

2021 VCE Australian Politics external assessment report

General comments

The 2021 Australian Politics examination revealed a very good level of engagement by many students with the themes, events and key moments evident in the Australian political system over recent years. Students and teachers are reminded that demonstrating an awareness of current political affairs and evidence of the detailed knowledge and skills set out in the study design remains the key to success in this subject. The effective incorporation of evidence from contemporary examples and case studies into responses to the examination questions must be a focus for internal assessment tasks during the year and for examination preparation.

Section A required students to answer all questions. Some students left answers blank. Students are encouraged to attempt and ensure they write a response of an appropriate length in response to the mark allocations given. Questions worth six to eight marks require a significantly detailed response and the inclusion of supporting evidence or examples. Answers should also be relevant to the question rather than general in nature.

Higher order questions that asked students to ‘analyse’ factors or processes needed a depth of discussion and the linking of different aspects of the response to the question overall. Teachers and students are reminded to review and practise a range of different command words in preparation for the Australian Politics examination.

Additionally, it is essential for students to read examination questions carefully and answer the specific components of what is asked, particularly in questions where multiple instructions are given. Questions 11 and 12 of Section A posed challenges for many students in this regard.

A general reminder that students should use federal political examples rather than ones involving state governments, despite their significance in Victoria in 2020–2021. References to large-scale protests as an example of participation in Victoria were accepted, but detailed discussions of the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption and Gladys Berejiklian or comments on Adem Somyurek and state branch stacking were not relevant.

Students and teachers must ensure the contemporary examples and case studies used in examination responses must be from within the last 10 years. The Study Design, FAQ and Advice for teachers have further details on this requirement.

Students and teachers are also encouraged to be aware of the legibility of student’s handwriting as part of examination preparation.

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

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	4	32	64	1.6

The response required a brief description of any of the various roles independents play in parliament. An example of an independent carrying out the role was often mentioned and there were a number of independents referred to such as Helen Haines, Zali Steggall and Andrew Wilkie. Roles may have included any of the following:

- to represent their electorate
- to vote on bills
- to negotiate/bargain with major parties on legislation
- to introduce private member's bills
- to ask questions in parliament
- to make speeches
- to belong to parliamentary committees
- to represent a particular issue, e.g. Andrew Wilkie, Federal Member for Clark, and his views on gambling
- to meet ministers face to face
- sometimes they hold the balance of power.

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

One role of independents is to represent the view of their constituents. They can do this through participating in question time where they can present the view of their constituents and expose a lack of action by the government on this issue. For example, Helen Haines (Independent for Indi) asked 'why the PM promised an independent commission against corruption but hasn't implemented it.' This shows Haines representing her constituents who were concerned about corruption.

Question 2

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	8	18	35	35	2.9

A high-scoring response had to include a specific contemporary example from either the US or Australian system, or both. The response needed a brief overview of the three branches of government (executive/legislature/judiciary) and an explanation of how the separated powers operate with an overlap in

Australia in contrast to a complete distinction in the United States of America. Students could have referred only to the executive/legislature difference in both nations or also included the role of the judiciary.

Examples needed to help the comparison rather than just mention the name of the president or prime minister.

Question 3

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	8	31	30	26	2.7

The response required explanation of two ways in which Australia's electoral system is consistent with the value of political equality. In an electoral system, political equality is generally understood to refer to the idea of 'one vote, one value'. Within a liberal democracy such as Australia, it could also relate in a broader sense to each citizen having the ability for equal participation in the electoral system. Therefore, responses may have referred to any of the following points:

- universal suffrage / the right to vote
- one vote, one value – through equal-sized electorates
- one person, one vote
- lack of gerrymandering via the role of the Australian Electoral Commission
- compulsory voting in the way it compels voting so that all citizens votes are counted/treated the same
- public funding of election campaigns.

