2024 VCE Global Politics external assessment report

General comments

The 2024 VCE Global Politics examination was the final examination based on the now concluded *VCE Australian and Global Politics Study Design Unit 3 and 4 2018–2024*.

For 2025, teachers and students should refer to [VCE Politics Study Design From 2025](Pages%20-%20VCE%20Politics). Sample materials will be published in early 2025.

Students are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with the VCAA [glossary of command terms](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx), as the responses in the 2024 examination indicated that not all students were aware that command terms 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 questions required students to evaluate, discuss or analyse key concepts, and then to apply their own knowledge, which most students managed to do consistently.

The following advice addresses some of the key skills assessed in the 2024 examination:

* Students should only respond to the task word in the question. This is required to be awarded full marks and not doing so can lead to students wasting time, which may diminish the quality of their answers later in the examination paper.
* Careful reading is required to identify the different elements of each question, as in, for example, Section A Questions 6 and 11.
* In Question 3 of Section A, the command term ‘compare’ was used, which has not been used frequently in previous examinations. Consequently, responses to this question indicated a lack of certainty about how to compare the power of two intergovernmental organisations.
* Many questions, including all four of the essay topics in Section B, required students to ‘discuss’; but for these questions, some students only provided a description or explanation.

The following advice relates to general examination technique:

* Students may write in the blank space below the answer lines, but not outside the black margins. If students continue their responses at the end of the booklet, they need 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 that 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 will help students to attempt the question and possibly gain some marks.
* Students are not required to restate the question in their response. All assessors are familiar with examination questions and do not need to be reminded of the question to which the student is responding.

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

Question 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 5 | 20 | 43 | 32 | 2.0 |

This question required students to describe one example of state sovereignty being challenged by contested borders. The demonstration of an understanding of the term sovereignty – in this case including a number of key components such as legitimate, widely accepted, effective control over territory, or authority to represent their territorial entity within the international community – was critical.

This could have been done by providing specific evidence of an example of a contested border, followed by a description of how sovereignty is or can be challenged through the contestation of a state’s borders. Higher-scoring responses linked the specific details of their case study of a contested border to elements of the definition of sovereignty. Students could have referred to examples of borders contested through physical/military force or examples of contested recognition of certain borders and territories.

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

The state sovereignty of India and China was challenged by the contested border along the Himalayas, with both sides interpreting the Galwan Valley as falling within their recognised territory. On the 14th June 2020, Chinese and Indian forces engaged in conflict in the Galwan Valley using fence posts and clubs wrapped in barbed wire; resulting in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers (New York Times). By threatening both India and China’s perceived territory and access to natural resources, the contested Himalayan border has challenged the sovereignty of both states.

Question 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 4 | 5 | 18 | 28 | 29 | 17 | 3.3 |

This question required students to explain how the United Nations attempts to achieve two of its aims. Two precise and accurate UN aims needed to be stated. While these did not need to be word for word accurate, students needed to clearly demonstrate that they understood two specific aims. They then needed to be able to use contemporary examples for each of the aims and draw clear links from the examples provided to the stated aims.

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

The United Nations (UN) as the premier IGO, attempts to achieve its aim of maintaining international peace and security through the use of resolutions of the Security Council, which are binding on members under the UN Charter. On June 10, 2024, the UNSC passed Resolution 2735 which called upon Hamas to accept a ceasefire deal, and a resolution on March 25, 2024, calling for an “immediate ceasefire and lasting truce” in Gaza thus using the powers of the UNSC to attempt to end conflict and restore security. Additionally, the UN aims to achieve its aim of facilitating international cooperation to solve international problems by coordinating actions among its member states. This was demonstrated in 2015 through the creation of the Paris Climate Accord which was acceded by 196 states and aimed to ‘limit global warming to well below 2ºC in an attempt to solve the international problem of climate change. Thus the UN uses its power to issue binding resolutions through the UNSC and the ability to coordinate states to achieve its aims.

