2022 VCE Global Politics external assessment report

General comments

The 2022 VCE Global Politics written examination was based on the current VCE Australian and Global Politics Study Design *2018–2023*. The examination paper had a spread of questions requiring a good range of thinking skills. Many of the questions required students to discuss or analyse key concepts, and then to apply their knowledge, which most students managed to do consistently.

The following advice addresses some of the key skills assessed in the 2022 examination.

* Students should only respond to the task word in the question. This is required to get full marks and not doing so has the potential to waste time and impact the quality of answers later on in the examination paper.
* Careful reading of questions is required to identify the different elements of each question, as in, for example, Section A Questions 4a. and 8a.
* Student should be aware that an analysis or a discussion are different from an explanation:
* some students did not respond with an analysis to Question 7 in Section A. Words such as ‘moreover’, ‘therefore’, ‘in contrast’ and/or ‘this can be seen’ can be used to demonstrate an analysis as opposed to an explanation.
* many questions, including the essay topics in Section B, required a discussion, but some students responded with an explanation. A discussion is more than an explanation; it is a multi-faceted response that considers limitations, restrictions, weaknesses, circumstances, or potential reforms, depending on the question asked. Words such as ‘however’, ‘a limitation’, ‘although’, ‘while’ and ‘despite’ can be used to demonstrate a discussion.

The following advice is about general examination technique:

* Students may write in the blank space below the answer lines, but not outside the black margins. If students continued their responses at the end of the booklet, they needed to correctly state at the end of their response that it is continued (for example, by writing ‘PTO’) and label the response at the end of the booklet (for example, by writing ‘Section A, Q1a. cont’d’). Improper/no labelling can risk a student’s continued response not being identified. Students should not use asterisks, stars, acronyms (other than PTO) or other symbols to label their responses.
* Students are encouraged to write in blue or black pen and avoid writing in pencil. They should ensure that their responses are legible.
* Paragraphing is important for longer responses, including the essay in Section B.
* Students are strongly encouraged to signpost their approach in the introduction of their essay with words or phrases to indicate the type of argument they are making.
* Students are encouraged to attempt every question, even if they are unsure about what to write. A good use of reading time is to try and break down those questions that may not seem clear-cut or obvious by focusing on the key words. This helps students to access the question and possibly gain some marks.

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, resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 9 | 28 | 63 | 1.5 |

Students needed to demonstrate that they clearly understood the distinction between a state and a nation. Many students chose to provide an example to show differences, but this was not required. Students, however, did need to include a specific difference between the terms.

For example, states have recognised sovereignty – defined borders, recognised government, legitimate state status, and participation in intergovernmental organisations (IGOs). Students need to avoid just providing a single statement or sentence as it does not give them access to both marks.

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

A nation differs from a state in the aspect that a nation doesn’t have recognised sovereignty or necessarily a permanent population or defined territory, such as the Catalan nation. In comparison, a state does have recognised sovereignty to represent itself to the global community with the ability to defend and self-determine without intervention, with a permanent population and defined territory, such as the state of Spain.

Question 2a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 5 | 22 | 46 | 28 | 2.0 |

Generally students were able to clearly identify an appropriate Transnational Corporation (TNC) in their response (as opposed to an IGO or a non-state actor [NSA]). However, many students seemed to confuse the role of a TNC with its aims; for example, some students wrote about a TNC’s aims but endeavoured to make the aim appear to be a role. The actions/activities needed to be articulated and a specific example given.

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

The role of Samsung is to produce and sell high quality and cheap products such as the Galaxy Flip 3 phone for its consumers and customers. Samsung would therefore conduct activities such as finding and employing a supply chain to contribute goods for its products such as cobalt, allowing Samsung to amass approximately 2,458 suppliers globally while providing employment to 308,000 people. Additionally, Samsung may also boost host states economy through their employment opportunities. Hence, in global politics, Samsung acts as an innovator to drive progress for its customers and employees globally.

