British citizens alike, the UK still had some issues with regard to citizens of other countries who have decided to reside in Britain. The UK Home Secretary Theresa May, has claimed that these citizens are “benefit tourists“. This means that they are neither workers nor self-employed and the only reason they came to reside in the country is to access public services and the host state's benefit system. The UK also argued that this problem would have been significantly worse after restrictions on free movement for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals were lifted however, they were also proven to be wrong once this happened as the number of immigrants from these nations was lower than expected.

It can also be stated that the UK benefits from the EU because they gain more access to trade. Trade is important to any economy as it creates more revenues and means that the UK is less likely to suffer from debt. For example, the EU is the largest trading partner of the UK and this trade is worth £400 billion to the UK economy or 52% of the UK’s trade. However, some politicians take the view that these figures are incorrect as EU rules and laws place too many restrictions on UK goods and products. Food products and electronic goods are subject to EU rules and laws and this may make them more expensive. In addition, some MP’s believe that the UK should leave the EU and make their own trade agreements with countries. It is clear to see that EU membership and trade is a debate topic. Despite the negative point above EU trade is very important to the UK as it makes the UK more competitive in the world and enhances the status of the UK economy.

To conclude, the Euopean Union - as seen in the aforementioned examples - has an apparent affect on the decisions made within the UK. It can affect the UK in ways which seemingly don't benefit the country but also in ways that the country and its citizens find beneficial. The UK however, can always challenge the laws of the EU and come to agreements on certain changes within them.