Question 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Average |
| % | 3 | 3 | 7 | 15 | 22 | 24 | 19 | 8 | 4.4 |

This question required students to compare how one non-state actor and one transnational corporation (TNC) can challenge state sovereignty. The command term ‘compare’ requires students to recognise similarities and differences and the significance of these similarities and differences. As per the Study Design, a non-state actor does not include:

* states
* TNCs
* IGOs (intergovernmental organisations such as the UN, ICC and IMF)
* regional groupings (NATO, ASEAN, EU).

Rather, a non-state actor is considered to be a legal organisation, including human rights NGOs, environmental NGOs and/or organised religions or a global terrorist movement.

Students needed to demonstrate understanding of the term ‘sovereignty’, correctly identify one non-state actor, link their example of the non-state actor to how it does or does not challenge state sovereignty and then apply a similar approach to an appropriate example of a TNC.

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

Daesh can challenge state sovereignty to a lesser extent than Shell. Daesh has historically undermined Iraq and Syria’s territorial sovereignty by establishing a 42,000 km2 caliphate in 1/3 of Syria and 40% of Iraq. This also challenged political sovereignty as the states could not enforce laws due to the loss of effective control over this territory as ‘anti-ISIS [Daesh] policies have been abysmal failures’ (The Guardian). On the other hand, due to Shell’s vast economic power, it can challenge Nigeria’s economic and political sovereignty to a greater extent. Despite causing 1010 oil spills from 2013–2018 in the Niger Delta and only complying with environmental law 27% of the time, Shell still claims a 7% stake in federal revenue and made $2 billion from activities in 2019 alone. The transnational corporation undermines effective control of policy because Nigeria cannot enforce domestic laws, and economic dependence on Shell has been fostered, signalling a huge challenge to state sovereignty, greater than that of Daesh, whose territorial challenge to state sovereignty has been largely surmounted by 2024. Ultimately, ‘Shell has absolute impunity in its activities’ (Kobah, 2015) and challenges Nigerian sovereignty as a predator, exploitative of host states.

Question 4

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | Average |
| % | 26 | 29 | 45 | 1.2 |

In this question, students were asked to describe one factor that shapes the pursuit of economic prosperity by their selected Asia-Pacific state. While there are several factors that influence a state’s national interest, it was critical here for students to draw a direct link between their chosen factor and chosen state’s achievement of economic prosperity.

Relevant factors included:

* the need to fulfil the social contract
* large population
* historical context (Century of Humiliation)
* rivalry with states such as Japan, South Korea and the USA
* desire to lift living standards
* strengthening the government’s ability to meet the needs of its people
* declining age demographics.

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

One factor that has influenced China’s interest in economic prosperity, was the century of humiliation. The century of humiliation was a period during the 1800 to 1900s where Japanese and western powers interfered with Chinese affairs. China views this as an embarrassment, hence as a key element of the China Dream, ‘Strong China’ stems from a desire to become a regional if not global hegemon, primarily through increasing their economy to contend with other superpowers and prevent western powers from interfering again.

Question 5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 21 | 8 | 12 | 23 | 23 | 13 | 2.6 |

In this question, students were asked to discuss how their selected Asia-Pacific state uses political power to pursue security. The Global Politics glossary defines political power as ‘the use of a state’s internal political machinery to exert influence over the actions of others (may be domestic or external). For example, legislation, executive orders, “white papers”’. The higher-scoring responses demonstrated an understanding of political power; identified one specific use of political power, which needed to indicate its domestic origin; and incorporated evidence to allow some discussion about the pursuit of security via the identified use of political power.

Higher-scoring responses used precise evidence to show how the use of political power directly impacts the state’s pursuit of security (which could have been either effective or ineffective).