Question 2b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 7 | 8 | 18 | 27 | 24 | 15 | 3.0 |

In several responses to this question, which was also about TNCs, students wrote about a second or unrelated TNC to the TNC they used in Question 2a. The question made no specific reference about using a different TNC since the study design only requires students to be familiar with one TNC. In the question, the term exploitation could be considered as: a challenge to state sovereignty, a violation of financial, environmental and human rights laws, lobbying and corruption. The actions examined needed to be specific and fall within the designated 10-year period. Students may have used multiple examples of exploitation if they wanted to. Students needed to clearly engage with the word ‘exploitative’. Simply being a ‘bad’ TNC isn’t evidence of exploitation, unless it is linked to the idea that the TNC is less accountable in states that rely on their economic activity for benefits.

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

Transnational corporations such as Samsung can be exploitative of host states through their supply chain. Samsung has been considered by the international media to have ‘duped and exploited’ (The Guardian 2016) its supply chain workers in Malaysia who were forced to work up to 14 hours on their feet. By using its economic leverage, as a company that made over $15.2 trillion in operating profit in 2019 alone, Samsung has become a predator for sourcing cheap labour in developing states such as Malaysia, who also have lax labour rights and regulations. Despite its ability to protect and advance the workers conditions, Samsung have covered up their economic power in order to maximise its profits and return dividends to its shareholders. Hence TNCs can be considered exploitative of host states.

Question 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 5 | 5 | 16 | 26 | 28 | 19 | 3.3 |

The United Nations (UN) is a very significant Intergovernmental Organisation (IGO) that underpins many other concepts in the study design. This question asked students to clearly identify and then discuss two of its specific aims. The intent of the stated aim must be clearly expressed; it cannot be an aim(s) that has been made up.

UN aims include maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among states; promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights; harmonising the actions of states; upholding international law. Students could have paraphrased the aims, provided the intent of the aim was clearly communicated. In discussing the effectiveness of the UN, examples were used by nearly all students, including Syria, Russia vs. Ukraine, the Paris Climate Accord, North Korea and nuclear weapons. The question asked for a discussion, but some students either didn’t do it or did it in a safe, simplistic response that didn’t clearly demonstrate knowledge.

A ‘discuss’ question requires balance in the response; some students chose to use a straightforward approach to articulate how one aim was achieved by the UN, while the second aim wasn’t achieved by the UN.

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

The UN has been somewhat effective in achieving one of its aims to maintain international peace and security through its role of placing economic sanctions. For example, the UN Security Council agreed to place sanctions for North Korea’s intentional illegal use of ballistic missile territory over northern Japan such as a ban on weapons exports and a limit on oil imports in 2018 to prevent anymore dangerous weapons development. Despite this the UN was unable to stop or punish North Korea as they ‘flaunt[ed]’ the economic sanctions ‘caught red handed’ (2018 ABC) for their 30 international water transfers of oil between China and north Korea. Moreover, the UN has also been somewhat effective in achieving its aim to facilitate peaceful relations and cooperation between states in its role to pass resolutions. Russia has constantly used its veto power to halt any investigation or condemnations into Syria’s use of chemical weapons (12 vetoes in total), despite the other 14 UNSC members agreeing on such draft resolutions. However, the UN has sometimes enabled cooperation such as when the UNSC unanimously voted in favour for a 30-day ceasefire in Syria in 2018 for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Therefore, overall, the UN has been somewhat effective in achieving two of its aims, but limited in its lack of enforcement mechanisms.

Question 4a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 22 | 30 | 27 | 21 | 1.5 |

Question 4 focused on Unit 3, area of study 2. Idealism may be defined as influencing a policy by ideological principle alone, rather than pragmatism. Diplomacy is described as a foreign policy instrument of a state that involves negotiation of some kind and which may be utilised through formal channels, such as an ambassador, through its conduct in intergovernmental organisations and from meetings and speeches made by leaders of states or through informal channels such as publicly denouncing or criticising another state – examples may come from any of these actions.

