

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2014 VCE Global Politics examination was completed well by most students; however, there is still some confusion regarding specific requirements in several Areas of Study.

For some students, examination techniques could be improved. Teachers and students are advised to refer to the 2013 VCE Global Politics examination report, in addition to this one. Students should not rely on rote-learned or prepared answers. Students should respond directly to short-answer questions; for example, Questions 2, 3c., 6 and 13 needed no more than three concise sentences in response.

Questions 7, 8 and 11 in Section A, and the essay question in Section B were done well. Students who were well prepared were able to structure their answers thoroughly, refer to the question asked, and write a clear and cogent response that included relevant evidence to support their answer.

Most students appear to have understood the underlying concepts, global terminology and course content. Some students did not read the instructions for the questions carefully, particularly for Question 4, where some students wrote on only one non-state actor even though the question clearly asked for two non-state actors. Questions 7 and 8 asked for different and distinct aspects of national interest, but some students wrote responses that assumed Question 8 was a continuation of Question 7 and, therefore, missed the key element of Question 8 and could not score full marks.

Similarly, Question 6 asked students for one specific use of hard power by 'your selected state'. Some students included examples from outside the Asia-Pacific region and thus could not be awarded marks; for example, China's foreign policy initiatives in Africa, Europe and/or the Caribbean, Australia's relationship with India or Sri Lanka, and the involvement of either Australia or the United States in military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The states that are included are listed on page 36 of the study design. In Question 11, a common mistake was that students explained one side of the ethical debate even though the question asked students to analyse two sides to one ethical debate.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Global actors

Question 1

Marks	0	1	Average
%	10	90	0.9

Students could have chosen to use any one of the following points for one mark:

- Historically, the role of the state has been to defend its sovereignty and promote its national interests.
- The role of the state is to be the representative of its territorial region and be a key actor in the system of international relations.
- The role of the state is to meet the needs of its citizens.

Possible actions of the state: signing treaties with other states, forming military and economic alliances, waging war, participating in peace negotiations and providing services to its citizens.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	13	40	41	2.2

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Globalisation is one of the key concepts underpinning the VCE Global Politics course. It is defined as an ‘acceleration and intensification of exchanges of goods, services, labour and capital, which promote global interdependence’. It can also act to bring various global actors together, fostering greater levels of interdependence. Yet at the same time, it can split international, national and community relationships apart.

Defining globalisation alone was not enough to score full marks. Strong students were able to explain how and why the term is relevant to global politics, with many including a specific example.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	1	99	1

There was only one acceptable answer – the United Nations or the UN.

This was the first year a cartoon was used in the examination. Most students handled this question on the cartoon very well.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	9	91	0.9

The aims of the UN are:

- To keep peace throughout the world
- To develop friendly relations among nations
- To help nations work together to improve the lives of poor people, to conquer hunger, disease and illiteracy, and to encourage respect for each other’s rights and freedoms
- To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve these goals.

The objectives of the UN include:

- peacekeeping and security
- human rights and humanitarian assistance
- social and economic development.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	14	35	47	2.3

‘Recent years’ refers to the 21st century as explained in the study design. Students tended to adopt one of two approaches to answering this question. Those who used a more holistic approach cited criticisms such as:

- insufficient funding of the UN impacts upon the breadth and depth of its work
- the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) having and often using their veto power to stop resolutions and actions from occurring
- resolutions passed by the General Assembly lacking enforcement mechanisms
- peacekeepers lacking resources and real power.

Some students used a specific case-study-based criticism such as:

- its inability to stop the ‘illegal’ US invasion of Iraq in 2003
- the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) being unable to successfully complete its work in Syria in 2012
- being unable to stem the humanitarian crises in Iraq and Afghanistan
- being unable to bring charged perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity to trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

A clear explanation of a criticism was required.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The United Nations has been criticised in its structuring of the Security Council. The permanent five members are said to represent only 29% of the global population. It is this concentration of power that allows powerful states to dictate policy; as was seen in Russia’s vetoing of UNSC Resolution 2042 and 2043, in relation to the ongoing Syrian Crisis.

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Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	2	7	19	23	26	19	4.1

Students were required to select one non-state actor from two of the five listed categories. Responses based on actors outside of these categories were not awarded marks.

Good responses went beyond a mere description of the non-state actor and what it does, providing some assessment of its influence. Influences could have been positive, negative, social, economic, political, limited in scope or large. Students who included details such as dates, specific actions and consequences were rewarded.