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

China uses political power, the ability to influence through the use of internal political machinery, to quash the ‘three evils’ and maintain national security. China vilifies the ‘three evils’ of ‘separatism, extremism, terrorism’ which are allegedly exhibited by the Uighur Muslim population in Xinjiang and employed political power to turn the region into a virtual police state. For instance, China has systematically detained 1.3m Uighur Muslims and subjected them to ‘re-education camps.’ A clear example of political power is the passing of the Xinjiang specific ‘Construction on Public Safety’ legislation in 2017 which allows the government to ‘crack down’ on ‘threats to national security’, referring to Uighurs. In response to democracy protests in Hong Kong, China also used political power to pass the National Security law in June 2020 which criminalises anything deemed threatening to ‘national security’. Therefore political power is used effectively to pursue national security by China.

Question 6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 14 | 11 | 24 | 17 | 12 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 2.9 |

This question asked students to analyse the extent to which pragmatism has been demonstrated within your selected state’s use of power to pursue the national interest of regional relationships. The Global Politics glossary defines pragmatism as a school of thought in which policy is influenced primarily by practical considerations, as opposed to a particular ideology. Some students’ understanding of this term appeared to be based upon the outcome or result of a foreign policy decision taken rather than its precise meaning, which looks specifically at the compromise and negotiation that may deviate from an ideologically stated position.

Students who simply stated that an action is pragmatic based on the result or decision were not awarded marks. Responses that were awarded all of the available marks contrasted pragmatism with idealism, included more examples of pragmatism, and examined the effectiveness of the use of power in establishing/influencing regional relationships. For responses to be awarded marks, the examples of regional relationships had to have come from the list of Asia-Pacific states provided on page 32 of the Global Politics Study Design.

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

Pragmatism refers to a state prioritising practical considerations such as what is best for the state, over following particular ideologies. This is shown to negatively affect regional relationships, as in 2020, China placed tariffs on Australian exports, such as lobster, barley, beef and wine, in order to stop Australia’s independent inquiry into COVID-19. This has formed part of China’s 14 grievances, however, despite this China still trades iron ore with Australia, going against their ideology of the 14 grievances, as trading iron ore is a particular consideration as this helps boost China’s economy. However, this has affected China’s regional relationship with Australia as it resulted in 94% of Australians wanting the Australian government to reduce our economic dependence on China and look for other states to trade, thus impacting regional relationships. However, China has developed a positive regional relationship through their Free Trade Agreement with Cambodia, which is a pragmatic response as this agreement helps boost the economy of China, resulting in trade increasing by $10 billion, this being a practical consideration. This has resulted in a positive regional relationship with Cambodia as Hun Sen, the President of Cambodia said China is a ‘true friend’, thus sharing positive regional relationships.

Question 7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 15 | 28 | 35 | 22 | 1.7 |

In this question, students were required to use one example to describe how realism limits the pursuit of justice in global politics. The Global Politics glossary defines justice as ‘the concept of moral rightness based on ethics, law, fairness and equity that, importantly, also seeks punishment and/or compensation when these ethics are breached’. Realism is defined as ‘states (and other global actors) prioritising their specific interest and needs over those of the global community’.

In the responses to this question, the demonstration of a clear understanding of both justice and realism was critical, along with an appropriate example of justice and an explanation of how the selected example limits justice. The question did not stipulate that students must use an example of an ethical issue, although many did select one of the four issues listed in the Study Design. Issues not listed in the Study Design could include the ICC (The Rome Statute), the Paris Climate Accord and the UN *Convention on the Law of the Sea*.

To demonstrate a realist action, students could use the example of a breach/ignoring of a specific ethic of international law by a global actor.

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

Realism states prioritising their own interests and needs over the needs of the global community, can limit the pursuit of justice in relation to arms control. Despite Syria’s breech of Article 1 of the Chemical Weapons Convention by using chlorine gas to kill 90 civilians at Khan Shaykhun on April 4, 2017 – therefore a breach of ethics and international law, Russia’s realism limited the pursuit of punishment on Syria. Russia prioritised its alliance with Assad to veto s/2017/315 and demand an investigation into the breach and punish Syria’s violation of ethics with sanctions in s/2017/172. As a result, the United nations’ pursuit of justice was curtailed by realism.

