

2019 VCE Global Politics examination report

General comments

The 2019 Global Politics examination was the second examination based upon the revised *VCE Australian and Global Politics Study Design 2018–2022*. The examination contained questions requiring students to incorporate several related concepts from different parts of the study design. Students generally managed these requirements well, with many students completing all questions. However, some did not gain the full range of marks for their responses to questions in Section A because they either did not read the requirements of the question carefully enough (for example, Question 7 asked students to use a different ethical issue from the one they chose to write about in Question 6), or did not remember that case study examples on regional relationships must be from within the designated Asia-Pacific region listed in the study design. Students need to be aware that questions can be drawn from the key knowledge and key skills listed in the four Areas of Study, including the prefaces or introductory material associated with each Area of Study.

Advice for students

- Students are advised to write their responses in paragraph form for questions such as Questions 2, 3, 4c. and 10.
- Students should not rely on previously prepared answers. For example in Section A, Question 2 asked students to write about how one transnational corporation (TNC) has used advancements in technology and communication to expand its power. While many students could explain how the TNC has used its economic power, very few were able to clearly demonstrate how technology and communications allowed the TNC to gain greater power.
- It is not necessary to define key terms in global politics before answering a question, unless the question specifically asks for a definition. It is necessary, however, for students to demonstrate through their response a clear and thorough understanding of the concept a key term represents.
- Students should use the extent of response space and mark allocation as a guide to the length of the expected response. For example, Questions 4a. and 4b. required only one example each, so including a second example gained no additional marks.
- Before including examples and case studies, students should ensure that these are relevant and will enhance their response.
- While there are no criteria covering legibility of handwriting on VCAA exams, students are encouraged to make their work as easy to read as possible, so that their meaning is clear to assessors.

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
%	2	2	9	87	2.8

Students were required to identify and give the full name of three intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) based on their listed aims. The vast majority of students handled this task very well. Some students nominated the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as one of the IGOs, but this is not included in the study design.

Intergovernmental organisation	Aim
United Nations	to foster worldwide cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems
International Monetary Fund	to facilitate the growth of international trade, thus promoting job creation, economic growth and poverty reduction
International Criminal Court	to serve as a court of last resort that can investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	8	8	20	27	21	11	5	3

A number of students had difficulty with this question, which used an excerpt from the study design. It seems that students were keen to write about the (economic) power of transnational corporations but were unable to directly engage with how advances in both technology and communication had expanded the power of a TNC. To access the full marks students needed to clearly identify specific advances in both technology and communications that had expanded the power of a TNC. Simply stating that they did, without the provision of specific evidence, significantly limited the response.

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

Advances in technology and communication have allowed the TNC Glencore to expand its mining business internationally, with increased productivity due to advancements in machinery leading to increased profits and communication facilitating the creation of subsidiaries in other states such as Zambia. As a result of these advances, which have been facilitated by globalisation, Glencore's economic power has increased greatly and thus it is able to use this power to influence the policies and actions of states to suit its own interests, usually through the threat of withholding or withdrawing investments. This occurred in Zambia when in January 2015, the Zambian government attempted to raise mining royalties from 4% to 20% in an attempt to make up for a budget shortfall caused by tax evasion by mining companies such as Mopani (Glencore's subsidiary).

In response to this proposed tax increase Mopani cut off all investment and threatened to shut down all of its mining operations. As the economy in Zambia is dependent on its mining industry and investment by mining companies, by April 2015, the royalty increase was capped at 9%. This shows that Glencore's great economic power, which is facilitated by globalisation and the advancements of communication and technology, have allowed it to challenge even state sovereignty.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	4	2	6	12	20	25	19	12	4.5

Students were asked to evaluate the power of states, referring to at least two challenges to sovereignty. They were not restricted in what challenges they elected to evaluate. While many students wrote about the challenges posed by regional groupings, contested borders and issues requiring multilateral responses, others wrote excellent responses focussing on challenges such as climate change, armed conflict, terrorism, economic instability and people movement.

The key element responses needed to demonstrate was **evaluation** of the power of states. Simply describing the power of states was not enough, no matter how much detail was included. It was essential to engage in evaluative judgments to gain full marks for this question.