Responses that only described the work of the two non-state actors were unable to gain full marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Both ISIS and Amnesty International have played an increasing role in the international community. Both actors have significantly influenced public opinion. Amnesty International is an NGO that uses campaigns and lobbying against governments in order to raise awareness about the corrupt activities of states and human rights violations worldwide. Whilst Amnesty has been effective at influencing public opinion, Amnesty lacks the authority to influence and shape states' actions: This is exemplified through its campaigns regarding the ongoing Syrian Crisis: the 2010 'Your Son Is Not Here' campaign and the 'Day of Disappearance' campaign. Whilst Amnesty has been able to raise awareness on the issue, it is evident they have little influence on states actions as the crisis continue to occur.

Similarly, the terrorist movement, ISIS has had significant influence over public opinion. ISIS has attracted over 1500 foreign fighters, 164 of whom are Australians. ISIS is able to exert influence over extremists through their extensive social media reach. ISIS has, however had more influence on states than Amnesty has. The existence of ISIS has shaped states' behaviours in relation to the war on terror, and has urged states to be more proactive in their approach to combat it. For example America has provided \$1.7 billion in non-lethal aid to the Free Syrian Army to help them overcome ISIS.

Power in the Asia-Pacific region

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	20	76	1.7

The study design defines sovereignty as the 'legitimate or widely recognised ability to exercise effective control of a territory within recognised borders'. It is the primary organising principle of global politics, providing states with the authority to represent their territorial entity within the international community.

Students were not required to include an example, although many students did use one. Students should be discouraged from using the term being defined within their definition of that term.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	6	10	30	54	2.3

'Hard power' is a very important term in this Area of Study. Hard power is exercised through coercion or threatened acts of coercion primarily to influence the actions of other global actors. It is most commonly exercised by military forms of power, but it can also be exercised by economic, political and diplomatic forms, through coercion and rewards.

Students who selected a state outside the Asia-Pacific region, such as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Sri Lanka and any state in Africa, were unable to score marks.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	12	22	35	25	2.6

Each of the five states has a number of elements of their national interest stated in the study design. Students could have used any one of those elements in their response. They could also have used another element of their state's national interest that was not listed in the study design if they wished.

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From the study design, the factors that have shaped the national interest include:

- state formation
- cultural and ethnic identity
- ideology
- historical links
- relationships to foreign powers.

Students could have gone beyond these elements and looked at factors such as:

- electoral calendar/agenda
- environment
- security – economic, geopolitical, etc.

In order to answer this question, it was critical that students made a direct link between the factor and the specific element of its national interest. Many students limited their answers by just describing a factor that has shaped an element of the state's national interest.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The existence of separatist movements within China has shaped China's national interest of territorial integrity. These separatist movements are in regions such as: Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan are culturally, ethnically and or ideologically different to China's Han majority population and as a result do not wish to a part of the modern China state. However, since the heart of sovereignty lies in territorial integrity, China has responded with both political and military force such as the 2009 Urumqi Riots where Chinese forces killed approximately 197 protestors to help maintain authority over this 'restive' region and stop them from achieving independence.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	6	15	23	23	15	10	3.3

This question caused problems for some students. Students had to select one element of their state's national interest and analyse opposing views of that element. As with Question 7, there are several elements stated in the study design, but students could have used another element instead.

It was essential that students carefully examine opposing views to their selected element of the national interest. The phrase 'opposing views' implies a significant disagreement as to what the element of the national interest is or perhaps should be. These views can be either internal or external to the state. Higher-scoring responses possessed a level of depth and quality that separated them from other responses. In analysing the opposing views, students needed to account for why the opposing view existed. This linked to the factors that shape the national interest from Question 7.

The following is an example of a good response.

Within the United States of America there exists different views of various elements of the states' national interest. The differing ideologies of both Republicans and Democrats, as well as an ever changing security environment, are primarily responsible for these opposing views.

For example former President Bush, a Republican from the right of the political spectrum, advocated a more hawkish foreign policy and anti-terrorism strategy which emphasised the importance of decisive military force. This was underlined with the 45% increase in baseline defence spending during his presidency (2000–2008) and the formulation of the so-called 'Bush Doctrine' which argued that the USA had a right to use force pre-emptively to protect its people. Such a view is a reflection of the more security environment throughout the Bush Presidency especially post 9/11.

In contrast, President Obama a Democrat, traditionally on the left of the political spectrum views the use of military force as a 'last resort' measure preferring to emphasise 'multinational cooperation'. As a result the 2013 defence budget was equal to 2007 in real terms, representing a decline in military spending. That there has been no international terrorist attack on the US mainland since 2001 further explains the differing perspective of President Obama.

