

2018 VCE Global Politics examination report

General comments

The 2018 Global Politics examination was the first examination for the revised *VCE Australian and Global Politics Study Design 2018–2022*. Overall, the examination was well handled by the majority of students; however, there appeared to be some confusion as to which specific examples/case studies could be used to answer particular questions. The events, issues and crises used in case studies and examples in the 2018 examination needed to be from within the last 10 years (2008–2018).

The majority of students completed the examination in the allotted two-hour time period. Time management is crucial to examination success, and students should practise answering examination questions under strict time conditions.

Students must make effective use of the reading time by considering how they will respond to each question. Students should also use this time to think of a plan for responding to the essay question they want to write on in Section B.

Students should respond directly to short-answer questions; for example, answers to Questions 5c. and 6b. needed no more than a few concise sentences. Students do not need to restate the question they are responding to.

Students should not just define a key term where the question asks for an explanation. Students need to be able to go beyond a definition by providing a response that demonstrates thorough and complete understanding of the concept.

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

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	16	45	35	2.1

In this question, students needed to identify one action with the use of an example by United Nations (UN). Students then had to identify a link to cooperative action, possibly including a specific example of an activity undertaken by the UN.

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

The UN, as an intergovernmental organisation, acts as a vehicle for multilateralism, or the coordinating of relations between three or more actors, to pursue its aim of promoting cooperation. One way the UN does this is by assisting states in pooling their resources to pursue a common goal. One example of this is the UN's mission to Cote d'Ivoire, which consisted of a military force from multiple member states of the UN, with the aim of restoring peace in the region. This cooperative efforts were successful, with the UN declaring in June 2017 that it had been able to 'restore trust' in the region. Operations like these, where states combine their resources through the UN to achieve a common interest promote the benefits of cooperation.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	15	78	1.7

Students were required to identify and describe an example of contested borders between states or within a state in global politics.

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

One example of a contested border in global politics is the Spain-Catalonia border. According to the Catalan government, Catalonia deserves to be an independent state. In October 2017, the Catalan government held a referendum amongst its people, which showed overwhelming support for Catalan independence. According to the Catalan President, Girona, Puigdemont 'Catalonia is where the sovereignty of our people lies'. However, Spain believes that Catalonia is a part of Spain. The Spanish President Mariano Rajoy, labelled the referendum 'an attack on the rule of law'.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	10	27	37	24	2.7

Students were asked to explain one challenge to the power of the International Criminal Court (ICC). They then needed to explain how this specific challenge impacts on the power of the ICC (i.e. either limits the achievement of the ICCs aim[s] or the fulfilment of its roles). Some students did not have a good grasp of the aims, role and power of the ICC as their understanding of a challenge centred only around the number of signatories to the Rome Statute, without providing any additional explanation. Cooperation from the United Nations Security Council and its member states on a number of different levels and in substantive actions is critical for the ICC to achieve its aims.

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

A challenge to the ICC is its dependence on its member states, as many of them prioritise their national interests over helping the ICC achieving its aim of acting as a court of last resort to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As exemplified by how despite the ICC issuing an arrest warrant for the arrest of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir in 2009 who was accused of genocide (BBC). The ICC has been unable to prosecute him as many 'member states have allowed al-Bashir to continue to flout its arrest warrant' (NYT), such as South Africa which failed to arrest al-Bashir when he visited in 2015 (BBC). Thus signifying the ICC as having its power limited by member states seeking to maintain positive relations with Sudan. Thus states like South Africa are prioritising their national interests, and limiting the power of the ICC as it cannot effectively achieve its aims.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	4	12	19	26	22	11	3.7

Students needed to identify a specific transnational corporation (TNC), demonstrate an understanding of state sovereignty and then analyse the way in which the TNC can impact on state sovereignty. Several students were not awarded full marks for this question, as while they explained aspects of the power of the TNC they did not make clear connections to how the power of the TNC affected the sovereignty of a state.

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

The TNC Samsung has challenged both the political and economic sovereignty of South Korea. The state's sovereignty was undermined by a political scandal involving the former Vice-Chairman of Samsung who was found guilty of bribery, perjury and embezzlement in 2017, receiving five years imprisonment. Furthermore, South Korean President Lee was impeached for her role in the scandal highlighting the extent to which South Korea's political integrity and authority was undermined by the TNC.

In addition, Samsung possess great economic power over South Korea which has also challenged the states sovereignty. Samsung contributed 20% of South Korea's GDP, therefore when Samsung suffered financially in 2016 it impacted upon the state economy. Samsung was forced to recall 2.5 million devices losing \$27 million in profit. A South Korean editorial asserted that 'when Samsung falters the South Korean economy suffers', demonstrating how the TNC challenged South Korea's economic sovereignty.