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

States have traditionally been referred to as the 'central actors' of global politics, and this is more or less true as state sovereignty has allowed states to maintain power and control over their territories and population. However, due to globalisation, the power distribution across the global stage has been diluted to include regional groupings, intergovernmental organisations, non-state actors and TNCs. For example, the European union (EU) is able to challenge sovereignty as member states have to abide by EU rules, product standards and human rights standards. The EU also involves free trade and free movement among member states, meaning member states have less control over their economies and immigration. However, states do remain 'masters of treaties' meaning they were able to choose which elements of sovereignty they were willing to give up to further their national interest of economic prosperity. Furthermore, states are still able to maintain sovereignty over other elements such as military operations and as demonstrated by BREXIT, choose to leave the EU altogether.

Secondly as the power distribution among states themselves is also unequal, more powerful states are able to impose upon the sovereignty of less powerful states, such as through territorial disputes. An example of this would be China's extensive claims in the South China Sea, which legally belongs to other states such as Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	10	26	55	2.3

This question required students to clearly identify a specific foreign policy instrument and link it to the state's maintenance of economic prosperity. Better responses were able to directly link their example of a foreign policy instrument to how it actually serves to increase or strengthen that state's economic prosperity.

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

The foreign policy instrument of trade has allowed Australia to maintain economic prosperity. This has been clearly seen with the signing of ChAFTA, in 2015, a free trade agreement with China. This is a \$183bn two-way trade relationship with China, in which 95% of trade is tariff-free, allowing for 1/3 of Australian exports to be sold in China. This agreement has undoubtedly led to Australia being the wealthiest state in terms of medium wealth per adult (2018). Also, it has led to Australia having a record twenty eight years of continuous economic growth.

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	22	16	17	25	20	2.1

Students were required to provide a specific example of soft power and explain how the use of soft power affects the nominated state's pursuit of its international standing. Soft power refers to the ability of one global actor to shape the actions of other global actors through uncoercive, yet persuasive, means so that they all agree on the outcome. This can be achieved in various ways, for example through diplomatic, cultural or historical ties. Many students did not answer this question very well, demonstrating a limited understanding of soft power.

Some responses simply stated that soft power means no coercion is present, whereas inducements, be they economic, diplomatic or trade-based, are examples of hard power, without the architecture of military-based examples. Consequently, direct application of aid or other forms of economic power are not examples of soft power. This is an important element of the coursework and one that students and teachers need to review and further refine.

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

Australia's use of soft power, the ability to influence an actor's decisions through un-coercive yet persuasive means, to achieve international standing was seen through the use of Koala Diplomacy. This involves the use of Australia's iconic animal, to project a positive image of Australia to the global community. This was particularly seen at the G20 Summit held in Brisbane in 2014, where several world leaders were seen and photographed smiling and holding koalas. Consequently, this projected a very positive image of Australian culture to the international community, pursuing Australia's international standing.

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	7	4	6	11	16	14	18	15	10	4.7

This question required students to describe with specific examples the use of diplomacy and the military by their nominated state in the Asia-Pacific region. They then needed to evaluate the effectiveness of their examples of diplomatic and military use in achieving the nominated state's national interest in regional relationships.

It was of concern that a few students nominated states outside of the prescribed Asia-Pacific region, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso, to evaluate the effectiveness of their examples in achieving regional relationships. The states for this national interest element must come from within the prescribed list on page 32 of the study design. In addition, some students explained, rather than evaluated, the impact of diplomacy and the military on regional relationships.

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

Australia's use of diplomacy, ability to conduct effective negotiations between states without arousing hostility, and military, the capacity or placement of a states' military has been extremely effective in achieving regional relationships. This is particularly seen with Australia's AUSMIN meetings with the US, an annual meeting with the ministers of defence and foreign affairs. This has undoubtedly led to stronger relationships between the two states as they plan ways to manage the defence of each state. Furthermore, the use of military has been pivotal in strengthening Australia's relationship with the US. This can also be seen with the ANZUS treaty which underpins Australia's military alliance with the US, that has allowed the two states to strengthen their relationship, which was epitomised with the '100 years of mateship' celebrated in 2018 further tightening the bonds between the two.

The presence of 2,500 US marines in Darwin and the purchase of F35 JSFs (\$17bn) from the US has also served to strengthen the relationship, as they rely more heavily on each other for protection and national security. However, this close relationship with the US has hindered Australia's diplomatic relationship with China as Australia is caught in the middle of the US-China trade war. Australia's priority is to maintain positive relationships with both states but that has become more difficult in recent times.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	10	10	29	51	2.2

This question was relatively well managed by students as they only needed to identify one international law (which can be defined as a body of rules established by custom or written legal agreements that are accepted as binding upon the international community), explain what the international law focused on, and then make a direct connection to the nominated ethical issue.