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Ethical issues and debates

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	12	24	59	2.4

The instructional verb was critical in this question. As it was ‘explain’ and not ‘define’, students were required to do more than just define the two terms to gain full marks. Drawing clear distinctions between ethics and justice was essential.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	10	19	29	33	2.7

In responding to this question, students had to select one ethical issue and one global actor, and identify one relevant international law/treaty. Students needed to clearly explain the response of the selected global actor to the selected international law/treaty. Responses needed to go beyond a mere description and look at the motivations of the global actor’s specific response.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	7	2	5	9	14	16	21	16	11	5

A ‘debate’ implies that there are at least two perspectives to the selected ethical issue and students must analyse two of these debates in equal depth. Students needed to clearly explain two opposite sides of the ethical debate they selected. These sides needed to be specific and well examined. Students could have analysed the ethical debate in a purely theoretical context and be awarded high marks. Many students, however, chose to examine opposing debates with the use of a specific example.

The following is an example of a good response.

In regards to the ethical issue of people movement, one argument is that all states have a moral obligation to help all people fleeing legitimate persecution, placing the national interest of states below that primary obligation. This is linked to the notion of ethics, as this argument is based on a common humanity that binds us all, necessitating states to accept more refugees. This can be described as an idealistic stand-point as it assumes states would act on humanitarian grounds, rather than just their national interest.

This aspect of the debate is reflected in the 1951 Refugees Convention, which obliges signatory states to accept all eligible refugees who are seeking asylum. Australia has signed the Refugees Convention and in 2012–13 it accepted 20,000 refugees on humanitarian grounds from UNHCR camps in the Asia-Pacific region.

The opposing view to an obligation to strangers, is that states do have an obligation to uphold their national interests on behalf of their citizens. This is best explained through the application of a realism perspective, as it involves states acting in a way that best ensures the maintenance of their security. For example Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugees Convention, choosing instead to support their national interest unilaterally. This can be seen through actions such as imprisoning refugees and so-called people smugglers. Such action has been justified by Indonesian officials as measures it must take to best protect their own citizens, many of whom experience severe economic hardships on a regular basis.

Crises and responses

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	20	71	1.6

The study design defines utility of violence as violence that is ‘employed as a means of achieving one’s political objectives’. The violence is ‘purposeful and organised’. Increasingly, utility of violence is not only perpetrated by states but by many non-state actors.

Students were not required to include an example, although many students did use one. Students are discouraged from writing ‘circular definitions’, where the term being defined is used within the definition.

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Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	18	16	29	37	1.9

Crisis diplomacy involves negotiations between relevant actors in the global political arena in response to a crisis. The example selected needed to be from the 21st century and must have related to a specific crisis from the four listed in the study design; for example, current international effort to combat the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was not a suitable example. Additionally, a scheduled meeting (for example, a meeting of the UN General Assembly) is not an example of crisis diplomacy. Responses needed to go beyond a definition of crisis diplomacy and should have been supported with an example. Students were also required to explain why crisis diplomacy was needed and/or how it was applied.

The following examples could have been used:

- responses to the ongoing Syrian crisis, including the destruction of chemical weapons (2013–2014)
- NATO and EU meetings to respond to the crisis in eastern Ukraine (2014)
- actions to halt the rise and actions of ISIS/ISIL in Syria and Iraq (2014)
- G8 and G20 meetings in response to the impacts of the Global Financial Crisis (2007–2008).

Questions 14 and 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	9	13	23	23	19	2.9

Question 14

In this question, students had to make specific reference to the issue they selected. It was critical that they showed the consequences of that issue for a global crisis; for example, how the notion of a ‘just war’ has an impact on intrastate and interstate conflict.

The following is an example of a good response.

A ‘just war’ refers to any war that is morally or theologically justified (i.e. for a just cause or deemed harmful by a legal authority). The concept seeks to promote the peaceful restoration of conflicts and the use of force under special circumstances (as a last resort, if there is no reasonable chance of success). For a war to continue to be considered just, non-combatants must not be targeted, international conventions must be adhered to and the level of force employed must be proportionate. In this regard, the promotion of a ‘just war’ has the potential for either accelerating the resolution of a global crisis or inadvertently exacerbating it.

In the case of the Libyan civil war, the UN Security Council authorised a NATO-led campaign based on clear evidence that the Gaddafi regime was committing mass human rights violations against its own citizens (actions ultimately amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity). Under the notion of a ‘just war’ the foreign intervention did bring the conflict to a conclusion in favour of the Libyan rebels, but others argued that the actions of the coalition members were unjust.