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	17	31	38	2

While many students defined/explained the concept of pragmatism, they struggled to provide a specific example of pragmatism and then link it to an aspect of a state's foreign policy. The majority of students saw pragmatism as essentially realism (the pursuit of national interest) over idealism (which students incorrectly related to cosmopolitanism). The idea of pragmatism being 'practical' was mentioned, but some students did not give an idea/explanation of what that meant for foreign policy or decisions of states.

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

Pragmatism is a school of thought in which foreign policy is influenced above all else by practical considerations, as opposed to a particular ideology. This can be seen in Australia's "Stop the Boats" policy regarding the issue of asylum seekers. Whilst Australia is a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees, its actions of intercepting and deterring asylum seeker boats

and detaining asylum seekers in offshore detention centres demonstrates practical considerations of border security being placed above the intentions of the Convention.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	8	6	17	24	20	14	11	3.3

This question required students to discuss two different interpretations of a state's national security within the Asia-Pacific region. The differing interpretations needed to be within the nominated state and could not be interpretations based on two different states. Some students could not access full marks as they confused different elements or features of the state's national interest with interpretations of national security. Suitable examples included:

- China: treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang
- Australia: pursuit of the US alliance versus deeper economic ties with China
- US: unilateral versus multilateral security, e.g. tensions with NATO
- Japan: US military protection versus constitutional change to legitimise expanding its self-defence forces
- Indonesia: territorial disputes versus regional relationships

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

The Chinese government believes that religions, specifically Islam pose a security threat, and as such use power to prevent the spread of the religions so as to ensure its national security. The Chinese government has declared 'Three Evils', which are terrorism, religious extremism and ethnic separatism, to be dangerous to the state. As such the Chinese government has assessed harsh policies concerning the Muslim Uighurs in the western province of Xinjiang. In Xinjiang, the Chinese government has banned beards, limited the number of Uighurs that can make the hajj pilgrimage and allowed state-sanctioned copies of the Quran, as well as setting up 're-education camps' for the Uighurs. The Chinese government also has a strong military presence in Xinjiang to stop terrorism, according to President Xi Jinping. China must catch terrorists with 'nets spreading from the earth to the sky'. China has done this because it believes that religion is a threat to its national security.

In contrast, the Uighurs believe that China's national security is still possible with religion, and that they should be free to express their own cultural identity. Uighurs have taken offence to China's actions, and have protested on several occasions in Xinjiang to show their displeasure, including the Urumqi riots of July where around 200 people were killed and the Shanshan riots of June 2013 where 27 people were killed. According to Aljazeera, Uighurs at the Shanshan riots were speaking out against what they believed to be 'cultural genocide' perpetrated by China. This interpretation taken by the Uighurs focuses on religion not being a threat to china's national security.

Question 5ci.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	24	70	1.7

Students needed to describe one specific use of hard power by a selected Asia-Pacific state. Appropriate examples included:

- Australia: Operation Sovereign Borders
- US: escalating trade war with China
- China: military action in the South China Sea
- Japan: military exercises with US in the South China Sea
- Indonesia: military exercises with USA

Question 5cii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	10	38	22	25	2.5

Using the same example provided in Question 5ci, students were required to connect the stated use of hard power to the specific national interests of the state and then explain the link, for example, how this demonstration of hard power assists the pursuit of the state's national interests.

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

The militarisation of the South China Seas is used to achieve China's national interest of national security because it is defending its territory and claims of sovereignty. By having an increased presence in the area (by occupying islands, drilling for oil and displays of military power). China increased the likelihood that other states will recognise it as the sovereign authority thus achieving national security. It is also pursuing economic prosperity as the area has one third of the world's commercial shipping, valuable fishing grounds and some eleven billion barrels of oil, all of which would benefit china's economic prosperity.

Question 6a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	15	43	37	2.1

In this question, students needed to firstly identify a specific response from a relevant global actor to the selected ethical issue and explain what the response taken involved. Students were required to outline a precise reason why the selected global actor responded in this way.

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

Cambodia has responded to the issue of controlling landmines by signing the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) in 1997 and attempting to eliminate all landmines in its jurisdiction. It has done this by destroying 7349 stockpiled landmines in 2016, and funding the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) to assist in clearing more than 200 km² of contaminated land.

