

2016 Australian Politics examination report

General comments

Overall, students performed well in the 2016 Australian Politics examination. The highest-scoring responses demonstrated that students had a very high level of understanding and awareness of important political events in Australia throughout 2016 and of political events in the USA, in the presidential election year. The use of examples from these events contributed in many cases to answers that were detailed, analytical and relevant to the question. Lower-scoring responses were those that did not make use of evidence and those that were repetitive or too general. A few students did not give answers to some questions; students should attempt all questions.

In Section A, students were required to answer a series of short-answer questions, two of which included a piece of stimulus. Most students understood the stimulus material and were able to use it as a reference in their responses or as a starting point.

Several questions in Section A asked students to outline or explain a particular number of key factors or differences, such as two factors or differences and dot points were included in the answer spaces. Most students used the dot points in the answer spaces to structure their answers and as a guide for length of their response. Some students repeated factors, using slightly different terms or emphasis. Students need to be very careful to avoid this.

Some Section A questions were formatted using subheadings (for example, strengths and weaknesses of the Senate in Question 2c.). Where subheadings are included, students must ensure that they are used effectively.

Students and teachers should also take note of the command words used in Section A. Terms such as 'outline', 'explain' and 'define' require a different type of answer from questions that use higher-order terms such as 'evaluate' and 'discuss'. Some attention should be paid to these command words during the year and in examination preparation.

Section B asked students to choose one question and write an essay in response to the question. The topics of each of the four questions related to one area of study, and each question required students to take a point of view and argue or discuss it in relation to the question. Some essays demonstrated an excellent level of knowledge of the relevant area of study. Higher-scoring essays made a coherent attempt to answer the question as it was asked, making detailed reference to evidence and contemporary examples. Lower-scoring essays were characterised by brevity, a narrow focus and repetition. It was evident that some students had prepared essays that they were determined to rewrite; this approach should be avoided.

Students and teachers are reminded to allow time during the year and in examination preparation for essay-writing practice. This is a key component of the examination and should not be neglected.

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 more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Australian democracy

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	62	38	0.4

The correct answer was D.

Many students indicated C., but this was incorrect, as in some circumstances the Liberal and National parties will not stand candidates against each other due to their Coalition partnership. Other students indicated B., which was also incorrect; a political party must win the majority of seats in the House of Representatives to win an election, not simply the most votes.

D. was correct, as there are currently no limits to the amount of money a candidate can spend during an election campaign.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	45	55	0.6

The correct answer was A.

This question caused some confusion for students. The AEC does in fact conduct elections for trade unions and employer associations as part of its role. The AEC certainly does not set election dates; that is the prerogative of the government of the day. Therefore, A. was the correct response.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	12	5	15	14	54	3

This question required students to outline two functions (or purposes) of elections for the House of Representatives, not outline two functions of the House of Representatives itself.

Answers could have included the following as functions:

- to determine those people who will represent or act on behalf of the population in the 150 electorates of the House of Representatives
- to determine the government, through the party winning the majority of seats in the House of Representatives
- to provide a mandate to the government for the next term

- to allow voters to hold the incumbent government to account and pass judgment on its performance
- to provide a forum for debate of competing ideas and policies.

Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	13	17	23	29	18	2.2

This question was misinterpreted by some students. The focus of the question was on the techniques (or strategies or tactics) that are used during election campaigns by candidates and parties. The question asked for a discussion of whether these techniques upheld the main values of a democracy.

Too many students discussed different policies or ideas that had been canvassed during recent election campaigns and/or specific candidates. Some students showed very little understanding of the existing options for campaigning. This point is referred to in the study design, and in a federal election year there were many helpful examples that could have been drawn upon.

High-scoring responses included a discussion of such campaign techniques as negative advertising, making untrue promises, scare advertising, pork-barrelling, excessive focus on marginal seats, lack of limits on campaign funding and spending, and inconsistent disclosure requirements. Linking these to democratic values such as accountability, representation and transparency, and showing where techniques either upheld these or undermined them, was rewarded.

