2023 VCE Global Politics external assessment report

General comments

The 2023 VCE Global Politics examination was based on the current [VCE Australian and Global Politics Study Design Unit 3 and 4 *2018–2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/politics/Pages/Index.aspx). Students are strongly encouraged to be very familiar with the VCAA [glossary of command terms](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx), as some students appear to be unaware that words such as ‘analyse’, ‘compare’, ‘discuss’ and ‘evaluate’ require higher-order thinking and more precise and accurate detail. The examination paper had a variety of questions requiring a range of thinking skills. Many of the questions required students to evaluate, 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 2023 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 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 5 and 8b.
* In Question 3 of Section A the command term ‘compare’ was used, which has not been used frequently in previous examinations. Consequently, some students were less certain about how exactly to compare the power of two intergovernmental organisations.
* Many questions, including all four of the essay topics in Section B, required an evaluation, but some students responded with a description or an explanation. An evaluation is more than an explanation; it is a multi-faceted response using knowledge and understanding to consider a logical argument and/or supporting evidence for and against different points, arguments, concepts, processes, opinions or other information. Evaluation involves making a judgment.

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’). Poor, improper or 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 only in blue or black pen and avoid writing in pencil. They should ensure that their responses are legible.
* Paragraphing is very important for longer responses, including the essay in Section B.
* Students are strongly encouraged to signpost their approach clearly and precisely in the introduction of their essay, with words or phrases to indicate their position on the contention in the essay topic as well as the type of argument they are making.
* Students are encouraged to attempt every question, even if they are unsure about what to write. An efficient use of reading time is to try to 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.
* Students are not required to restate the question they are answering in their response. This is not an efficient use of time, energy and lines allocated for the response. All assessors are familiar with examination questions and do not need to be reminded of the question the student is responding to.

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 | 3 | Average |
| % | 12 | 12 | 36 | 40 | 2.1 |

This question required students to discuss the impact on the sovereignty of a state that is a member of a regional grouping. A regional grouping is a state-based organisation based around a particular region or territory. Common examples used in this question included the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Arab League (AL), African Union (AU) and the Gulf Coast Cooperation (GCC). Several responses identified ethnic groups such as Kurds or Uighurs as being a regional grouping. This is incorrect.

Students needed to have also shown a specific challenge to state sovereignty, as opposed to a situation where a state has resisted a challenge from the regional grouping. Responses needed a specific action, outcome or change as a result of joining the regional grouping.

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

The regional grouping, European Union (EU) has been able to challenge the legislative sovereignty of member states, evident in the 2015 judicial dispute between the EU and Poland. Due to Poland breaching EU laws of having a judicial system free of political influence, the EU responded with punitive measures including €1 million fine daily and withholding €36 million in COVID-19 funding. This ultimately, pressured Poland to make reforms to its legal systems to comply with EU laws and meet requirements for the release in funds in 2023.

Question 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 13 | 5 | 11 | 27 | 30 | 14 | 3.0 |

In this question, students were required to explain the impact of globalisation on one non-state actor’s pursuit of one of its aims. Some responses to this question indicated an inability to accurately identify a non-state actor as prescribed in the Study Design. Non-state actors include a range of non-government organisations (NGOs) that pursue global objectives in relation to certain areas (for example, human rights, environmental protection); organised religions that engage in international advocacy; and groups that do not accept the legitimacy of the state, such as terrorist organisations.

Some responses identified specific states, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and the International Criminal Court, as non-state actors, while some others identified a transnational corporation such as Apple, Meta, Amazon and Glencore as non-state actors, which is incorrect and stopped those students from accessing any marks for this question. Students needed to use an example of how globalisation, and the action it facilitated, had an impact on an aim. Many students simply referred to globalisation and action, but did not link it to the aim they had specified.

Some responses blurred the distinction between aims (goals) and roles (functions); the focus needed to be on the broader aim it was working to achieve.

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

Globalisation which refers to increasing global connections facilitated through advancements in communications and technology impacts how the non-state actor of Greenpeace achieves its core aim to protect biodiversity in all its forms and propels its power. This is exemplified in the use of social media to garner people power against environmental laggards, as was the case in 2014, when Greenpeace launched a viral social media campaign which precipitated the end of Lego’s 50 year relationship with Shell, who were drilling for Arctic oil. Greenpeace has also utilised institutions of global governance, which have been necessitated due to globalisation, in an effort to propel adherence to their aims. Namely, Greenpeace garnered 5.5 million signatures in an online petition urging the United Nations to sign a Global Ocean Treaty, which came into force in 2023. In seeking to protect 20% of global oceans by 2030, this pursuit exemplifies how Greenpeace utilises globalisation to foster the success of their preservationist aims.