Question 8

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 7 | 8 | 16 | 24 | 28 | 16 | 3.1 |

For this question, students needed to explain one cosmopolitan response to an international law relating to a specific ethical issue selected by the student. The Global Politics glossary defines cosmopolitanism as ‘a desire among global actors to cooperate to reach common goals and outcomes to meet challenges that are presented to the global community’.

Students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the term cosmopolitanism, identify an international law that is relevant to the ethical issue selected, and include an example of a cosmopolitan response from a global actor. Finally, students could explain why or how this response is cosmopolitan (complying with or pursuing compliance) by demonstrating how the actor’s action resulted in upholding the requirements of the international law.

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

Turkey has made a cosmopolitan response to the people movement law of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. The state has reflected a desire to cooperate with other global actors to resolve people movement by welcoming over 3.7 million Syrian refugees and affording 90% integration onto local communities, upholding Article 32 of freedom of movement, as well as the permanency of their resettlement upholding Article 31 the right to not be expelled. Turkey has supported refugees’ businesses, provided 97% primary education and ‘set a positive and powerful example’ (Merkel) of responding to people movement, upholding ethics and the 1951 Convention, notably Article 33 of non-refoulement by not returning refugees to their state of origin, working to meet the challenges of 117.3 million global refugees in line with international law.

Question 9a.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | Average |
| % | 22 | 78 | 0.8 |

This question required students to identify an appropriate ethical debate relating to an ethical issue, and to discuss a different issue to that used in Question 8, or they were not awarded any marks.

Students needed to identify an ethical debate listed in the Study Design; paraphrasing of the debate was acceptable, but the ethical debate needed to appropriately relate to an ethical issue. Irrespective of specific wording, the student needed to clearly demonstrate one of the debates listed below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Human rights | People movement | Development | Arms control |
| Economic challenges to the universality of human rights | Obligations to asylum seekers and other refugees versus national interests including border security | Differing strategies for poverty alleviation | Differing approaches regarding non-state proliferation |
| Cultural challenges to the universality of human rights | The rights of refugees versus economic migrants | Overseas development assistance versus self-interest | International security versus state security |
| State sovereignty versus ‘Responsibility to Protect’ | Differing approaches regarding refugee resettlement | States – economic growth versus sustainable development | Arms control versus disarmament |

Question 9b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 9 | 6 | 14 | 16 | 24 | 18 | 13 | 3.5 |

In this question, students needed to analyse two sides of the ethical debate they nominated in Question 9a. Students were awarded marks by discussing an ethical debate they understood, even though they may not have been able to precisely articulate the debate in Question 9a. The debate had to clearly relate to one listed in the Study Design and their selected ethical issue.

For each side of the debate, students needed to identify one perspective (for example, realism or cosmopolitanism), an actor and an action reflecting this perspective. They also needed to describe how this actor’s action represented the identified perspective. Some students referenced specific articles of international law being upheld or breached/ignored.

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

The cosmopolitan side of this debate argues that human rights should be protected order under all circumstances in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), even despite potential economic gain. Australia is a proponent of this view as it implements stringent labour laws and a minimum wage to protect employees from exploitation. Australia therefore expresses cosmopolitanism in adhering to the UDHR’s ‘just and favourable conditions of work’ even while potentially hindering economic growth since the IMF reported that Australia’s GDP grew by only 2.9% in 2016 compared to Bangladesh’s at 6.9%. Alternatively, the realist side contends that it is permissible to sacrifice individual human rights for the collective benefit of economic growth. This view is typically by developing countries or rapidly growing economies such as China. A Chinese white paper from 2018 desires above all else to ‘eliminate poverty’, however this approach necessitates the deterioration of human rights. For example at China’s Foxconn factory it is reported that workers work ‘100 hours overtime’ and have been forced to sign ‘no suicide pacts’. Despite this, the realist view of China dictates that the greater good for economic prosperity outweighs individual human rights violations.