Specific examples from the 2016 federal election were used effectively, such as the 'Medicare' campaign run by the ALP, extra attention given to marginal electorates such as Indi, and the use of a candidate's personal wealth, such as Malcolm Turnbull's personal donations to the Liberal Party. Examples from the 2013 election were also used well.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

Election campaign techniques can arguably be undemocratic in that there is no requirement for truth or accuracy in a campaign. That means that parties and candidates can make promises which they do not intend to keep or will later break, effectively attempting to win votes [from] false statements and policy proposals For example in 2013 Abbott promised there have 'no cuts to the ABC or SBS' yet he later cut these channels funding as there is no requirements for truth in a campaign.

Question 1e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	16	22	21	17	10	2.4

This question asked students to evaluate the effectiveness of the preferential voting system in upholding the key democratic principle of 'one vote one value'.

To address this question thoroughly, students needed to explain what the phrase 'one vote one value' means and also link this to the system of preferential voting itself. The notion of votes being equally weighted is crucial to 'one vote one value'. This is best seen in the way electorates for the House of Representatives have roughly the same number of voters in them, and this is maintained via the work of the AEC. Students also referred to the notion of the secret ballot, only being able to vote once in an election, and the role of the AEC overall in conducting elections as other ways of

achieving 'one vote one value'. The work of the AEC in investigating multiple-voting allegations was also referred to.

Many students went further into a discussion of how preferential voting operates through the distribution of preferences which occurs at the same 'value', in order to reach an absolute majority, and this reflected a very good knowledge of the voting system. Examples of particular electorates or candidates were useful here.

In a question that asks for an evaluation it was important that students were able to look at both sides, including how the principle might also be weakened or not achieved, and at some point in their answer make a judgment. For example, the goal of electoral redistributions and equal voter numbers is not evident in Tasmania where the Constitution requires a minimum of five seats for the House of Representatives. Higher-scoring answers also demonstrated an understanding of the worth of votes in marginal electorates, as opposed to safe ones, and that this also weakened the principle.

Australian democracy in perspective

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	5	27	68	1.7

Judicial independence refers to a key aspect of the separation of powers as it operates in Australia. It means that the court system/judges are kept separate from the other branches of government power (the executive and the legislature) and can therefore operate free from any influence or interference from these branches.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	4	12	17	65	3.4

Students needed to clearly outline ways in which democratic rights and freedoms are upheld in Australia and another system. Most students referred to the USA as their other political system.

Possible answers for Australia included:

- the separation of powers
- the rule of law
- decisions by the independent High Court
- the right to vote and the conduct of elections by an independent electoral authority
- legislation passed by the parliament to protect specific groups and their rights
- the five express/explicit rights outlined in the Constitution.

Possible answers referring to the US political system included:

- the Bill of Rights
- the separation of powers
- checks and balances built into the system
- the role of the independent Supreme Court
- the Constitution.

Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	6	11	16	59	3.1

This question was well answered by students, who showed a very good knowledge overall of how the Senate does and does not reflect democratic principles. It was important to explain the linking of the democratic principle to the way the Senate worked and most students did this.

Strengths of the Senate in reflecting democratic principles include:

- minor parties and/or Independents having members in the Senate, promoting greater representation of community views and opinions; use of examples such as Derryn Hinch and Pauline Hanson was helpful in these responses
- the Senate acting as the house of review – reviewing/amending/improving legislation that has been passed by the House of Representatives, and so enhancing accountability
- the government can have its legislation defeated – the Senate acts as a check/balance to the lower house and also upholds accountability
- proportional representation being used to elect the Senate; this voting system allows for greater participation by minor parties/independents and their supporters.

Weaknesses of the Senate in reflecting democratic principles include:

- minor parties and independents being over-represented in the Senate, therefore weakening the principle of ‘one vote one value’ and representation
- the ‘above the line’ method of voting allowing people to be elected with very few first preference votes. For example, in the 2013 Senate election, Ricky Muir from Victoria became a Senator with less than 1 per cent of the primary vote. This is known as the practice of ‘preference-harvesting’. Reforms to the Senate voting system introduced in 2016 sought to overcome this weakness but were of limited success, with some Senators still being elected with a comparatively low primary vote
- the States having the same number of senators, regardless of the number of people living in each state. Tasmania has as many senators as New South Wales, which undermines representation
- the Senate rarely acting as a states’ house, yet this was the original intention; therefore undermining the notion of representation
- governments being unable to carry out the mandate they receive from the electorate, when Bills are rejected in the Senate, which weakens the principle of majority rule/popular sovereignty. Many high-scoring answers referred to examples such as the rejection of the ABCC Bill early in 2016.