Students needed to choose only one of the five listed states in the Asia-Pacific region in their responses. Idealism could be shown through a lack of willingness to negotiate or compromise. Appropriate examples of diplomacy involved references to specific diplomatic discussions. Responses that used terms such as Checkbook/Mask/Panda/Vaccine Diplomacy could not access all the marks in this question unless they were also specifically linked to negotiations between states.

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

United States of America

Idealism has influenced the US’ use of diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument in the pursuit of international standing. This was evident when Biden cited ideological views and values such as the fact that climate change responses were a ‘moral obligation’ and it would be an ‘opportunity’ to ‘hopefully lead global efforts’ in climate change, under American exceptionalism as the ideology. Biden was influenced by this to then use diplomacy to rejoin the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement in 2021, to host the leaders Climate summit in 2021 and participate in COP26 to pledge a 50% cut in emissions by the US.

Question 4b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 13 | 20 | 25 | 25 | 17 | 2.1 |

National security can be described as the national interest of a state to ensure it maintains its sovereignty. It also includes other concepts of security, such as energy, resource, economic and environmental, which are all necessary for a state to maintain sovereignty. Some students went on to refer to security as incorporating the protection of a state’s borders from threats and intruders.

Students should be aware that just because a state trades to pursue economic gain, it does not necessarily constitute the concept of trade as a foreign policy instrument (FPI). Therefore students were required to analyse a specific trade action, such as the signing of a bilateral or a multilateral trade agreement, or the imposition of retaliatory trade restrictions such as controls or tariffs.

Economic security also needed to be referenced in relation to national security, and students had to clearly explain the link. Linking the specific action to trade was challenging for some students who wrote in very broad general terms but made no precise or specific connection between trade and national security.

General arguments about a trade agreement between states making conflict between them less likely was a limited approach if not explored in depth.

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

*Trade has been utilised by China within the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) in 2013 with Taiwan, in order to promote the renegade islands economic dependence to the Mainland, in order to increase China's effective control over its borders and prevent threats of the three forbidden forces; separatism, extremism and terrorism. As since 1991, $188bn has been invested from Taiwan to the mainland and upwards of 42% of adults within Taiwan are been increasing economic ties with the mainland (Pew Research). China's efforts have pursued the attempt in achieving national security through the use of trade.*

Question 4c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 5 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 18 | 17 | 17 | 12 | 7 | 4.6 |

The international standing of a state is an important national interest that can influence the power a state has in global politics. Other national interests impact on international standing as well as a state’s role and recognition in intergovernmental organisations, for example, as being a proponent/champion of international law. If a state has an unfavourable international standing, it may threaten elements of its sovereignty.

Some students struggled with the scope of this question as they chose to evaluate their state’s international standing through its relationship with just one other actor. Other students assessed the international standing of their chosen state through responses from two or more global actors, so increasing the opportunity to gain more marks.

Valid measurements/indicators of a state’s international standing included quotes of praise/criticism from IGOs, NSAs (like Amnesty International), regional groupings (like the EU) or multiple states (such as joint statements from Western governments), or collective action by multiple states to endorse/criticise the state, such as votes in the UN or membership of multilateral bodies (such as the Belt and Road Initiative).

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

The US has been somewhat successful in achieving international standing. During Trump’s administration, he prioritised US economy and potential loss of 27 million jobs to influence his pragmatic decision to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Stating that it was a ‘draconian’ deal, Trump demonstrated an American First ideology at the detriment of positive international standing. The US were lambasted by the international community, a German tabloid wrote ‘Earth to Trump = Fxxk you’, while the UN was ‘deeply disappointed’ by Trump’s decision, especially as the US were the second largest emitter in the world and also cancelled their pledge to donate $3 billion to the Green Climate Fund under the Paris Climate Agreement. However, Biden’s action to uphold ideological values and restore the US’ negative international standing into a more positive one was more successful in achieving international standing than Trump’s actions. Biden used American exceptionalism and a desire to ‘hopefully lead global efforts’ (Biden, 2021) in the climate change ‘moral obligation’ to re-enter the Paris Climate Agreement in 2021. It was successful in being praised by the global community with the UN ‘warmly welcoming’ the US and the EU Commission ‘looking forward’ to the US’ contribution to climate change efforts. However, even Biden’s actions were unable to truly restore the US’ international standing as the UN Secretary General cautioned that ‘it [has] a long way to go’ in climate change even with US participation efforts of a 50% cut in emissions and $1.2 trillion towards these goals. Ultimately the US has not been very effective in achieving international standing, especially as so many were disillusioned towards American values when Trump was in power in 2016-2020.