Question 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Average |
| % | 2 | 2 | 7 | 20 | 25 | 24 | 14 | 6 | 4.2 |

This question asked students to compare the power of two intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) they had studied. ‘Compare’ as a command term requires a student to recognise similarities and differences as well as the significance of those similarities and differences.

A number of students elected to make a judgment that one IGO was more powerful than the other, or to highlight similarities/differences between IGOs in terms of their power (be it in terms of scale, types, impact).

Higher-scoring responses cited specific powers from the Study Design of the nominated IGO, (UN – Diplomatic vs IMF – Economic vs ICC - Justice) and used this to set up their comparative judgment.

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

The United Nations (UN) is the world’s premier forum for multilateral cooperation and the IMF is the world’s premier entity for the surveillance and maintenance of economic stability and cooperation worldwide. A similarity between the UN and the IMF which underpins their governance in the global political arena is the involvement of the USA in both organisations. Within the UN, the USA is one of the prominent member states who has veto power in accordance with article 27 of the UN Charter. On the other hand, the USA is the greatest contributor to the IMF, with 16% of their finances being accounted for by USA donations.

Both organisations are subsequently mechanisms for the USA to exert power on the global stage. In addition, a major limitation to the power of both the UN and the IMF is they’re both bound by limited frameworks of enforcement. While security council resolutions are legally binding, general assembly decisions are highly dependent upon international cooperation. Similarly, the IMF has a limited scope of enforcing states to amend their fiscal policies, with the only effective mechanism of enforcement being their conditional loaning. However, a major difference between the power of the UN and the IMF is that the UN has greater breadth of authority beyond the West, with major powers like China and Russia both being immensely active in the Security Council. On the other hand, the IMF is bound by the ‘Washington Consensus’ meaning that their economic initiatives align more with the West, thus limiting their ability to infiltrate economic economies to align more with the western economies who don’t ascribe to capitalist ideals.

Question 4

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 8 | 18 | 39 | 36 | 2.1 |

This question asked students to outline how one specific foreign policy instrument (aid, diplomacy, military, or trade) has been used by a state to pursue its national interest of economic prosperity. Responses to this question highlighted that students needed to be careful about selecting specific actions that represent foreign policy instruments, as some instruments were perhaps more appropriate to the achievement of economic prosperity than other examples would have been.

To succeed in this question, it was very important for students to clearly identify a specific plan and impact of the instrument and avoid a response that was very broad or general in nature (’this state trades so, therefore its trade boosts its economic prosperity’), lacking specific knowledge.

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

The foreign policy instrument of military has been used by China to pursue economic prosperity through their ‘creeping expansionism’ (Bak) in the South China Sea, such as mooring 220 ships at Whitsun Reef, in order to access their exclusive economic zones (EEZ). The South China Sea contains 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 million cubic feet of natural gas which would assist China in their goal of 5.5% GDP growth annually and thus strengthen its economic prosperity.

Question 5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 18 | 8 | 16 | 22 | 21 | 11 | 4 | 2.7 |

In this question, students were required to explain differing interpretations of the key national interest element of international standing. Differing interpretations should be thought of as the way the chosen state sees a specific foreign policy issue, and the way another relevant actor (either internal or external) views that same element (in this case, international standing). Higher-scoring responses were able to show the chosen state’s view of international standing in relation to an issue, then explain how this was perceived differently by another actor, using specific evidence to support the interpretation. Some students elected to use different time periods or actions (for example, the USA signing up to the Paris Climate Accord under President Obama, then abandoning it under President Trump before rejoining it under President Biden) to delineate a differing interpretation, but these responses were less effective in addressing the central element of the question, and not what is intended in the study design.

To be awarded full marks, students needed to establish early in their response that they understood that international standing referred to the broader global reputation of a state, often through intergovernmental organisations, rather than the opinion of just one state.

A useful approach to the question was to focus on how the state justifies its actions on the world stage (such as responses to climate change or the COVID pandemic) and how this has been critiqued by others.

