

THE UK POLITICAL SYSTEM

Revision Sheet for Business School Entrance Exams | Updated February 2026

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY & PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Type: Uncodified (unwritten) constitution based on conventions, statutes, and common law

Key Principle: Parliamentary Sovereignty - Parliament is the supreme legal authority

HEAD OF STATE VS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

HEAD OF STATE	HEAD OF GOVERNMENT
<p>Position: Monarch</p> <p>Role: Ceremonial and symbolic</p> <p>Appointment: Hereditary</p> <p>Powers: Mostly symbolic (Royal Assent, dissolving Parliament, appointing PM)</p>	<p>Position: Prime Minister</p> <p>Role: Executive leader</p> <p>Appointment: Leader of majority party</p> <p>Powers: Runs government, proposes legislation, represents UK</p>
<p>CURRENT: King Charles III (since September 2022)</p>	<p>CURRENT: Keir Starmer (Labour, since July 2024)</p>

THE PARLIAMENT (BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE)

HOUSE OF COMMONS	HOUSE OF LORDS
<p>Members: 650 MPs (Members of Parliament)</p> <p>Election: Directly elected by citizens</p> <p>Term: Maximum 5 years</p> <p>Voting system: First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)</p> <p>Role: Primary legislative chamber, can override Lords</p>	<p>Members: ~800 Lords (unelected)</p> <p>Composition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life Peers (appointed)• Hereditary Peers (92)• Bishops (26) <p>Role: Reviews and amends legislation, cannot block bills indefinitely</p>
<p>CURRENT SPEAKER: Sir Lindsay Hoyle</p>	<p>LORD SPEAKER: Lord McFall of Alcluith</p>

■ MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

■ LABOUR PARTY	■ CONSERVATIVE PARTY	■ LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
Color: Red Ideology: Centre-left to left-wing Values: Social justice, workers' rights, public services Leader: Keir Starmer	Color: Blue Ideology: Centre-right to right-wing Values: Free market, low taxes, tradition Leader: Kemi Badenoch	Color: Orange/Yellow Ideology: Centrist, liberal Values: Individual freedom, EU relations, electoral reform Leader: Ed Davey

Other significant parties: Scottish National Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru (Wales), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP - Northern Ireland), Sinn Féin, Green Party, Reform UK

■ THE CABINET (EXECUTIVE)

The Cabinet is composed of senior government ministers, chaired by the Prime Minister. It makes key government decisions.

Prime Minister: Keir Starmer
Chancellor of the Exchequer: Rachel Reeves (finance minister)
Foreign Secretary: David Lammy
Home Secretary: Yvette Cooper (internal affairs)
Defence Secretary: John Healey

■■ ELECTORAL SYSTEM

System: First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) for House of Commons
Voting age: 18 years old
Constituencies: 650 electoral districts across the UK
How it works: Candidate with most votes in each constituency wins the seat
Criticism: Can produce disproportionate results; winner doesn't need majority
Government formation: Party with most MPs forms government (usually needs 326+ seats for majority)

■■■■■■■■■ DEVOLUTION: POWER TO THE NATIONS

The UK has devolved powers to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, giving them their own parliaments/assemblies.

■■■■■■■■■ SCOTLAND	■■■■■■■■■ WALES	NORTHERN IRELAND
Body: Scottish Parliament Members: 129 MSPs First Minister: John Swinney (SNP) Powers: Education, health, justice, some taxation	Body: Welsh Parliament (Senedd) Members: 60 MSs First Minister: Eluned Morgan (Labour) Powers: Education, health, some taxation	Body: Northern Ireland Assembly Members: 90 MLAs First Minister: Michelle O'Neill (Sinn Féin) Powers: Health, education, justice (power-sharing)

■■ THE SUPREME COURT

Established: 2009 (replaced Law Lords in House of Lords)
Members: 12 Justices
President: Lord Reed
Role: Highest court of appeal; reviews compatibility with human rights law
Key difference from US: Cannot strike down Acts of Parliament (Parliament is sovereign)

■ CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION (2024-2025)

General Election: July 4, 2024 - Labour won landslide victory
Government: Labour majority (412 seats out of 650)
Opposition: Conservative Party (121 seats) - worst result in party history
Key context: First Labour government since 2010; ended 14 years of Conservative rule
Brexit: UK left EU on January 31, 2020; still adapting to new relationship

■ KEY FEATURES OF THE UK SYSTEM

✓ Uncodified constitution (no single written document)
✓ Parliamentary sovereignty (Parliament has supreme legal authority)

✓ Constitutional monarchy (ceremonial monarch + elected government)
✓ Westminster system (model used by many Commonwealth countries)
✓ Bicameral Parliament (Commons and Lords)
✓ First-Past-The-Post electoral system
✓ Collective Cabinet responsibility (ministers must publicly support Cabinet decisions)
✓ Shadow Cabinet (Opposition forms alternative government structure)