Question 5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 7 | 12 | 33 | 49 | 2.2 |

In this question students needed to examine how the key concept of realism relates to the study of global politics.

Students may have related the concept to global politics by discussing how an actor violates international law, pursues its own interests**,** goes against specific articles of lawor lacks cooperation with global agreements.

Realism can be defined as involving states (and other global actors) prioritising their own specific interests and needs over those of the global community. Typically, this means a global actor ignores or disregards international conventions or norms that it believes no longer suits its own concerns and priorities.

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

Realism is a school of thought where states and other global actors prioritise specific objectives over the common needs of the global community. Realism relates to global politics as each global actor will always come to a point where its national interests must be prioritised over goals of the global community in order to maintain power, or for states, maintain sovereignty. In Bolivia’s case, they demonstrated realism over the common goals of children’s rights because their economic challenges were more important to protect their citizens and maintain sovereignty. They chose to lower the working [age] from 14 to 10 against international standards as a plan to ‘eradicate extreme poverty by 2025’ (Bolivia’s Social and Labour Ministers 2016). Thus realism can undermine cosmopolitanism but exists as each global actor has different goals and ethical issues.

Question 6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 6 | 9 | 16 | 26 | 25 | 18 | 3.1 |

Cosmopolitanism is said to reflect a desire among a number of global actors to cooperate so as to reach common goals and outcomes in order to meet challenges that are presented to all members of the global community, so called ‘Third-Agenda Issues’. Typically, this means a global actor looks to uphold or support recognised international rules and conventions, through laws or norms that it believes are very important for all societies to uphold and champion. To cosmopolitanists, all humans are equal and should be treated equally and all global actors should therefore act with this specific motivation.

Some potential motivations for not accepting cosmopolitanism could include cultural/religious relativism, economic limitations, economic priorities, national interests, or substantial security demands. Many students understood that cosmopolitanism lacks universality, but some were not able to clearly explain why.

Examples of actions that are not cosmopolitan may be identified through a breach of relevant articles of identified international law/s.

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

The cosmopolitan perspective is not accepted universally because realist perspectives exist. While goals of the international community may be in the majority, certain states have their own unique struggles and issues that can hinder the adoption of a cosmopolitan perspective. For example, Saudi Arabia has their own cultural factors that may not align with human rights especially for women in international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against all Women, but instead the articles in a treaty may go against the ‘norm of Islamic law’ (Saudi Kingdom). Moreover, state security can also challenge the cosmopolitan perspective of international security. North Korea rejects the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to maintain its existence as a regime and maintain its sovereignty by developing nuclear weapons as a ‘deterrent’ (Kim Jong Un 2017) against the US’ possible attack. Thus, the cosmopolitan perspective is not universally accepted because states may prioritise their cultural identity or survival and right to self defence over international community views.

Question 7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 6 | 6 | 14 | 20 | 24 | 17 | 13 | 3.5 |

Students were required to demonstrate that the elements of both sides of the ethical debate are clearly understood. They could then demonstrate their understanding by referencing specific articles from relevant international law(s) that are either being upheld/pursued (cosmopolitan) or being breached/ignored (realist).

Students also needed to balance their response across both perspectives and not assume that one side does not require detailed explanation or evidence. They also needed to be more precise in attributing ethical perspectives to specific actors. An international law in and of itself is not a specific actor, though this could be linked to the United Nation’s implementation/enforcement of its articles in the international community.