Question 6b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	4	13	16	60	3.2

Firstly, students needed to name two specific international laws relevant to the stated ethical issue. Both of the laws had to be from the same ethical issue as that used for Question 6a. In regard to the name of the international law, clear abbreviations or acronyms were accepted, provided the name of the law was conveyed. A date related to the international law's implementation was not required. Secondly, students needed to identify one obligation for each of the two laws, and no further explanation was required. Obligation does not have to be word for word from the text of the treaty/declaration, but needed to clearly capture the essence of the intention.

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

	Name of international law	Obligation
Law 1	<i>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against all Women (CEDAW)</i>	<i>That women should not face discrimination based on their gender, obliging states to ensure the principle of equality</i>
Law 2	<i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</i>	<i>The death penalty can only be carried out 'pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court'.</i>

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	2	5	8	14	18	21	18	11	5.2

This question required an explanation of ethical debates and students were able to demonstrate a good level of understanding. Students were required to define or demonstrate an understanding of the term 'ethics' or the concept of 'ethical perspectives'. They were required to describe two different sides of the selected ethical debate, including more than one global actor's response on either side of the debate and explain the ethical perspective of each side of the debate, for example, linking the term 'ethics' and explaining why they have adopted that particular position. The debates could have been selected from those listed in the study design, but this was not a specific requirement. No marks were awarded if the ethical issue selected was the same as the one used in Question 6a.

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

One ethical debate that has been created by the ethical issue of people movement is economic migrants vs. the universality of refugees.

Economic migrants are people who choose to leave their country to advance themselves economically so as to provide a better life for themselves. This side of the debate is founded in realism or the idea that states practice their national interests and needs over those of the global community. This is because states choose these people do so, on the basis that they will positively influence and effect their economies. Thus they are guided by realism as they put their desires and interests to be economically prosperous and have a growing economy above the need to fix the refugee issue facing the globe. This was highlighted in 2012-2013 when Australia allowed 128,000 skilled migrants into the country in hopes they would benefit the economy. This is comparable to them letting around 16,000 refugees in 2017 highlighting the disparity between what is beneficial for Australia and what is beneficial for the globe.

Conversely, the other side of this debate accepts that refugees should be taken in universally and irrespective of their potential background. This illustrates a cosmopolitan response as it illustrates the ability for states to cooperate to reach and achieve common goals and ideas when being faced with a challenge. By universally accepting refugees, you are working with the international community to help resolve challenges such as the refugee crisis. This cosmopolitan perspective was apparent in 2015 when Chancellor Angela Merkel suspended the Dublin Regulation in Germany and allowed 1.1 million refugees to enter the country.

Ultimately, ethical perspectives can guide certain choices states make in regards to an ethical debate. Realism tends to choose the interests of states whereas cosmopolitanism reflects the mentality that states should work together to fix global issues.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	7	5	10	12	15	19	17	14	4.2

Aspects of a global crisis are the specific features or characteristics about a crisis that distinguishes it from another crisis. An aspect, however, is not a description or an explanation of a cause(s) of the crisis, or what has happened. Many responses to this question, however, focused on the causes of a crisis rather than its aspects.

Students who scored well were able to clearly analyse a specific aspect in the context of the crisis, perhaps including its effects, relative importance and impact on effective resolution with the incorporation of relevant and contemporary examples.

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

One key aspect of economic instability is globalisation. While globalisation does not cause economic instability itself, it has exacerbated economic instability when it does occur and expanded its effects. Globalisation promotes interdependence between states and economies, and as such increases the likelihood that one economy will be affected by events in another economy. According to The balance, 'Globalisation...could cause regional or global instabilities if local economic fluctuations end up affecting a large number of countries relying on them'. An example of the effects of globalisation can be seen in the USA Financial Crisis of 2008-2009. Due to a 'historical peak' (US Department of Commerce) of 4328 billion USD in Foreign Direct Investment in the US in 2008, the effects of the crisis spread around the world to economies such as Greece and Ireland.

Another key aspect is the role of key actors as stabilisers of the global economy. One of these key actors is the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an intergovernmental organisation. The IMF supports states to resolve economic crises by providing loans and policy assistance. One example of the work of the IMF came in Greece in 2010, during the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis. Together with the European Commission and the European Central Bank (these three organisations together were called the Troika), the IMF provided three loan packages totalling \$326 billion USD, and as a condition to these loans required Greece to enact certain austerity measures, such as decreasing pensions by 70% and the privatisation of electricity and railway utilities and the Athens airport. While the IMF's response was not perfectly effective, with the IMF declaring in February 2017 that Greece's debt was on an 'explosive path' it has helped Greece return to a 0.8% budget surplus in 2017 and provide 1.45 economic growth in 2017. Key global actors such as the Troika, are required to stabilise the global economy because they have access to far more resources and funds that a state can access on its own.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	3	6	10	16	18	17	16	9	5

Students were asked to evaluate the extent to which international cooperation has promoted effective responses in a selected global crisis. In their responses, students needed to demonstrate an understanding of the key term 'international cooperation'. They were then required to outline at least two specific responses where international cooperation has played a role in responses to a specific global crisis. Finally, students needed to make a judgment about whether or not this example of international cooperation led to an effective response in each case.