Question 2d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	15	20	25	17	13	2.6

This question required a comparison of the ways the rule of law, as a key democratic principle, is upheld in both Australia and in another political system. Most students referred to the USA as their other political system.

Students needed to outline their understanding of the rule of law, essentially that it is the democratic principle that all citizens and institutions are treated equally by the legal system and subject to laws that are applied fairly and equally. Most students were able to explain this as the first part of their answer.

Responses then needed to show an understanding of how this is done in both countries. A degree of comparison and contrast, and reference to specific examples, was evident in higher-scoring responses. The idea that both Australia and the USA do this relatively well as effective democracies was also mentioned by many students. Higher-scoring answers were able to compare throughout, rather than list points in two separate sections.

For Australia, the protection of the rule of law could be seen in:

- the Constitution, via express and implied rights
- the legal system and the courts, for example, the High Court
- the parliaments, both national and state, which can change current laws and can introduce new laws.

Many students referred to cases determined in the High Court, such as the Malaysia Solution (2011), as an effective example of how the rule of law is applied to the federal government. Others referred to laws that were passed to effectively treat terrorism suspects outside the rule of law as a counterclaim to Australia's protection of the rule of law.

In the USA, the protection of the rule of law could be seen in:

- the Bill of Rights
- the Constitution
- the legal system and the role of the Supreme Court
- the presidential power of veto and the way Congress can veto the president.

Examples of cases in the Supreme Court, such as the outcome of the 2000 presidential election and the more recent same-sex marriage case (2015) were used effectively to show the way the court applies the law equally to all citizens. Reference to the Bill of Rights and its role in this area was also done effectively by many students. Many students referred to the process of impeachment in the USA as evidence of the rule of law; this was incorrect, as this process applies only to the president in certain circumstances. It is a way of checking the power of the executive branch.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

The rule of law, which is a democratic principle whereby all individuals and groups are required to adhere to the law as well as to enjoy its benefits equally from one another with no one being above or exempt from the law, is overall well upheld in both Australia and the US. Equality under the law is largely apparent in both nations and particularly a strong independent judiciary can apply the law especially to any cases which come before it.

Domestic policy

Question 3ai.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	55	45	0.5

This question was answered poorly by many students. Specific terms need to be used accurately and clearly in definition questions.

A shadow minister is a member of the Opposition in parliament who has responsibility for a portfolio area held by a government minister. For example, Tanya Plibersek is the shadow education minister.

Question 3aii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	21	62	1.5

The following are roles that a shadow minister can play in domestic policymaking formulation.

- Shadow ministers have the job of suggesting policy alternatives and improvements, for example, the ALP wanted to phase out negative gearing on housing purchases.
- Shadow ministers have the job of asking questions of government policy in their area, often during question time in the hope of drawing attention and forcing policy change – for example, what does the Minister intend doing about rising house prices?
- Shadow ministers have the job of criticising policy proposals – for example, suggesting changes to the GST may be unfair and so pushing for policy reformulation.
- Shadow ministers promote alternate policy solutions during election campaigns with the hope of getting elected and implementing them – for example, during the federal election campaign Chris Bowen, as shadow treasurer, proposed new taxation measures.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	8	24	20	41	2.8

This question required students to identify influences from outside Australia that may have had an impact on domestic policy formulation by the federal government. Outlining two areas clearly and using a specific example was a successful approach. Students need to be careful not to refer to the same aspect/factor in two slightly different ways. Two distinct areas were needed.

Influences that could have been referred to included the following.