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

Ethical issue: Human rights  
Debate: Economic challenges to the universality of human rights

The Ivory Coast adopted a cosmopolitan perspective in this debate recognising that the universality of human rights should prevail over economic challenges such as extreme poverty. The Ivory Coast’s Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that upholding children’s rights was a ‘moral obligation’ and thus the reason why the Ivory Coast adopted a Revised Hazardous Work List, new regulations or Light Work legislation and pledged $32 million in order to uphold its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As opposed to this, Bolivia had a realist perspective in this debate prioritising its economic challenges and high poverty levels before tackling children’s rights. ‘Bolivia (were) making laws for Bolivians’ and that it was part of a plan to ‘eradicate extreme poverty by 2025’. (Bolivia’s Social and Labour Minister 2016). Thus while Bolivia also ratified the UNHCR, it noted that such children’s rights could not exist unless extreme poverty was eliminated across Bolivia.

Question 8a.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 38 | 27 | 35 | 1.0 |

Several students struggled with this question because the wording of the question prompted them to focus on the nature of globalisation as a cause of a global crisis. However, a closer and perhaps slower reading of the question would have allowed those students to see that in fact globalisation, a key term in the study design, is not the cause. Rather, their focus needed to be on how globalisation has influenced or contributed to a specific cause of a crisis. A specific cause of a global crisis can be outside the 10-year time frame used in the subject. Responses that described only how globalisation exacerbated the crisis weren’t effective as they were not relating it to the specific cause of the crisis.

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

Climate Change

Globalisation has contributed to the cause of climate change within global politics, as the intensification of labour, goods, services, and capital has created agricultural demand, which encourages TNCs to increase their polluting manufacturing processes to allow for demand. For example, JBS Meats which is responsible for $8.4 billion worth of exports in 2019 caused 790,000 fires in the Amazon and to the manufacturing processes, ultimately damaging an environment responsible for 10% of carbon emission absorption.

Question 8b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 5 | 6 | 12 | 22 | 25 | 19 | 11 | 3.6 |

Many students started their responses by demonstrating a clear understanding of the key term ‘international cooperation’. However, the key phrase in the question was ‘to what extent’, which implies an evaluative/ comparative comment is required in the response. Reference to other key terms, such as multilateralism, crisis diplomacy, unilateralism and realism, may have provided a comparative/counterpoint comment.

The question wasn’t answered as precisely as it should have been. Only some students clearly demonstrated nuance or subtlety in their responses, while far too many wrote a ‘black and white’ response full of generalisations and lacking specific evidence. Responses with commentaries about international cooperation being either effective or not effective showed some specific understanding but struggled to access all marks.

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

Climate Change

International cooperation has been evident to a significant extent in attempting to remove climate change. This is evident as 196 countries have pledged to the Paris Climate Agreement 2015, demonstrating a willingness of the global community to interact and collaborate with each other in order to achieve the common goal of reducing emissions to below two degrees. Thus further, evident in the Beyond Oil and Gas Agreement 2020, as through it, in December 2021 Denmark pledged to end all licencing of oil and gas explorations in the North Sea. Thus, demonstrating states commitment to cooperate to resolve climate change. Yet there are examples of countries acting in a realist manner, for example Saudi Arabia in 2017 claimed they would slow down their oil subsidy phase out to ‘enhance the economy’. Thus, demonstrating that not all states are fully cooperative in attempting to resolve climate change. Yet ultimately, international cooperation has been highly prevalent in attempting to achieve a resolution to climate change.

Question 9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 21 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 4.0 |

Responses to this question needed to specifically reference a global crisis different to that used in Question 8b. Students then needed to reference two specific key aspects from those listed on pages 36 and 37 of the study design.

Some students did not seem to have a comprehensive understanding of the specific aspects listed for each of the global crises. A number of students were aware of one aspect, but not many knew two.