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

The Australian Labor Party and Liberal/National coalition have demonstrated differing approaches to the pursuit of Australia’s international standing. While the Liberal party maintained a hard power mindset channelling money into military expenditure and the creation of AUKUS over global issues such as climate change, the 2022 elected Labor government have emphasised a ‘tonal shift’ (Anthony Albanese). The Morrison government, whilst maintaining relations and standing with the US, undermined Australia’s position on the world stage by not attending the G20 summit in 2021 and failing to produce strong climate targets. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) condemned this inaction, maintaining the ‘Step Up’ program would mean nothing if Climate Change was left on the ‘backburner’. In opposition, the Australian Labor party had focussed on an idealistic policy, Tanya Plibersek maintaining ’idealism will always drive Labor’s foreign-policy decisions’, by increasing carbon emissions reductions by 43%. The PIF called the recent G20 summit ‘a refreshing change in tone’, signifying an increased international standing for Australia. Thus while the Liberal government focussed on military alliances the Labor party enhanced diplomacy as an instrument of global status.

Question 6

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 20 | 30 | 51 | 1.3 |

In this question, students were required to outline a factor that influenced a state’s national interest element in its regional relationships. A factor can be thought of as an action or event (positive or negative) that leads to, or contributes to, the state having that specific interest.

In regard to regional relationships, any specific action or example provided had to relate to another state in the designated region of the Asia-Pacific, as per page 32 of the VCE Australian and Global Politics Study Design Unit 3 & 4 *2018–2024*.

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

One factor influencing the USAs regional relationship is international relationships. This is a key factor that having positive international relationship, such as the USA and South Korea, align states with similar ideological belief, such as democracy and freedom, which supports the relationship the USA has with states in the region, such as Canada.

Question 7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 7 | 10 | 26 | 37 | 20 | 2.6 |

This question asked students to describe how the student’s nominated state has attempted to maintain its sovereignty. Sovereignty is a critical concept in Global Politics that involves the legitimate or widely recognised ability to exercise effective control of a territory within recognised borders. To access full marks, students needed to focus almost exclusively on clearly stating the action, purpose and impact of the action. Some students digressed from the question by choosing to focus their response on the state’s action rather than just describing the action. Students were also required to provide a context as to why the state’s sovereignty was initially challenged (e.g., protests in Xinjiang, lone-wolf terror attacks in the US by ISIS, refugee boat arrivals to Australia), making it necessary to set up the action.

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

China has attempted to maintain its sovereignty by employing the threat of military force to discourage Taiwan from declaring independence in December 2022 when China sent 71 planes and 7 ships towards Taiwan as a means to ‘safeguard national sovereignty and international integrity’ and ‘smash plots for Taiwan’s independence’ (China Taiwan Affairs Office). By utilizing the threat of military, including 4 days of live fire drills in August 2022, China sought to discourage separatism, thus maintaining territorial integrity and their territorial sovereignty.

Question 8a.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | Average |
| % | 10 | 90 | 0.9 |

For this question students needed to nominate one ethical issue that they had studied and then identify an international law they had studied in relation to that ethical issue. An abbreviation of the international law was accepted if it was clear and correct. An acceptable year would be one related to the signing of the law or its ratification.

Popular examples provided included:

* Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
* Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
* Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
* Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Question 8b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 7 | 4 | 9 | 14 | 22 | 15 | 16 | 9 | 4 | 4.2 |

This question required students to analyse two challenges to the effectiveness of the international law nominated in Question 8a. ‘Analyse’ means students should identify elements and the significance of the relationship between them. and draw out and relate implications. Challenges could include issues related to state sovereignty, realism, culture, religion, national interests, economy, enforcement, compliance, perceived Western bias of laws, conflicting laws, technological developments, regime changes and sheer scale, such as migration.

Better responses often flagged the two challenges early on, in the first sentence, and then discussed them separately. Students should also be aware that the two challenges needed to be separate and distinct from one another. For example, those students who chose religious challenges and cultural challenges often used the same, or very similar, examples, and it was difficult for them to access all the marks in that situation. It was ideally better to analyse two different state violations to show breadth and avoid any potentially confusing overlap.