The original aim of the armed intervention seemed to shift from stopping human rights abuses to that of regime change (i.e. mission creep with states advocating the success of the supposed ‘just war’ hinging on whether Gaddafi would remain in power or not), thus the subsequent change in government facilitated by the actions of other states arguably has left Libya and consequently its people in a more vulnerable position than perhaps it was in prior to the NATO-led intervention.

Question 15

Students needed to select a global crisis that was different from the one they used in Question 14. In responding to this question, it was critical that students were able to examine the effect of a selected challenge on the resolution of that crisis. Students could have answered this question in a purely theoretical manner and be highly rewarded. The effect of the challenge on the crisis did not necessarily have to be negative.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Non-state terrorism solutions have been challenged by globalisation. The rising presence of Islamic State (ISIS) and the extent to which its propaganda can reach many of its supporters has limited a state’s ability to censor it. This has been observed by the several public executions commencing with James Foley on August 19 2014. The rapid spread of such barbaric acts was made possible via the use of social media platforms on the internet and the ability of ISIS to generate, what The Age newspaper estimates to be \$400 million in assets, some of which has been raised by its supporters around the world.

This level of power and influence amassed by ISIS is a direct consequence of globalisation, has allowed ISIS and its supporters to enhance their influence significantly and to allow it to undermine counter terrorism measures in states such as Australia,

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where the government has conceded that several hundred young Australians have travelled overseas to join ISIS and its global jihad in Iraq and Syria.

Section B – Essay

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4
%	2	22	32	16	29

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	5	4	5	6	8	9	11	10	8	8	7	3	2	12.5

Many students constructively used essay plans to help them structure their essay. This is an excellent tool as it helped students collect their thoughts, consider the approach they will adopt and identify the key knowledge elements they want to carefully discuss in each paragraph.

The highest-scoring essays addressed the topic/contention directly in their introduction, were written with precise sentences and used the specific language of the study design. These essays also supported analysis and discussion with appropriate examples and relevant evidence. The best essays argued a position and discussed issues for and against the prompt.

To score full marks, students needed to state a position, broadly agreeing or disagreeing with the prompt. Students also needed to arrive at a reasoned conclusion through a discussion of both sides of the prompt.

Question 1

Students were required to discuss the impact of various global actors on states that have been the traditional players in the global political arena. Some students chose to examine only one state; this approach could have restricted their ability to discuss the topic. Other students mentioned several states in their response.

The essay needed to include an analysis of several global actors such as:

- institutions of global governance: UN, ICC, WTO, IMF, Arab League, G20, ASEAN, NATO, etc.
- non-state actors, both violent and non-violent organisations
- transnational corporations (TNCs).

Students had to discuss the ways other global actor(s) has limited the power of the state(s). Common examples used by students included:

- UNSC resolution 1973 authorising ‘no-fly zones’ over Libya
- Arab League, EU and UN economic sanctions
- the economic and political power and influence of TNCs over states
- terrorist organisations threatening the sovereignty of states (for example, ISIS controlling some 40 per cent of Iraqi territory).

Responses that were purely descriptive could not be awarded high marks.

The following is an example of a good introduction and conclusion for this topic.

In the Westphalian system, states are the principal building blocks of the international arena. As such Institutions of Global Governance such as the UN must respect the sovereignty of states in achieving its aims. Participation in international laws and treaties is also totally at a state’s discretion, meaning institutions such as the International Criminal Court may lack force in achieving its aims. IGGs are also deprived of the funding and rights that states wield. However, the power of the state has been eroded somewhat by non-state actors. TNCs for example, hold tremendous power in economic terms. As organisations with no obligations to citizens, these non-state actions have a degree of free reign in terms of their operations...

Overall whilst the state has seen aspects of its power diminished in the 21st century, it still maintains a core authority in the international system. IGGs have been able to challenge the power of the state due to their founding notion. In addition, source international laws are deprived of powerful state support, rendering them incapable of achieving their aims in the face of state power. In spite of all this, source non-state actors have managed to achieve certain economic and coercive power over aspects of sovereignty. Yet they still lack the authority and legitimacy of states, suggesting that states remain the most effective global actors.

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Question 2

Question 2 was the most popular choice in Section B. This question required specific information as it identified economic power as the focus of the essay. Students needed to identify the qualities and features of the economic power of the state being used. This power needed to be quantified in the form of evidence such as statistical data.