Less-prepared students launched into long, detailed narratives about the selected crisis, but did not make any specific reference to a key aspect.

Some students made connections to the question, however, and did gain some reasonable marks for their efforts. Effective analysis goes beyond a narrative related to the chosen aspect. Students needed to be more sophisticated in their analyses by carefully considering the similarities/differences/relationships between the two selected aspects or to then perhaps consider their relative impact upon the crisis (is one more relevant/impactful/harder to resolve?).

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

Armed Conflict

One key aspect of the Ukraine crisis (Feb 2022) is intervention. Intervention is Putin’s way of justifying the means to why he invaded. Prefacing that attack on Ukraine is due to self-determination evoking Article 1 of the UN Charter and self defence evoking Article 51. Putin claims Russia has a right to invade Ukraine as ‘the Donbas people asked for help’. Claiming the separatist groups were seeking self-determination and are defending the Donbas people. This is of significant importance to the crisis as it demonstrates Russia’s perspective on intervening in Ukraine, thus enabling the global community to find a solution to the problem based on the knowledge of Putin’s intentions.

Another key aspect to the global crisis in Ukraine is war as an instrument of state policy. As Putin’s actions align with the famous Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz’s principle that ‘war is a state instrument other than political means’ thus inferring that war is an instrument that states can utilise to achieve its national security goals. Alex Deep a writer on Small Wars Journal explained in 2015 how Russia is using war as an instrument as a last resort of the ‘direct tweet’ of Ukraine if Russia were to ‘lose’ Ukraine to Europe. This key aspect is relevant to justifying Russia’s thoughts on the invasion of Ukraine. Allowing the global community to understand Russia’s use of war as a means of last resort to protect its national security.

Section B

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question completed | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| % | 1 | 21 | 33 | 15 | 30 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Average |
| % | 2 | 0.5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 12.0 |

Many students chose to complete a rough plan of their essay in their Question and Answer book, and this seemed to serve them well. For example, students with plans tended to organise their thoughts more clearly, had clear links between their arguments and were able to maintain a coherent argument throughout the essay. The presence of a clear introduction is crucial, and introductions should outline the student’s main contention, in addition to referencing the ideas they intend to use to support that argument.

In general, responses that scored highly were able to develop a clear contention in response to the question that the student would circle back to after each main argument. This is an effective way of ensuring students stay focused on the question and a central idea/theme is consistent throughout.

Further points for students to think about for writing higher-scoring essays:

* Have I correctly engaged with the key terms in the question?
* How can I link my arguments so that, rather than be disparate, they can all build towards an overall complete and coherent conclusion?
* Have I used recent and relevant examples to support all my assertions?
* Have I ensured the integrity of my quotes and sources, and analysed their value for my argument?

Responses that did not score well tended to use introductions to provide background to the topic, rather than outline a direction for their argument. Furthermore, these responses often highlighted a limited grasp of key course concepts, or a lack of willingness to engage with those concepts that the question specifically asked for. Some students appear to be most comfortable memorising an essay and writing it, with very few alterations, regardless of the question on the paper. Such responses receive very limited marks.

Overall, good essay-writing technique is necessary to be able to present a clear and measured discussion of various perspectives entailed by the question. Responses that scored highly were able to engage with the topic in its entirety, develop a reasoned and nuanced position, and express themselves clearly using relevant and specific evidence.

Question 1

This question was the third most popular essay choice. Students were asked to examine the extent to which globalisation has impacted states being the central actors in global politics. As the question was very broad in its scope students could have examined any type of global actor they had studied this year. However, the central focus of the response needed to demonstrate a precise and detailed understanding of how globalisation had impacted the role of states. States must be referenced directly in every argument and be the basis of evaluation. Students should have also contextualised what a central actor is, and this could have been done via the concepts of sovereignty or power.

Importantly, students were required to examine the extent to which globalisation had been a factor, and not just provide a simple narrative discussion of the power of states compared to other global actors.

The following is the introduction from a high-scoring response.