- Policy decisions and changes made by foreign governments. For instance, the decision by Ireland to introduce marriage equality increased the pressure for a similar policy change in Australia. Other similar policy areas include drug laws, euthanasia, health policy and education policy.
- The state of the global economy. For example, the GFC of 2008 led to domestic economic stimulus packages in Australia under the Rudd government, and the changing nature of the Chinese economy has led to a decrease in exports from Australia and therefore required economic intervention under the Abbott and Turnbull governments.
- International agreements and treaties can influence Australian domestic policy. For instance, criticism of existing policy by the UNHCR and UN Human Rights committees may have been a factor in amending policies, such as releasing children from detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island.
- Global environmental concerns and agreements in response to them have influenced the domestic formulation of such policies as the carbon tax and renewable energy targets.
- Global conflict affects the movement of people and therefore may influence Australia's refugee and immigration policies.
- International incidents can influence Australia domestic policy. For instance, the increased number of terrorist attacks in various parts of the world has clearly affected Australian domestic counter-terror policies.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	17	13	27	14	29	2.3

This question required students to show that they understood the distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation. Policy implementation is different to policy formulation; these two concepts are clearly outlined in the study design. They are linked in practicality, but in the examination they need to be understood and explained differently.

Factors contributing to the ability of a government to put into practice (implement) their domestic policies refer to events or forces that impact on the carrying out of the policy that has been formulated and in most cases already successfully turned into legislation.

Therefore, students were not awarded full marks for referring to factors inside the parliament, such as the Senate passing legislation or having control of the numbers in both houses. It is essential that this understanding is noted by teachers and students.

Factors such as the following were accepted, alongside relevant examples:

- a high level of public (including media) support for an Australian domestic policy; for example, the NDIS
- a well-resourced and well-trained bureaucracy, as seen largely in the roll out of the NDIS
- bipartisan support from the two major parties in general; for example, in policy areas such as refugee detention, offshore processing or anti-terror laws
- economic capacity and a lack of budgetary constraints; for example, the NBN implementation has been hindered by this.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

One factor contributing to the successful implementation of domestic policy is money. For a domestic policy to be implemented successfully there must be enough money set aside to do so, or else the implementation will be delayed or compromised as happened with the NBN rollout.

Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	12	32	26	25	2.6

This question required students to discuss the place of public opinion in the domestic policymaking process. Students needed to show that there is evidence for different points of view and to outline in general terms what 'public opinion' means. There were a range of approaches to the question; responses that included recent examples were rewarded.

On many occasions public opinion has significantly influenced government policy decisions. For example, in the response to the backlash to the 2014 Budget and to the suggestion of a rise in the GST in 2016, the views of the public were clearly heeded by the government. On the other hand, in relation to recent policy issues such as same-sex marriage and ongoing concerns about offshore processing of refugees, the opinion of a majority or large sections of the public has not been influential on the government.

Many high-scoring answers referred to the role of an election in this area; during an election campaign the views of the public might suddenly become much more persuasive to a political party seeking election.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

Public opinion plays a somewhat influential role in the formulation and implementation of domestic policy. As parliament's main role is to reflect and represent the views of the people ... they must devise policies that are popular within the community, they must devise policies that are popular within the community or necessary not just electorally sensible. However at times public opinion is not always overly influential as other factors play a predominant role. For example, despite the fact that 62% of Australians support the legalisation of same-sex marriage the government will not allow a conscience vote in parliament ... due to internal pressures within his party ...

Foreign policy Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	16	36	48	1.3

Foreign aid is the international transfer of capital, goods or services from a country or international organisation for the benefit of a recipient country or its population. It is generally agreed that its main aim is to reduce poverty in the recipient country, but it can also be seen to assist the national interest of the source country. The recipients of the largest amounts of Australian foreign aid are in our region, particularly Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

Many students referred incorrectly to types of aid given by the Australian Government after natural or humanitarian disasters. This does not fit the definition of foreign aid.

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	9	18	23	46	3

This question required students to link instruments of Australian foreign policy (other than foreign aid, which was overlooked by some students) to achieving regional security. Australia's region is broadly accepted to refer to the Asia-Pacific region, so students needed to outline approaches that were directed to this geographic region and that could reasonably be seen to help ensure Australia's security and safety from threats such as terrorism. Making this link was very important.