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

Another way the Australian electoral system is consistent with political equality is through the AEC, the independent body which redraws electoral boundaries to ensure equal representation. This upholds political equality as it ensures adequate representation and that no vote is more influential. For example prior to the 2019 election Victoria gained a seat (Fraser) giving it 38 seats thus ensuring Victoria was adequately represented.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	1	1	7	17	27	19	23	4	4.4

The response required an analysis of the extent to which the participation of citizens is enabled in Australia's political system. This question provided plenty of scope for a detailed discussion of the democratic value of participation and many highly capable students took full advantage of the opportunity to give detailed evidence of the range of ways in which citizens can participate in the Australian political system.

Higher scoring responses also looked at ways in which participation can be inhibited or weakened, often discussing a counterpoint to the positive factor they had introduced and linking this to the democratic ideal. Such responses also avoided merely listing a series of descriptive points and established an overall contention or point of view, addressing the 'to what extent' part of the question. At least two or three ways of participation were needed in order to achieve a higher score in this seven-mark question. The use of evidence to support the response was done very well by some students, drawing on a range of examples from contemporary politics.

Examples of how participation is enabled include voting in elections, protesting, joining a political party or interest group, standing for election, contacting or lobbying MPs, petitions and making submissions to committees.

Question 5a.

Mark	0	1	Average
%	2	98	1.0

The response required the identification of a right that is constitutionally protected in the US political system. The right to bear arms, the right to freedom of speech, the right to not testify against oneself, the right to vote and the right to trial by jury were all examples of accepted responses drawing on the Bill of Rights or US Constitution as a whole.

Question 5b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	15	37	33	15	1.5

Many students did not score well on this question. The response needed a specific explanation of the concept of 'rule of law' as an essential part of a liberal democratic system, such as the USA, relating to how it upholds popular sovereignty because power rests with the people themselves and because it entails an independent judiciary. Students were also required to include a specific example of either how rule of law is demonstrated in the USA or alternatively how it is not.

Rule of law is the principle that all persons are equal under the law regardless of their power, status, class religion, ethnicity, sex etc. – including the government.

Examples of rule of law being upheld in the United States of America could have included:

- President Trump bringing cases alleging fraud in the 2020 election to the courts, each of which was dealt with in the same way as any other case with weak evidence, despite his status.
- The initial overturning of the Trump administration's 'Muslim travel ban' in 2015 by the Federal Court, which treated the president/administration as an equal party to a case, initially finding against them.
- The same-sex marriage decision of 2015 in Obergefell v. Hodges is an example of the Supreme Court ruling independently on a state-based legal issue.

Examples of how rule of law may have been undermined include:

- the issuing of presidential pardons to citizens who had been convicted of crimes
- the practice of voter suppression in recent elections.

Many students referred to impeachment as an example of rule of law. This is not correct. The process of impeachment is applied to presidents and other elected officials only, and in the president's case by the Congress itself. It is not carried out by an independent judiciary.

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

Rule of law is a principle of a liberal democracy, that is that no one is above the law, even federal officials and there are mechanisms in place, such as performing judicial review by the Supreme Court, to ensure this. It's important for it prevents an abuse of power of the gov and ensures they do not exceed their bounds ... For example the Supreme Court (SC) performed judicial review on Donald Trump's executive order the Muslim Travel Ban, although it was found by the SC to be constitutional.

Question 6

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	21	15	31	15	1.5

This question required a description of the purpose of the Electoral College and its specific role in the US system. For three marks, a detailed description was required with recent relevant examples. Higher scoring answers showed a good understanding of the Electoral College and drew upon evidence from the 2020 US election.

The overall role of the Electoral College is to act as the body that determines the election of the president and vice-president. It consists of 538 electors who are nominated by the candidate's parties to cast their vote for the president, based on the outcome of the popular vote in their state. Each state has a designated number of Electoral College members. The Electoral College meets as a body in December after the presidential election of the preceding November to cast their votes, which are certified by Congress in January of the following year.

In the 2020 election Joe Biden received 306 votes in the Electoral College compared to 232 for Donald Trump.