Globalisation has allowed for actors other than states to gain considerable power, as the acceleration and intensification of trade, technology and communication strengthens them. As a result, transnational corporations, intergovernmental organisations, and non-state actors have moved closer to centre stage. Nevertheless, despite this growing power, states are still the central actor in global politics.

Question 2

This question was the most popular essay choice, indicating that power is a concept that students are very engaged with. Students needed to show a clear understanding of what hard and soft power are, and the differences between them, hard power being coercion and incentive, soft power being attraction, with the absence of incentive or coercion. Students needed to also include an evaluation of at least two national interests pursued by the state.

Students demonstrated an understanding of hard power, but consistently described soft power incorrectly. Note that soft power is usually diplomatic or cultural. Hard power is most commonly exercised through diplomatic, military and/or economic forms.

Some students spent too much time writing about the use of power but not enough time considering the source of the power for the state, which would have deepened the analysis/evaluation.

The following is the introduction from a high-scoring response.

In the 21st century, China has had limited effectiveness in using purely hard power (consisting of coercion and incentive to influence others) or purely soft power (attraction and persuasion) to influence other global actors to achieve its national interests. Whilst soft power is used skilfully by China to creatively pursue national security domestically, this attraction is not effective internationally in achieving China’s international standing due to the lack of substance behind it. On the other end of the spectrum, while China has used hard power effectively in achieving economic prosperity through the traditional coercion of the military, this aggressive style undermines China’s national security. When the two types of power, are combined, this most effectively achieves national interests of regional relationships that balances coercion and force with enough attractive qualities.

Question 3

This was the least popular essay choice on this year’s exam. Students were asked to reference at least one international law per ethical issue studied this year and to then examine the extent that the chosen law has been successful in pursuing justice. Justice is a key term in the course and implies that ethics have been breached and there is a need for punishment and/or compensation.

Students could have addressed the pursuit of justice in several ways, so there was a good deal of scope in how the question could be analysed. Students needed to assess whether international laws can adequately achieve justice. Some essays were one-sided in their approach, critiquing the limits of international law but lacking the balance the topic required.

Unfortunately, some students wrote almost exclusively about relevant international laws but did not engage with the concept of justice in their response and did not fulfil the elements of the topic; they were unable to access the full range of marks available.

The following is the introduction from a high-scoring response.

International laws have been ineffective at pursuing compensation and or punishment when human rights or arms control are breached to a significant extent. Although international laws encourage states to pursue justice when they are breached, ultimately realist perspectives undermine their ability to be effective in achieving it. Evident through the Genocide Convention’s inability to prohibit genocide in China, the ICCPR’s ineffectiveness in punishing China from its restricting of freedoms, as well as the Non-Proliferation Treaty’s failure to stop North Korea’s use of nuclear weapons.

Question 4

This essay topic was the second most popular on this year’s exam. Students were asked to take a position on the impact of states’ national interests preventing the effective resolution of two global crises. Students had to choose from the global crises stated in the study design, and could not use two case studies of one crisis, for example armed conflict. They also needed to reference more than one state in their essay. The national interests of states, however, were not restricted to the four interests stated in Unit 3.2 of the study design.

Many students effectively used several key terms (crisis diplomacy, international cooperation, globalisation and unilateralism) in their responses which demonstrated a detailed level of understanding that underpinned their approach.

The following is the introduction from a high-scoring response.

The maintenance of sovereignty and the achievement of national interests are the key goals of every state. However, these aspects can impede on effective resolutions to crises around the world. Ultimately, global crises have little chance of being resolved as states prioritise their national interests rather than global cooperation to ensure peace and survival. The interests of the Assad regime in Syria have greatly exacerbated the civil conflict, while Russian intervention has also prevented any effective resolution in the global crises armed conflict. Meanwhile, the interests of Australia have meant combatting the climate change crisis has been limited. Therefore, as self-interests prevail, it maybe impossible to effectively resolve any crisis in the 21st century.