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

International cooperation, refers to actors coming together to achieve common goals and ideals, has been evident in the development of the 2015 Paris Agreement which has effectively responded to climate change to a large extent as 197 parties made commitments to limit temperature rises to 2° Celsius. The effectiveness of the agreement has been shown by the development of the Moroccan Thermo-Solar Plant, a concentrated solar energy supply aiming to offset carbon emissions by 760,000 tonnes annually. Furthermore, the effectiveness has been displayed in the targets of states following the agreement such as Finland committing to be 100% renewable by 2050 and Costa Rica aiming to be 100% renewable by 2021.

Finland's Prime Ministers' statement that 'our biggest national interest in keeping climate change under control' exposes the success of the agreement ensures a decisive multilateral response which is cosmopolitanism. Despite this, the success of this international cooperation has been limited to a small extent due to the non-binding nature of the agreement and a lack of enforcement mechanisms.

President Trump's 2017 announcement to withdraw the USA from the Agreement, embracing a 'future of American dominance and self-sufficiency', pragmatically prioritised 2.7 million US jobs over actions on climate change. Hence, whilst the Paris Agreement has been largely successful, the ability for pragmatic states to withdraw from it has limited the effectiveness of the 2015 Paris Agreement to a small extent.

Section B

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4
%	1	27	20	28	24

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	1	0	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	6	9	10	10	12	11	9	7	5	3	1	12.8

Many students used a variety of essay-writing techniques. For example, many wrote brief essay plans and this assisted them to better structure their essay, order their thoughts and ideas and identify the specific evidence they wanted to include. This also helped students to clearly identify the key knowledge elements they wanted to discuss in each paragraph. It gave students a better opportunity to include the key study design terms in the essay and ensure that these terms formed the central theme of their essay.

Lower-scoring essays were characterised by poor paragraphing, an introduction that did not clearly engage with the selected topic, did not include the specific language of the coursework and lacked specific detail and relevant facts. These responses usually consisted of what students knew rather than what was being asked.

On the other hand, students who scored well were able to write essays that addressed the topic directly in their introduction, including precise sentences and an appropriate use of the key terms from the study design throughout. Their essays were supported by insightful analysis and detailed discussion with relevant evidence. Some students wrote essays that did not address the question that was being asked. Students are reminded that they must address the question as asked.

Overall success in this section of the examination demanded students to state a clear position, whether broadly agreeing or disagreeing with the prompt. Students then needed to divulge their contention and ideas and unpack these ideas with evidence and examples and arrive at a measured conclusion.

To gain a high score, responses needed to state a contention and broadly agree or disagree with the prompt. Students needed to come to a reasoned conclusion through discussing both sides of the prompt.

Question 1

This was the second-most popular essay topic. This topic asked students to discuss the traditional role of the state as the central actor in global politics. A discussion question requires students to engage critically and analytically with the prompt by examining its various dimensions and then arrive at a reasoned argument that is directly relevant to the topic. Students need to examine the traditional role of the state as the central actor in global politics based on the concept of sovereignty.

They were also expected to evaluate the power of other global actors in comparison to states. These should have included at least several examples of other global actors from the following groups: intergovernmental organisations, regional groupings, non-state actors including legal organisations (NGOs) or global terrorist movements, or transnational corporations. Finally, they were expected to show how the power of these non-state actors impacts on the traditional role of the state. Students could generally agree with the statement that the traditional role of the state is being challenged or take a more nuanced position to demonstrate that the state still maintains sovereignty while other actors gain some power.

The following is the introductory paragraph from a high-scoring response.

Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, states have been the most powerful actor in the global political arena. However, this role of the state has been challenged by the advent of globalisation, which has produced new actors that are able to diminish state sovereignty. Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) have been able to exert power over states through a variety of means, such as by forcing states into taking particular policy action. Transnational corporations (TNCs) have been able to use their large economic power to persuade states, and Non-state actors (NSAs) have been able to harness public opinion and control territory of states to diminish state sovereignty. However, states are still definitely the most powerful actor in global politics. While IGOs can challenge state sovereignty, they still only act with the consent of states, and TNCs and NSAs remain too small to challenge the most powerful states. While the role of the state as the most powerful actor in global politics is being challenged, they are still more powerful than any other global actor.