Question 10

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 6 | 4 | 11 | 18 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 10 | 4 | 4.2 |

In this question, students were asked to discuss how the responses of one state actor and one non-state actor have either assisted or challenged attempts to achieve effective resolution of a selected global crisis.

Students needed to correctly identify a relevant state actor and include an example of how they have responded to a specific crisis, and then to correctly identify a relevant non-state actor and an example of their response to a specific crisis. The question required a precise discussion of the impact (positive or negative, enhanced or exacerbated), using precise evidence about the responses of the state actor and the non-state actor.

Some students chose to compare the responses of actors; this was done effectively and was awarded marks. These responses focused on the actor either assisting or challenging the effective resolution of the crisis.

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

The responses of China and Amnesty International has assisted attempts to achieve the effective resolution of climate change. China’s response focuses on the energy transition and reducing reliance of fossil fuels, carrying 24% of the world’s renewable energy capacity. The state has enhanced efforts of international cooperation to resolve the crisis signing the COP 26 forestry pledge to end deforestation and commercial logging by 2030, addressing a cause of climate change as well. China has invested over $300 billion in 2016–2020 Five Year Plan to increase the market share of electric vehicles as the state has emphasised the Paris Agreement’s value in providing a framework towards effective targets to reach net zero by 2060. Amnesty International has likewise assisted attempts by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to achieve the effective resolution of the global crisis. Amnesty released a report in 2023 on heatwaves and droughts plaguing Pakistan: a burning emergency: calling on states to mobilise the Loss and Damage Fund to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Amnesty have also worked with the United Nations to draw attention to the crisis ‘the most serious threat to human rights this century, assisting in mobilising efforts of international cooperation to resolve climate change. Overall, the responses of China and Amnesty to climate change have enhanced attempts to achieve effective resolution.

Question 11

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Average |
| % | 8 | 4 | 12 | 18 | 21 | 18 | 13 | 6 | 3.8 |

This question required students to analyse the role of two different global actors in responding to a global crisis through international cooperation, and students needed to choose a different global crisis to that used for Question 10. Many students were well prepared to examine the responses of different global actors; however, some responses did not thoroughly examine the concept of international cooperation, suggesting that may not have read the question carefully enough.

The Global Politics glossary defines international cooperation as ‘occasions when global actors collaborate and interact with each other in the pursuit of reciprocal common ideals, goals and interests’. For this question, students needed to analyse the impact of the two global actors’ responses on international cooperation. Unlike Question 10, students could choose the two actors examined from either the same or a different category of actors, such as states, IGOs, TNCs and NSAs.

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

The United Nations has facilitated international cooperation in its response to the crisis of terrorism through Security Council resolutions which have subsequently provoked state to introduce policies countering terrorism. In August 2014, the UN produced S/RES/2170, which called on member states to ‘take effective measures to prevent the recruitment of foreign fighters from their soil to join terrorist groups’. This resolution was adopted by member states in the UN and provoked responses from multiple states to the crisis including Australia and Germany, which both adopted laws targeting the recruitment of foreign fighters in 2014. However, the UNs response was limited by terrorist groups such as Islamic state’s continued ideological power and capacity to disseminate recruitment propaganda in a globalised political landscape. Thus between 2014-2017 the US State Department estimates that 40,000 foreign fighters travelled to join terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria.