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

One challenge is the ability of states to use loopholes via reservations to dilute the effectiveness of CEDAW in fulfilling its aims to eliminate discrimination against women. As a cultural relativist, believing that ethical systems and laws should be subject to respective cultures rather than the Western-based international law, Saudi Arabia has used reservations with this justification to continue breaking CEDAW obligations. This is seen in its male guardianship system, where women need to seek a male guardian’s permission to basic items such as applying for a passport, which contravenes CEDAW article 2, having equal rights afforded to women and men. Despite this, Saudi Arabia continues to use reservations, which states that Sharia law is superior to CEDAW based law in the case on an overlap between the two.

Another challenge is the lack of enforcement mechanism by the CEDAW monitoring committee. In 2021, Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, it violated CEDAW article 10, Women’s right to education, as it prohibited women’s access to secondary and higher forms of education. However, despite the monitoring committee having 18 experts, it does not have the ability to place punitive measures in place, hence unable to enforce its aims which highly challenges its effectiveness to force states’ compliance.

Question 9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 5 | 5 | 13 | 23 | 28 | 18 | 8 | 3.5 |

This question asked students to nominate a second ethical issue they had studied and discuss one actor’s response to it. A ‘discussion’ can take many forms: analysis, evaluation, arguments for and against. The discussion should be linked back to the impact upon the nominated ethical issue. The response of other global actors in this question was of less relevance, and students are encouraged to think about their discussion in relation to what difference (positive, negative or both) the actor’s response makes to the specific ethical issue. For instance, does it meet internationally accepted ethics? To what degree? Does the identified response breach international law or principles? Which specific ones? Why does it breach these ethics?

Better responses engaged in the spirit of what a discussion is, considering the positives and negatives, and clearly signposted the contrasting nature of the response, such as in Australia’s record on people movement (Operation Sovereign Border vs a large annual number of refugee resettlements) or Saudi Arabia’s record on human rights (legalising women’s driving vs ongoing male guardianship laws).

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

Russia’s response to the ethical issue of arms control has been strongly guided by the realist perspective, disobeying their obligations under the UN’s Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC, 1993) to pursue their own national interests. Russia’s claim to have adhered to the CWC Article 3 (that states endeavour to destroy all chemical weapons they possess by 2030) in 2016, despite this the state employed the chemical nerve agent Novichok against political rival Alexi Navalny on August 20, 2020. Russia’s response to the ethical issue, not only disobeying but making fraudulent claims regarding adherence to international law, demonstrates an incredibly strong realist perspective, prioritizing the national interests of national security above the needs of the global community as communicated by the CWC. This preoccupation with domestic concerns polarizes Russia’s divisive responses in the international community, with the USA Chemical Weapons Commission decrying ‘Russia’s abject failure to meet their CWC obligations’ (2021).

Question 10a.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 17 | 37 | 46 | 1.3 |

For this question, students needed to outline the key aspect related to a global crisis they had selected. The key aspects are designed to be seen as ‘part of’ the crisis, so therefore students should be able to explain how the key aspect relates to the selected global crisis. To access the second mark, students needed to demonstrate an understanding of how the key aspect is linked to or contributed to the global crisis.

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

Armed conflict – prosecuting war crimes in international law

The International Criminal Court (ICC) as an international justice system has issued a warrant against Russia’s president Vladimir Putin for war crimes and illegal smuggling of children in March 2023 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This is significant to the crisis of armed conflict as it morally condemns Russia’s actions, the first permanent leader of a UNSC state to be charged by the ICC.

Question 10b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 17 | 10 | 19 | 26 | 19 | 8 | 2.5 |

In this question, which is a development of Question 10a., students were required to analyse how the selected key aspect has presented challenges to effective resolution of the selected global crisis. Students needed to think about a challenge to effective resolution in terms of how it ‘holds back’ or ‘decreases the ability’ to find a resolution. Students needed to discuss, with the use of evidence to support their ideas, how this key aspect makes the crisis harder to resolve.

Clearly establishing what a resolution looks like for the selected global crisis was a useful starting point. Some students, however, tended to lapse into a descriptive response where they focused on the global crisis rather than the challenges presented by the key aspect.

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

Prosecuting war crimes in international law has presented itself a challenge to the resolution of armed conflict in Ukraine as it is purely symbolic and exacerbates the cause of the crisis. The symbolic nature of the ICC’s arrest warrants issued in March 2023 on Putin is a challenge to the resolution of armed conflict. Russia withdrew its signature from the Rome Statute in 2016, regarding it as ‘insufficient and one-sided’ (Putin). Therefore, the powers of the ICC derived from the Rome Statute are limited and are purely symbolic as they are unable to conduct investigations in Russia. Therefore, the symbolic nature of the ICC challenge to the resolution of armed conflict.