Question 2

This was the least popular of the four essay topics. Students were asked to discuss the importance and effectiveness of different types of power and foreign policy instruments used in pursuit of a state's national interests.

A discussion question requires students to engage critically and analytically with the prompt by examining its various dimensions and then arrive at a reasoned argument that is directly relevant to the topic.

Students needed to analyse the effectiveness of at least three foreign policy instruments in pursuing different national interests. They needed to refer to key elements of the prompt: the effectiveness of foreign policy instruments varies considerably, and there is often a significant difference between intentions and results. High-scoring responses were able to explain and discuss three different foreign policy instruments and how the instruments were being used in pursuit of the national interest. Finally, as per the study design, specific examples and evidence used could be from an Asia-Pacific state's use of foreign policy instruments beyond the Asia-Pacific region, except in reference to the state's pursuit of its regional relationships.

The following is the introductory paragraph from a high-scoring response.

China's economic and diplomatic use throughout the past decade has been characterised by a predominantly pragmatic approach to foreign policy. China's pragmatic use of hard military power and diplomacy has been relatively effective in pursuit of its prioritised national interests of national security and economic prosperity. However, this came at the expense of China's regional relationships and international standing – necessary pre-requisites for its desired 'peaceful rise' to regional if not global, hegemon status. Whilst China has attempted to improve its regional and international standing in recent years through making advances towards the adoption of an increasingly idealistic approach to trade and aid, there remains a marked difference between China's intentions and its results. As such, China has achieved only limited success in promoting the positive regional and international standing that it needs to accelerate its attainment of superpower status.

Question 3

This was the most popular essay topic, and students were required to evaluate the effectiveness of responses by two or more global actors to one ethical issue. In an evaluation-style essay question students are expected to address the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the argument and arrive at a reasoned judgment. Students also needed to demonstrate the strength of one argument over another to demonstrate a key aspect of an evaluation.

The selected ethical issue needed to be from the list provided in the study design: human rights, people movement, development and arms control.

High-scoring essays did not just describe responses but went beyond a narrative approach to show a deeper level of understanding.

A judgment about the effectiveness of at least two global actor responses was required. While different aspects or elements of the responses needed to be discussed in the essay response, the task word 'evaluate' also required students to include a statement about the extent to which the response has been effective.

The following is the introductory paragraph from a high-scoring response.

In relation to the ethical issue of human rights while IGO's response may have better intentions, their lack of autonomy reduces their effectiveness compared with states. Regarding the use of torture, Afghanistan has taken a limited and docile approach into adequately responding to the ethical issue. Additionally whilst Bangladesh has taken steps to prevent child exploitation, its presence still remains and reduces its effectiveness. Conversely, IGOs such as the UN have attempted to effectively respond to issues surrounding human rights, however their lack of enforceability has undermined this. Overall, global actors has been quite ineffective in achieving change in relation to the ethical issue of human rights.

Question 4

This was the third-most popular topic and asked students to examine the role of globalisation both as a cause and as a solution to two global crises. Discussion-style questions expect students to grapple critically and in depth with the prompt, examine the various dimensions of the question and arrive at a reasoned argument that is directly relevant to the question. High-scoring essays demonstrated a breadth and depth of knowledge and incorporated the vocabulary of the study in context.

The two global crises selected had to come from the list provided in the study design: climate change, armed conflict, terrorism and economic instability. Students had to demonstrate a deeper level of understanding of the concept of globalisation. This understanding had to go well beyond the concept that globalisation is an increased movement of goods, services, labour and capital to the promotion of global interdependence. This includes an increased role for intergovernmental organisations and other global actors.

Students could have used a number of different interpretations to the question, but also had to respond to all aspects of the prompt when developing a coherent argument, for example, globalisation as equally a cause and as solution or globalisation as more a cause than a solution (or vice versa). Finally, students needed to show knowledge of specific responses from several relevant global actors and how these specific responses linked to globalisation and effective resolutions.

The following is the introductory paragraph from a high-scoring response.

Globalisation has increased the interconnectedness of the globe and the political arena. Globalisation has had many positive impacts, such as trade and closer relations with states however, it has brought challenges. Globalisation has caused crises of terrorism and armed conflict and spread their influence and effects around the world. However, new solutions have been enabled due to such interconnectedness, which is at times challenged by states individual national interests. Terrorism has been proliferated by globalisation, expanding its reach internationally. This challenges state sovereignty, relying upon multilateral cooperation to resolve. Armed conflict is also fuelled by globalisation, both in causes and solutions.