Applications of economic power include the use of trade barriers, the provision of loans, financial aid, foreign aid (ODA), supporting or ignoring economic sanctions and the role of the selected state in a recognised global economic organisation such as the IMF, WTO, G8, G20, ASEAN, etc. Students also needed to identify and examine more than one element of the state's national interest.

Some students chose to compare the state's economic power to another form of power, such as diplomatic or military. This form of assessment was a very valid mechanism and was rewarded, provided economic power was the focus of the response.

The following is an example of a good introduction and conclusion for this topic.

China has used its economic power relatively effectively in pursuit of their national interests of 'territorial integrity', 'economic development' (of a stable GDP growth rate of 7.7%), 'peaceful rise' and a positive perception in their regional role. Through the use of trade, investment and aid, China has also undermined the achievement of some of their aims (which can be viewed as not as important), overall, their execution of economic power has been highly beneficial in achieving its interests.

China's use of its economic power through trade, aid and investment has been beneficial and detrimental to their national interests of territorial integrity, economic development, a peaceful rise and a positive perception in their regional role. However, it can be argued that China has been more successful than unsuccessful as the achievement of some interests are of more importance than others, and therefore through China's undermining of their positive perception via economic power, they have still been highly effective when using their economic power.

Question 3

This question was the least popular of the four essay topics. Students who selected this topic tackled it by looking at how particular states have worked towards or against the resolution of a specific ethical issue and how the national interests of states influenced their responses to ethical issues.

Students had to make specific reference to how the national interests of states have challenged (or not challenged) the resolution of an ethical issue. For example:

- security interests limit resolution of arms control, human rights (PRISM, Guantanamo Bay), accepting a greater number of refugees (42 refugees with adverse ASIO reports)
- economic interests limit resolution of sustainable development, human rights (sweatshops in developing states, Iranian financial support to Syria propagates the conflict and human rights abuses), arms control (power and economic wealth of arms industry), UNHCR funding shortfalls limit the work of the organisation.

Students could have based their responses on examples such as the following:

- many treaties have no effective enforcement mechanisms, so states may choose to act or not act without any real threat to their national interests (for example, Kenya's refusal to arrest President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan [ICC warrant])
- state's approach in international forums, such as the UN, seen through the use of veto power by the permanent five members (P5) at the UNSC (for example, China and Russia vetoing three UNSC resolutions on Syria to protect economic interests).

Students looked at how the work of non-state actors, such as the UNHCR or other non-government organisations, is limited by the national interests of states. In assessing the role of a state, students needed to explain the ways that national interest has contributed or not contributed to the resolution of an ethical issue.

The following is an example of a good introduction and conclusion for this topic.

In a world more interconnected than ever before, the ethical issue of human rights has become a prevalent one that requires international cooperation for effective resolution. The sovereignty and national interests of states, however, greatly limits the achievement of universal human rights. The realist perspective adopted by most states means that states value their own national interests over the security of others, hence challenging the cosmopolitan perspective which believes there is a universality in human rights for all. Furthermore, the realist perspective adopted by some religious states also poses a limitation to the

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resolution of the issue of human rights, once again challenging the cosmopolitan perspective. Finally, cultural relativism of different states contradicts human rights, restricting the international community's ability to effectively resolve the issue.

Conclusively, it is evident that although there are different perspectives on human rights held by states worldwide, many states will continue to act to achieve national interests and uphold their own views before they decide to assist the international human rights. Thus, as a result of differing perspectives, the issue of human rights continues to be one that is far from resolution.

Question 4

This question was the second most popular topic and it was also a challenging one because of its broad scope. Writing about one example within the crisis limited the student's ability to clearly discuss the importance of the causes to the nature of that specific crisis.

High-scoring responses featured a number of different examples and, therefore, could argue that causes do not always shape the crisis. Students needed to clearly link the causes, either short-term or long-term, with the particular characteristics that the crisis has and perhaps state why this crisis is difficult to resolve given its causes.

Students who wrote on intra and interstate conflict or state and non-state terrorism had to refer to both aspects within their essay. While more emphasis could have been given to one or the other, students who discussed only one aspect could not receive full marks.

The following is an example of a good introduction for this topic.

While global crises such as terrorism are indeed shaped by the politicisation of identity, extremist religious ideology are too often perpetrated by threats to the power of those in authority. Yet it would be remiss to conclude that the causes of terrorism are the only determinant in shaping this crisis.

Overall, state terrorism is generally a result of internal factors such as threats to those in power and the national interest of states. In addition, non-state terrorism and state terrorism are both facilitated by identity politics. Notable, it is the precise characteristic that states there crisis and increases the difficulty in resolving them.