However, the greatest challenge to the resolution of armed conflict through prosecuting war crimes is it exacerbates the cause of the conflict. The primary cause of Russia’s invasion is the potential NATO expansion into historic Russian sphere of influence. Therefore, by the ICC driven legacy by NATO states, prosecuting Putin exacerbates tensions between Russia and NATO. Therefore, Russia views NATO and the ICC as ‘crossing the line’ contributing to the cyclical nature of conflict (Putin).

Therefore, prosecuting war crimes exacerbating tensions and the cause of the armed conflict is a major challenge, alongside the symbolic nature as a lesser but still significant challenge.

Question 11

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 7 | 3 | 8 | 13 | 15 | 18 | 20 | 11 | 5 | 4.5 |

In this final question in Section A, students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of responses by two states to a second selected global crisis. ‘Evaluation’ askes students to ascertain a value or amount, to make a judgment using knowledge and understanding to consider a logical argument and/or supporting evidence for and against different points, arguments, or concepts. This question could have been approached from two different directions, each of which is valid: firstly, evaluation between the two states selected, and secondly, evaluation within the two selected states.

Many students chose to look at two states but only with a limited one-sided perspective, which made it difficult to access all of the marks. Students ideally should have evaluated the degree to which the states’ specific responses were effective in resolving the crisis, rather than the degree to which the state was effective in achieving its own interests. Clearly establishing what a resolution looks like for the crisis was useful.

Several responses unfortunately drifted into a straight narration, regarding a chain of events of the global crisis (especially for armed conflict) and didn’t focus in enough detail on the states’ actions.

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

Climate change

China and the US have both made limited reforms in policy and domestic activities to work towards the goal of reducing global temperatures by 1.5 degrees and henceameliorating climate change. While China has made investments in renewable energy as in 2022 it invested USD $586 billion in non-fossil fuel energy and as a part of the Paris Agreement establishes an aim of making 25% of its energy production renewable. It has also fuelled climate change as Climate Action Tracker claimed its current policies and projections as ‘insufficient’ and in 2022 established 100 gigawatts of coal-fired energy. This demonstrates China’s lack of effectiveness as with current nationally determined contributions (NDCs) the world will rise in temperature by 2-30 Celsius, and not meeting Paris Agreement aims. Similarly, the US has not made effective efforts to respond to climate change as they prioritise their economic prosperity. While China on the Climate Action Tracker in the current year as being ‘insufficient’. This is particularly due to in 2017, when Trump exited the Paris Agreement citing it as a ‘self-inflicted major economic wound’ as it would cost USD$3 billion dollars domestically due to closure of fossil fuel industries. Thus the US and China has proven a lack of serious action towards climate change and hence look ineffective as the world is not going to reach its critical goal of lowing global temperatures.

Section B

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question completed | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| % | 2 | 16 | 26 | 20 | 37 |

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

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, which 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 the essay.

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 accuracy 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 asked for. Some students appeared to be writing a memorised essay, 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 the various perspectives covered 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 was the least popular of the four essay topics on this year’s examination. Students were asked to evaluate the importance of multilateral resolution to at least two other challenges to the power of states. Issues requiring multilateral resolution are those issues that one state is unable or unwilling to address effectively, such as the four global crises in U4 AoS 2. Multilateral responses require deliberate actions taken by at least three or more states, which can include other types of global actors that represent multiple states (e.g., IGOs). Other challenges to state power may include contested borders, regional groupings, TNCs, non-state actors’ actions taken by IGOs or other states, international laws and global crises.

Better essays made clear evaluative links in each body paragraph back to issues requiring multilateral resolution, regardless of the challenge to state power. Responses could have also referred to different types of power or elements of state sovereignty. Some essays read as rote-learned responses focusing on globalisation/sovereignty. The key to accessing all the marks was to have explicit links in each paragraph back to the central challenge in the prompt. Several students realised that most issues in Global Politics require multilateral resolution and were able to showcase the breadth of their content knowledge**.**

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

In a more globalised world, issues that require multilateral resolution pose a significant challenge to the power of states a greater challenge than transnational corporations (TNCs) yet less of a challenge than non-state actors. The rise of globalisation has created a more interconnected international community resulting in issues that require multilateral resolution, which constitute a threat to the power of states. Globalisation has also expanded the economic influence of TNCs, allowing them to challenge states, however, the co-dependent relationship established means this is a lesser challenge, as states can still assert their sovereignty. The most significant challenge to the power of states is non-state actors who are able to utilise globalisation to extend influence across borders and operate outside of conventional power structures. Globalisation has increased challenges to states including issues that require multilateral resolution which pose a significant threat.