Evidently, the UN has had some success in facilitating attempts at resolution through international cooperation, but this remains limited by terrorist’s global influence. Additionally, the US have attempted to response to terrorism through the creation of US-led military initiative – Operation inherent Resolve (June 2014) – the Operation employs international cooperation currently possessing 82 international partner states across the world with the aim ‘to defeat the influence of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria’. This has been highly effective for the US Operation Resolve succeeded in liberating all IS-held territory in Iraq and Syria by March 2019, comprising 110,000 sq. kms of territory and 7.7 million people. However, despite its loss of this caliphate IS globalised expanding its influence on the African continent in 2023 it carried out 266 attacks in Nigeria accounting for 60% of the group’s total attacks and 46% of global terrorism deaths in that year. Thus, for both the UN and US (as initiator of Operation Inherent Resolve), the globalised power of terrorist groups, such that they can resurface around the world and disseminate propaganda, has undermined efforts to address the crisis through international cooperation.

Section B

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question completed | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| % | 1 | 10 | 38 | 25 | 26 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Average |
| % | 2 | 0.7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 11.8 |

A number of 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 who had created a plan tended to organise their thoughts more clearly, provided clear links between their arguments and maintained a coherent argument throughout the essay. The inclusion 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, high-scoring responses developed a clear contention, 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 that a central idea/theme is referenced consistently throughout the essay.

Some questions that students should consider when writing essays include:

* Have I correctly engaged with the key terms in the question?
* How can I link my arguments so that, rather than being disparate, they all build towards a 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 the direction of their argument. Furthermore, these responses often demonstrated a limited understanding of key course concepts or a lack of willingness to engage with those concepts, as required for this question. Some essays appeared to be pre-prepared responses, as they did not address the specific requirements of the question. Such responses were awarded 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 in Section B that scored highly engaged with the topic in its entirety, developed a reasoned and nuanced position, and were expressed clearly using relevant and specific evidence.

All four questions in Section B asked students to evaluate in their essays. The VCAA term ‘evaluate’ is defined as ‘ascertain the value or amount of; make a judgment using the information supplied, criteria and/or own knowledge and understanding to consider a logical argument and/or supporting evidence for and against different points, arguments, concepts, processes, opinions or other information’.

Question 1

This was the least popular of the four essay topics offered in this year’s exam. Students were asked to evaluate the extent to which multilateralism has assisted states in achieving their aims. The Global Politics glossary defines multilateralism as a system of coordinating relations between three or more global actors, usually in pursuit of specific objectives.​ Students needed to clearly explain that multilateralism is not just an example of global cooperation.

Multilateralism needed to be the focal point of the essay; other approaches to states achieving their aims could be used as comparative points, but they needed to be evaluated against multilateralism. Some students argued that unilateralism or bilateralism to a greater or lesser extent assist in achieving their aims, which was an effective way to argue this topic. Students needed to relate all their points back to the aims of the specific states they are focusing on.

As multilateralism is not confined to the United Nations or the United Nations Security Council, an essay that isolated one actor’s endeavours to demonstrate multilateralism to varying levels of effectiveness could access the full range of marks. Other forms of multilateralism include intergovernmental organisations such as the IMF and ICC, and regional groupings like ASEAN, NATO, the EU, the Arab League, AUKUS and the QUAD.

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

The understanding that the process of multilateralism can assist states in attaining their aims can only be considered accurate to a limited extent. This is because, in most circumstances, the process of state’s engaging in international discussion and cooperation in order to respond to issues of global concern hinders the ability of states to achieve their ambitions. This is due to the fact that states are entities that have recognised sovereign control over a permanent population within defined borders, and thus their highly individual and separate interests could be subverted through their engagement with one another. For example, multilateralism often leads to the creation of international treaties – such as the United Nations Paris Climate Agreement – thus undermining the state’s aim of maintaining their sovereign powers to exert effective control over all areas within their defined territorial grounds. Moreover, multilateral engagement can result in states having to compromise their economic interests in favour of appeasing the global community or complying with their demands, as demonstrated through China’s and Australia’s responses to multilateral cooperation that has arisen in response to the climate crisis. However, on the other hand, multilateral discussions can address issues that are pivotal to a state’s sovereignty and thus combined power of multiple states can ultimately promote their desire for national security.