It was not necessary to give the year the law was created or came into effect. Details like this, if presented inaccurately, may affect the final score for the question. Marks were awarded for the depth and accuracy of the discussion in terms of its relationship to the ethical issue.

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

One international law is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which relates to the ethical issue of human rights as it seeks to protect the rights of children. Under this law, ratified states are obligated to protect children from work or activities that are harmful to their development or safety, and also protect children from being sold, sexually exploited or used in child pornography.

Question 6a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	6	12	30	52	2.3

Students were required to identify a specific global actor's perspective on the nominated ethical issue they selected. They then needed to clearly explain the actor's perspective, ideally by providing an example based on evidence or a case study. Better responses identified a realistic or cosmopolitan-based response and provided precise details to demonstrate the actor's perspective. Where appropriate, students should provide an example of the specific actions of an actor to support their answer and demonstrate their perspective.

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

People Movement

The United Nations (UN) has adopted a cosmopolitan view in response to the growing crisis. This is represented by the establishment of the Global Compact on Refugees, which serves to facilitate international cooperation amongst its 80 member-states, in response to the 25.9 million refugees worldwide, of which less than 1% were resettled in 2018. The UN aims to expand the rate of resettlement through this Compact.

Question 6b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	22	24	26	28	1.6

Students needed to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the concept of justice to explain one specific way in which the pursuit of justice assists in the pursuit of the ethical issue. A number of students did not have a good grasp of the definition of justice beyond the idea of ethics and morals. The question required a focus on precise methods of justice, whether they related to the principle of punishment or compensation. While many students showed a rudimentary understanding of the key terms in the study design, a lot more work needed to be done on applying this understanding beyond a memorised definition.

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

Justice is the concept of moral fairness based on ethics and seeks punishment when these ethics are breached; the International Criminal Court (ICC) exists to pursue justice for human rights abuses. They do this by acting as a court of last resort for the worst crimes (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity). They can do this within their 123 member-states, or outside of these states with the authorisation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In November 2019, Bosco Ntaganda (from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an ICC member-state), was sentenced to 30 years jail for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. The ICC also attempted to seek justice through the UNSC in 2009-10 to bring then Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to trial, but this was unsuccessful, highlighting the difficulties the ICC has in pursuing justice in some regions.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	10	4	9	16	23	18	21	3.8

This question required students to analyse one of four listed debates related to an ethical issue. Students needed to describe the two different sides of the selected ethical debate and provide either an explanation or relevant contextual information such as a pertinent influencing factor on either side of the debate.

Better responses clearly related the opposing perspectives of the ethical debate to specific global actors and discussed why they held that perspective/view and undertook certain specific action. Others indicated some possible misunderstanding of the question. For example, in the debate on differing approaches to non-state proliferation, some students examined the concept of proliferation, rather than **non-state** proliferation. Others did not specifically engage with the nominated ethical debate, and wrote instead about opposing perspectives on that ethical issue while ignoring the specific debate elements; for example, the rights of refugees versus economic migrants.

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

Arms Control

In the debate differing approaches regarding non-state proliferation, non-state actors such as ISIS believe they should have access to arms or weapons of mass destruction for the furtherance of their aims. Other global actors however, perceive that as being dangerous and hence believe that non-state proliferation should be prevented at all costs. ISIS supports the proliferation of such weapons to non-state actors as in 2014 when they took control of Mosul, they seized 40kg of uranium compound (uranyl acetate). They also used chemical weapons in attacks, fifty-two times in 2014 (NY Times). Hence, they support proliferation to non-state actors as it allows them to increase their power.

Actors such as the United Nations (UN), however, believe that this non-state proliferation is dangerous and should be prevented at all costs. The UN has passed resolutions such as Resolutions 1540 and 1977 which aim to prevent this proliferation. They mandate states to 'adopt and enforce laws and other preventative measures' (UN.org) to prevent the proliferation of these weapons to non-state actors. The UNs desire to uphold international laws reflects a cosmopolitan response whereas ISIS's only desire is to pursue their specific needs hence illustrating a realist response to this ethical debate.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	11	20	32	28	2.6

This question asked students to demonstrate a clear understanding of two important concepts, international cooperation and crisis diplomacy. High-scoring responses made explicit reference to the differences between the two (crisis diplomacy being a reaction to an issue which has come to a head, as opposed to the ongoing nature of international cooperation), using appropriate and accurate contemporary examples. Students are strongly encouraged to use a bridging sentence when outlining the specific difference between two concepts.