Some examples of accepted responses include:

- multilateral and regional engagement in forums such as the United Nations, the Association of South East Asian Nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Pacific Island Forum
- participation in joint military exercises with the USA and use of the US Darwin military base/satellite technology, particular in relation to tensions in the South China Sea
- bilateral trade agreements, such as with Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand or the United States.
- multilateral trade agreements, such as ASEAN and New Zealand (AANZFTA), the European Union, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).
- the signing of agreements to counter terrorism or other regional concerns; for example, the Lombok Treaty with Indonesia.

The following is part of a high-scoring response.

One way Australian foreign policy aims to achieve regional security is through peacekeeping missions which promote a peaceful and stable region and help alleviate conflict. Australia has contributed to regional peacekeeping missions in East Timor, PNG and more.

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	3	8	17	65	3.3

The key difference identified by most students was that bilateral approaches to foreign policy are entered into by two nations (for example, Australia and one other) and multilateral approaches are those involving more than two nations (for example, Australia plus a minimum of two other nations). Most students were able to then give an effective example of each, particularly in the area of agreements or treaties.

Some students also identified that in general the Coalition favours a bilateral approach to foreign policy and the ALP favours a multilateral approach.

Question 4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	8	16	25	32	14	3.1

This question required students to clearly compare the roles of the prime minister and foreign minister in formulating Australian foreign policy and to demonstrate an understanding of their different spheres of influence. Students should also have referred to the fact that the prime minister has more power in this area, as the foreign minister reports to the prime minister and in fact is usually selected by them.

Overall, this question was well answered and high-scoring responses used many recent foreign policy examples for both the current prime minister and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.

Relevant foreign policy roles of the prime minister that could have been discussed include:

- has executive power over foreign policy
- has discretionary power to make treaties and commit Australian troops to war
- chairs cabinet discussions over foreign policy and decides foreign policy decisions with the foreign minister
- represents Australia as international spokesperson for the nation, often at annual multilateral forums
- can significantly shape foreign policy direction through personal relationships and informal bilateral discussions; for example, Julia Gillard and Barack Obama had a positive personal relationship, as does Malcolm Turnbull and the prime minister of New Zealand
- can significantly shape foreign policy direction through their worldview; for example, Tony Abbott's call for 'more Jakarta, less Geneva' in the Coalition's approach to foreign policy.

Relevant foreign policy roles of the foreign minister that could have been discussed include:

- represents the nation abroad, though not as chief international spokesperson
- has a role in implementation of foreign policy decisions at ground level through access to DFAT, which can feed into subsequent foreign policy formulation
- when there is a prime minister with a strong interest in foreign policy, the foreign minister's role is somewhat marginalised; for example, with Stephen Smith and Kevin Rudd, and Alexander Downer and John Howard
- can be high profile and carry global influence; for example, Julie Bishop's chair of the UNSC and her role in the MH17 crash investigation
- provides advice to the prime minister about emerging international situations and takes advice from the department

- provides special government/consular support to Australians in trouble abroad, which can result in foreign policy formulation; for example, Julie Bishop's role in advocating for the Bali Nine.

So the foreign minister generally assists in the creation of foreign policy within their role as a minister responsible for a portfolio, while the prime minister has wide discretionary powers with few, if any, constraints to make foreign policy as they choose.

Section B

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4
%	0	15	45	15	25

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	1	1	1	2	2	5	2	4	5	4	7	12	10	11	11	8	7	4	3	2	0	11.6

Question 1

This question required students to discuss the role of political parties inside the parliament, and then to consider if the role of the parties had a negative impact on the democratic role of the parliament itself.

High-scoring essays began by addressing the roles parliament has within the Australian democratic system of government, the main ones relevant to this question being to act as a representative body, to legislate and to hold the government to account. These essays went on to discuss the ways in which sometimes these roles are not upheld by parliament. Higher-scoring essays were able to draw clear links between the particular practices of political parties inside the parliament that actually might cause this.

The following is a very good introduction to a high-scoring response.