Question 2

This was the most popular of the four essay questions offered in this year’s exam. Students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of one Asia-Pacific state’s use of foreign policy instruments (FPIs) in achieving at least one national interest. Students should look at their selected FPI(s) and explain which of these four Study Design categories it fits into: diplomatic, economic, military or cultural. For this question, students needed to discuss more than one FPI and at least one national interest. Students needed to clearly articulate how their specific example/case study demonstrates aspects of the FPI rather than claim that it is an example of that FPI by simply naming it. In some responses, the case studies used demonstrated aspects of multiple FPIs, but students needed to draw clear and logical links back to the specified FPI(s).

Students who discussed the domestic application of power, and its impact, were not awarded any marks. Students who chose to refer to regional relationships as an element of national interest had to draw on case studies referencing an Asia-Pacific state listed on page 32 of the Study Design.

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

The effectiveness of China’s use of foreign policy instruments is contingent upon the intention and result of their intended national interest outcomes. China’s use of diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument as it has been highly effective in achieving prioritised national interest outcomes with little blowback. On the other hand, their use of military as a foreign policy instrument whilst predominantly effective in achieving national interest outcomes has invited some blowback. However, China’s use of trade as a foreign policy instrument has led to a marked difference between intention and result, diminishing its effectiveness. Ultimately, China’s effective use of foreign policy instruments is dependent upon the difference between intent and result of national interest outcomes.

Question 3

For this question, which was the third-most popular essay topic, students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of international laws when they are upheld and supported in regard to at least one ethical issue they have studied. This question provided scope for students to evaluate more than one ethical issue and to reference more than one international law.

To be awarded full marks, students needed to relate all of their analysis to the specifically stated elements of the international law being upheld or breached/ignored. Some essays identified an effective response to an ethical issue occurring when the ethics codified within international law are pursued or met. Other responses examined the often-competing perspectives of realism and cosmopolitanism through the perspective of the actions and motivations of different, relevant global actors.

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

The ethical issue of people movement is effectively responded to when global actors prioritise an ethics-based cosmopolitan perspective, which often aligns with international law. Whilst Australia and Hungary uphold the 2000 Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocol Against the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants by Land and Sea (2000 Convention) the states’ realist responses undermine the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, therefore not responding to people movement effectively. On the other hand, Turkey, Germany and New Zealand prioritise cosmopolitanism which fulfils legal obligations under the 1951 Convention, demonstrating effective responses to people movement. Ultimately, to effectively respond to this ethical issue, states must prioritise ethics and cosmopolitanism to ensure that international laws are upheld.

Question 4

This was the second-most popular essay topic. Students were asked to evaluate whether or not the key aspects of a global crisis are the main causes of that crisis. Students could choose to argue that key aspects are causes, or contributing factors, to global crises. Alternatively, they could have decided to suggest that some key aspects are representative of challenges or responses (or even solutions). Equally, students could choose to evaluate the key aspects against other causes of the chosen crisis/crises, in which case students needed to evaluate those causes in comparison/contrast to the key aspects of their selected crisis/crises.

Below are the key aspects listed in the Study Design.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Climate change | Armed conflict | Terrorism | Economic instability |
| Resource exploitation | Intervention | Non-state terrorism | Globalisation |
| National interests | War as an instrument of state policy | Terrorism as an instrument of state policy | Capitalism’s boom/bust cycle |
| Methods of adapting to and reducing climate change | Prosecuting war crimes in international law | The role of asymmetric warfare | The role of key global actors as stabilisers of the global economy |

The following is the introduction from a mid-scoring response:

While key aspects are a cause of global crises, ultimately unilateralism is more significant as it facilitates them. The key aspects of climate change and terrorism do cause the crisis as they create the conditions needed for them to exist. However, unilateral pursuits drive the key aspects of climate change causing them to be more significant. Similarly, the key aspects of terrorism are prevalent due to unilateralism. Therefore, although key aspects are a cause, unilateralism is a main driver of the crises as it facilitates them.