Question 2

This was the second most popular essay topic on this year’s examination. Students were asked to examine the impact of a state’s pursuit of its national interest elements in regard to the intentions and results attained. The Study Design lists four specific elements of national interest (national security, economic prosperity, regional relationships, and international standing) that students could choose to address; however, other elements of national interest of a state could also have been examined. ‘Intentions’ refers to the objectives that the state is trying to achieve, while ‘results’ refers to the outcomes of their actions, either intended or unintended. Body paragraphs ideally should have explored specific case studies with similarities/differences between intentions and results.

Where some responses tended to storytelling and minimised explicit evaluation, which was central to the question, they were not able to access all of the available marks. Better essays utilised different national-interest elements to fashion a more tiered or nuanced argument, highlighting more-significant to less-significant to not-significant differences between intentions and results.

Higher-scoring essays didn’t simply show the disparity between intention and results but also clearly highlighted the cause/s for the disparity.

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

In an increasingly unstable and constantly changing geopolitical arena, Australia’s pursuit of the national interests has had fluctuating degrees of success compared to intended outcomes. With the ever-evolving nature of foreign policy a state’s power of national security is often hampered or redirected by other states’ international relations. Moreover, in seeking diplomacy within regional relationships, Australia has witnessed a marked difference in outcomes. However, while negative results can be prevalent, the state has demonstrated unintended success in the attainment of economic prosperity. Thus, while adapting circumstances, Australia is consistently hindered or else aided by varied and threatening foreign policy outcomes.

Question 3

This was the third most popular essay topic on the examination. In this essay, students were asked to demonstrate a clear understanding of cosmopolitanism in the context of their chosen ethical issue. While only one ethical issue was to be referenced, students had to specifically include an evaluation of two specific ethical debates.

Better responses examined the often-competing perspectives of realism and cosmopolitanism through the actions and motivations of different global actors, arguing that both IGOs, such as the UN, and non-state actors, such as Amnesty International, are more likely to be more cosmopolitan in intention whereas state actors are usually/often driven by realist considerations (as too are profit-oriented TNCs). Some more sophisticated essays analysed in depth how state actors can be both realist and cosmopolitan based on the circumstances of the particular ethical debate.

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

Rooted in the notion that there exists a ‘universal community’ to which all states should work collectively for the betterment of, cosmopolitan ideals fail to dominate global actor perspectives, on human rights, as they reflect a western liberal idealism which negates the divergent duties, needs and cultures of states. Although cosmopolitanism abounds western perspectives surrounding the universality of human rights versus cultural challenges, as well as the universality of human rights versus economic challenges, realism is the most prevalent ideal of global actors as sovereignty determines domestic needs supersede international ideals.

Question 4

This was by far the most popular essay topic on this year’s examination. In this question, students were asked to evaluate how important a lack of effective international cooperation has been to the effective resolution of two global crises studied this year. The discussions of the two global crises did not need to be balanced but needed to be clearly present. Better responses engaged with the challenges facing the effective resolution of the global crises and established linkages. Students could have also referred to material they had previously written in Question 10b. of Section A if they chose to.

As was the case with essay Question 1, students should have ideally dealt with international cooperation in their first paragraph/argument so that they could refer to it throughout the rest of their essay, as the question demanded. Some of the essays did not choose to address the concept of international cooperation in any meaningful way, instead focusing on other elements of a global crisis, such as responses to it or, less relevantly, its causes.

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

In an increasingly globalised world there has been the introduction of third-agenda issues which transcend state boundaries and threaten the global community. It can be argued that, for both climate change and the armed conflict in Ukraine, multilateral resolutions are needed to effectively resolve these crises. Therefore, a lack of international cooperation poses the greatest challenge to the resolution of the crisis as states need to collaborate to positively address these issues. However, it must not be forgotten that a lack of international cooperation is not the sole challenge in the effective resolution of the crises for there are other challenges such as the structural issues in the United Nations (UN).