Whilst the Australian Parliament is largely able to fulfil its democratic role in our political system, often due to the role that political parties play its ability to act effectively in this way may also in some cases be undermined, by specific tactics and practices parties may employ. The Parliament's role is to act as a representative body for the Australian people, to make and pass legislation and to hold the government to account for its actions. While these aims are typically well achieved, parties can also work against them, particularly considering the issues of executive dominance, party discipline, destructive levels of partisanship and theatrics and stunts in the Parliament.

Question 2

This question required a detailed comparison of the processes used to determine the head of government in Australia (that is, the prime minister) and that of another political system. Almost all students selected the USA, so a comparison needed to be made with the process of determining the president.

Students needed to make reference to which process was more democratic, either overall or they could have made a judgment about particular steps in either nation that seemed more or less democratic. High-scoring essays did this clearly and without simply describing the two different

voting systems or picking out random features with little context. Undue influence on compulsory and non-compulsory voting weakened some responses. Students must be able to move beyond these two areas in such essays.

High-scoring essays contrasted equally the two processes relating to electing the prime minister and president and made detailed reference to elections and the associated events that had taken place during 2016 in both the USA and Australia. Students and teachers are reminded that electoral systems and their comparison are a key aspect of the study design. Students and teachers must ensure that their study includes detailed discussion and awareness of current political events so that relevant and effective examples can be drawn upon, especially in essay writing.

In relation to Australia students could have included the following points as being democratic.

- The process of electing the prime minister is comparatively simple and transparent.
- Universal franchise means popular sovereignty is upheld, and the role of compulsory voting is relevant for discussion here.
- It is relatively quick – although the closeness of the 2016 election casts doubt over this.
- The role of the AEC ensures transparency and impartiality in the process.
- Elected politicians have complete say over who is the leader (Coalition) or a significant say over who is to become leader (ALP), enhancing representation.
- A focus on the two party leaders during election campaigns ensures that despite voters not casting a vote ‘directly’ for the prime minister, they have an awareness of the two candidates and their views/values/policies.
- The prime minister is a member of the legislative branch of government and is held accountable in that forum.

Less democratic features of the process include the following.

- The voters have no direct say in who becomes prime minister. Voters cannot vote for a prime minister directly. They vote for candidates in their electorates. There is no equivalent to the primary election process used in the USA.
- Voters elect candidates at the election, with the person who leads the successful party becoming the prime minister – but the party can remove the prime minister/leader of that government after the election (for example, Gorton, Hawke, Rudd, Gillard, Abbott) and the voters have no say in this. Excluding Turnbull, five of the last nine prime ministers have been removed by their party in this way after the election. Therefore, frequently, the head of government is not the person who successfully led that party at the election.
- There is no guaranteed tenure of office for the prime minister; Menzies was prime minister from 1949 to 1966, while Forde lasted only eight days.

Democratic features of the process used to elect the president of the USA include the following.

- Thousands of voters are directly involved in the selection of the two candidates who will run for the presidency (via the party primaries and caucuses) and in the process eliminate other candidates. The primaries give party members a democratic say for the person they want to run for the presidency.
- During the primary/caucus process, Americans have the opportunity to really get to know the candidates and their policies via a series of party debates, numerous rallies and speeches, and extensive media scrutiny. The tussle between a field of Republicans in late 2015 and into 2016 is an excellent example. For instance, American voters had ample opportunities to find out what Donald Trump was like and determine what kind of president he would be.
- At each of the two major party conventions before the election, the delegates vote for the candidate who will contest the president. Again members of the parties are directly involved in the choice of leader. The 2016 conventions of each major party were notable as they broke

with recent traditions and rather than a stage-managed show of unity, some speakers were booed off stage, such as when Ted Cruz refused to endorse Donald Trump, and Bernie Sanders attempted to rally Democrats behind Hillary Clinton.

- All eligible voters can vote for their choice of president in the November election.
- Unless a president is impeached, which is rare, they will stay in office for a full four-year term and, unlike the Australian prime minister, cannot be overthrown by their own party mid-term. When people vote for a president there is a clear understanding that the president will be there for four years. There have been two attempts to impeach a president (Andrew Johnson in the 1860s and Bill Clinton in the 1990s); both were impeached by the House of Representatives, but acquitted by the Senate.