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

International cooperation refers to incidents where global actors work together to achieve common goals and outcomes. Crisis diplomacy, however, is a less formal and sustained process than international cooperation, involving global actors cooperating in the wake of an immediate crisis, most often natural disasters or armed conflicts. Crisis diplomacy is defined by its unplanned, immediate nature, such as 79 diplomats meeting on the side of a 2014 NATO meeting in Brussels in an unplanned, unscheduled meeting to discuss how best to manage the emerging non-state terrorist threat of Islamic State (IS).

International cooperation however, is characterised by being carefully planned and sustained, as illustrated through the 2015 Paris Climate Accords being finalised after a series of planned, scheduled meetings, whereby states cooperated to complete the terms of the treaty which underpins the efforts to limit rises in global temperatures to 1.5 °C - 2.0 °C above pre-industrial levels.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	10	22	32	29	2.7

In this question students needed to demonstrate an understanding of the term globalisation, which is a significant underlying concept across the course. They then needed to clearly link globalisation to the deterioration of the global crisis they selected, using a specific and relevant contemporary example.

While it was evident that many students understood globalisation and how it can be related to the global crisis they selected, some were not able to clearly demonstrate how globalisation specifically exacerbated the crisis.

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

Terrorism

Globalisation refers to the acceleration and intensification of the global exchange of goods, services, labour and capital. Globalisation has exacerbated the global crisis of terrorism by allowing terrorist groups to take advantage of advancements in technology, with the Islamic State (IS) producing at least 38 pieces of online propaganda a day (al Jazeera). Globalisation has also increased the use of international air travel, enabling IS's efforts to recruit up to 40,000 foreign fighters from across the world, who have participated in 424 suicide bombings, killing over 4,900 people in Iraq and Syria. Lastly, globalisation further enabled IS to spread non-state terrorism across state borders, its online Amaq News Agency to 'carry out and inspire' (CNN) over 70 terrorist attacks in 20 countries (excluding Iraq and Syria).

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	3	9	18	26	23	16	3.9

This question required students to identify two specific challenges to the effective resolution of a different global crisis than the one they used for Question 9.

Higher-scoring responses were able to clearly identify two specific and actual challenges and explain how and why they hampered a resolution. Students who didn't score well only identified

and described two challenges but did not analyse how the challenges made the crisis more intractable.

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

Climate Change

One challenge to resolving climate change is a reliance on fossil fuels. According to the IPCC, emissions from burning fossil fuels are one of the largest contributions to atmospheric CO² levels which are causing climate change. However, a shift away from burning these fuels is unlikely to occur because of a reliance on them for energy needs and economic growth. Australia, for example, exported \$67 billion dollars worth of coal in 2018 and therefore relies significantly on fossil fuels for economic prosperity, but poses a real challenge to the effective resolution of climate change.

Another challenge is that of government inaction. Many governments, such as the current Australian coalition government, refuses to acknowledge the crisis and therefore do not implement policies to resolve the crisis. For example, in 2019, PM Scott Morrison referred to concerns about climate change as 'needless anxiety' and additionally the Australian government has authorised the development of the Adani coal mine, which will undermine attempts to reduce atmospheric gases which contribute to climate change. Therefore, a lack of government action has hindered the effective resolution of the crisis.

Section B

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4
%	2	9	28	27	35

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	1	2	2	2	4	5	4	5	6	8	8	9	10	9	6	6	4	2	1	11.5

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

Lower-scoring essays were characterised by poor paragraphing, an introduction that did not clearly engage with the selected topic, absence of the specific language of the coursework, and a lack of specific detail and relevant facts. These responses usually consisted of what students knew, rather than a response to what was being asked. Previously prepared responses, even when very detailed and well written, do not result in high scores as they do not address the question asked.

On the other hand, high-scoring responses addressed the topic directly in the introduction, included precise sentences and demonstrated an appropriate use of the key terms from the study design throughout. These essays were supported by insightful analysis and detailed discussion with relevant contemporary evidence.