Undemocratic features of the process used in the USA include the following.

- The campaigns cost a huge amount of money and candidates with massive sources of donations are at an advantage, also given the length of the process.
- As voting in the USA is optional, often only 50 per cent to 60 per cent of eligible people vote, and a president is usually elected with only a minority of eligible voters choosing that person.
- In reality, the president is formally chosen by the electoral college, which can overturn the people's choice. The electoral college creates the possibility for the loser of the popular vote to win the electoral vote. This could be seen as undemocratic.
- The concept of the electoral college may be seen as undemocratic itself, as less populist states are over-represented and some delegates do not vote as their state has voted. There are 538 members of the electoral college; 270 is a majority. A person who obtains 270 votes or more becomes the president, regardless of the percentage of votes they gained.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

The main reason the United States has a slightly more democratic system for electing the President is due to the fact that the voters are allowed the opportunity to directly vote for their preferred candidate. In the USA on election day, voters will have the choice between the candidate from either major party- Hillary Clinton (Democrats) or Donald Trump (Republicans). They also have the option to vote for minor party candidates such as The Greens Party- or even write in their own independent candidate. This is more democratic than Australia as it allows all voters to have a direct say over who will become President. In Australia voters are restricted to voting for representatives only from their own electorate which gives them only a limited amount of indirect influence over who will become the prime minister.

Question 3

This question proved challenging for many students and was not a popular choice. There was some evidence that students attempted to fit prepared essays on this area of study to the topic, failing to address the question.

As a 'discuss' question there was quite a deal of scope for students to talk about the role political parties have in forming domestic policy, considering major, minor and micro parties, inside and outside parliament, and even the way government and opposition parties operate. This topic did not invite students to move in to a discussion of other formulating factors. Students must resist the temptation to do this when responding to this area of study; they should read the set question carefully.

Referring to one or more policies studied during the year allowed for a range of examples to be used.

The roles of political parties in policy formulation include the following.

- The most obvious influence is that one of the two major parties becomes the government of Australia seemingly with a mandate to introduce and implement policy. For example, the Liberal Party had a mandate to follow through with a plebiscite on marriage equality after the 2016 election.
- Minor and micro parties operate with the major aim of influencing policy in less direct ways, because Bills introduced by them face considerable difficulties being passed in parliament. For example, the policy areas of the ABCC and backpacker tax seen in the parliament in 2016 were impacted by the minor parties and independents in the Senate.
- The place of party ideology is important to policy development; for example, the ideological discussion about 'lifters and leaners' in the Liberal Party, which underpinned the 2013 Budget and continued into budget discussions in 2016
- The role of caucus (ALP) and the parliamentary party rooms, where the more detailed policy is determined and agreed to by MPs.
- The role of elections and their timing on party policy development. For example, both major parties being on the same page about refugee policy has been crucial in the lead-up to recent elections; neither party wants to vary their policies during an election campaign.
- The role of individual MPs/ministers/parliamentary secretaries/shadow ministers, etc. Skilled parliamentarians are able to advance a particular policy in parliament.
- The role of minor parties, especially in the Senate. For instance, the Greens were crucial in passing Senate voting reforms in 2016.
- Micro parties can be very significant depending on the Senate numbers. For example, the crossbenchers from the Motoring Enthusiast Party, Family First and the Liberal Democrats were crucial in blocking aspects of the Abbott government's legislative program. They can also 'horsetrade' with the government to amend policy in return for favours.

Question 4

The question was on a specific area of foreign policy. Essays responding to this topic needed to focus entirely on economic factors inside and outside Australia and their role in foreign policy formulation. Similarly to Question 3, students were not able to go on to discuss other foreign policy formulation factors in general.

Some high-scoring essays were able to offer detailed discussion and clear knowledge of the key role that economic factors play in forming contemporary Australian foreign policy by using evidence of both external examples, such as free trade agreements, our participation in bodies such as the WTO, and the influence of the global economy. Domestic factors such as unemployment rates, export drivers, lobbying from pressure groups and budget constraints were also discussed by some students. Both these internal and external factors are focused on helping Australia achieve our overall national interest, as the main objective of Australian foreign policy decisions.