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

Question 1

This was the least popular of the four essay topics. Students were asked to discuss how global governance allows states to secure both security and stability. Global governance refers to institutions, rules, norms and legal arrangements that seek to facilitate cooperation and manage relations between states. It includes both governmental organisations such as the United Nations and non-governmental organisations.

A discussion question requires students to debate various aspects or perspectives. These perspectives may be considered as positives/negatives or be approached as a broader comparison of the concepts. Students needed to examine the centrality of both security and stability to a state's national interests and then highlight the concept of sovereignty as a fundamental element of a state's power. Students could have approached the essay from a broad theoretical perspective, supported by contemporary examples, or from a case study perspective. Finally, the term 'states' compelled students to discuss more than one state.

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

Global governance, rules, norms, institutions and legal arrangements that seek to facilitate and manage relations among states, largely allowing states to pursue security and stability. This is because without supranational institutions of global governance, states would not be regulated or monitored. This is seen through the United Nations (UN) which largely allows states to pursue security and stability. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also has allowed states to pursue stability, however possesses some limitations. Furthermore, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has also been able to allow states to pursue stability in security through its investigations and prosecutions but has also failed. Thus, global governance is important for the pursuit of security and stability of states.

Question 2

This was the second most popular of the four topics. Students were asked to examine at least three national interests – mostly, but not exclusively, from the four national interests in the study design – national security, economic prosperity, regional relationships and international standing. For each of the national interests examined, students needed to analyse the differing interpretations of that national interest. Differing interpretations do not need to be diametrically opposed but certainly need to demonstrate a clear and obvious distinction.

An analysis question requires students to study the parts of an idea in specific detail to determine how they relate. While many students chose to write their essay on this Area of Study (Power in the Asia-Pacific), some dealt mainly with the use of power in the region and made only superficial reference to the differing interpretations of a state's national interests.

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

Australia, a middle power state, is unable to set the global-political agenda without multilateral cooperation and is therefore reliant on the success of its key national interests, to represent and legitimise the state on the international stage. Australia's interests includes national security, economic prosperity, as well as regional relationships. In Australia's pursuit of national security, the ultimate is achieved, whereas Australia's international reputation has fallen. The state's pursuit and maintenance of economic prosperity has largely been achieved, however, the issue of Australia's over-reliance on other states is debateable. Furthermore, Australia's forging of successful regional relationships has seen the state become caught-up in a trade war that may require Australia to optimise certain relationships.

Question 3

This was the third most popular topic. Students were required to evaluate the extent to which international law governs the actions of global actors in relation to two ethical issues. The key instruction 'Evaluate' requires students to determine the worth of an idea or concept by making a comparative judgment. Ideally students take a position either for or against the contention, using specific examples or contemporary case studies, then make an evaluative statement about the extent to which international law governs the actions of the global actors in relation to the issue.

Students could choose from a variety of global actors – states, intergovernmental organisations, non-state actors or a TNC. Better responses were able to examine the impact of international law on more than one global actor, but they did not necessarily select global actors from more than one of the above categories.

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

International law referring to a body of rules established by custom or legal agreements help to govern the actions of global actors to a degree, however, where states put their national interests before the ethical issues of human rights and people movement, international law is ineffective to a significant extent. States such as Australia prioritise its national interests surrounding its security and does not always uphold international law when responding to people movement. Saudi Arabia, likewise to Australia places its interest first and often does not uphold international law in response to human rights. Despite this, to an extent the United Nations (UN) through international laws in the form of treaties helps states in some instances uphold obligations to international law in the actions of global actors in response to this issue.

Question 4

This was the most popular essay topic. Students were required to analyse the effectiveness of responses from relevant global actors in addressing the causes of two global crises. Students were generally well prepared for this topic, although some did not link their evaluation of the global actors' responses to how well these responses addressed the causes of each of the two global crises.

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

The crises of economic instability and terrorism have been largely ineffectively responded to by the international community. The causes of these two crises are difficult to counter and respond to including; dependence on oil or disenfranchisement for terrorists. States such as China and Russia have attempted to aid in reforming the impacts of debt and a lack of trade revenue but have largely been ineffective, furthermore, the US and the United Nations (UN) have attempted to respond to the crisis of terrorism, being somewhat effective but unable to completely resolve the issues brought about by ideological principle and political instability.