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

The electoral college (EC) has the role of electing the US President and Vice President. The EC contains 538 electors- 100 for the Senate and 435 for House and 3 for District of Columbia, which cast a vote on behalf of their state in race to win 270 votes. In the 2020 election, Biden received 306 votes which granted him President of the United States and Kamala Harris as the Vice President. If electors vote against the views of their state based of general elections their role is not upheld and they are known as faithless electors.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	5	13	22	23	19	14	3.7

This response required an analysis of the effectiveness of the Congress of the United States of America in holding the president accountable.

There were a range of ways of addressing this question offered by students. Key to higher scoring answers were an attempt at analysis, or linking several factors together, and an understanding of the powers of the Congress in relation to holding the president to account and their overall effectiveness and the use of a range of recent examples to give weight to the response. More than one power of the Congress needed to be discussed for this six-mark question.

The process of impeachment was discussed by many students and indeed this is a key power of the Congress in holding the president accountable. It is important, despite the examples provided by President Trump, that students are aware of the rarity of impeachment and the unlikelihood of its success. Better answers acknowledged this, stating the impact of partisanship, especially in the Senate, as a mitigating factor in its success. Other powers of the Congress that could have been discussed included the power to override a presidential veto, the rejection of presidential appointments to the Supreme Court in the Senate, refusal to ratify treaties and the withholding of funding for presidential initiatives. Many students referred to these powers and used relevant examples from both the Trump and Obama presidencies.

Factors that limit the effectiveness of Congress include the various types of majorities required when voting in the Senate (e.g. 3/5 cloture to stop a filibuster, 2/3 majority to overturn a treaty and other votes, simple

majority to confirm presidential nominees), each of which, combined with increasing partisanship, limit the ability of Congress to hold the president to account.

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

Congress is able to hold POTUS accountable through its role in confirmation hearings, overriding vetoes and through impeachment, although partisanship has limited the efficacy of impeachment.

Question 8a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	17	17	31	35	1.8

The response required a description of how party policy platforms can influence the formulation of domestic public policy.

Party policy platforms are the collection of policies that a political party takes to an election, promising to implement them if they are elected. If they are elected, the party is seen to have a mandate to formulate and implement these policies given they have received enough support from the public to form government. Conversely, not being elected might cause a party to re-evaluate its policy platform.

Many students answered this question well, demonstrating a clear understanding of the links between elections, mandate and policy formulation. The use of a recent example enabled some students to be awarded higher scores for this question. Examples that could have been used include the coalition tax cuts promised in the 2019 election campaign and subsequently formulated, the scrapping of the carbon tax by the incoming Abbott government in 2013, the (eventual) introduction of marriage equality by the Turnbull Liberal party in 2016, and the ALP's reversal of their politics on negative gearing and franking credits after its 2019 election loss.

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

Party policy platforms ultimately dictate what policy is formulated by newly elected governments as they earned a mandate from the Australian people to implement and formulate these policies. In the 2019 election a key aspect of the Liberal Party policy platform was lower taxes, which led them to implement the low-middle income tax offset [...]

Question 8b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	18	27	26	19	2.3

Students were required to use contemporary examples to explain two ways in which stakeholders can influence the formulation of domestic public policy.

Stakeholders include any individual or group with a vested interest in the impact of a domestic policy. The term 'stakeholder' is referred to in the introductory paragraph to Domestic Policy Area of Study. Examples of stakeholders are interest groups of all types, members of the public, government departments/public servants, political parties and MPs.

Students needed to clearly explain two different ways that stakeholders can attempt to influence the way in which domestic policy is formulated. The link between the way of influencing and its possible success was required. Ways of influence included lobbying, protests, petitions, use of social media, formal submissions and media advertising.

Students are reminded to write with clarity and address the question specifically; for example, a response could read, ‘One way in which members of the public can influence policy formulation is by protesting, to indicate to government the strength of feeling and numbers of people with a view on a particular issue. For example, 500 people attended a protest calling for the end the policy of mandatory detention of refugees who arrive offshore ...’

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	4	10	13	15	18	16	12	8	4.5

Students were required to analyse the influence of minor parties in the formulation of domestic public policy. This question had the highest mark allocation in Section A and as such required a coherent and detailed response incorporating a range of examples. An overall contention and a conclusion assisted higher scoring answers to fully analyse the influence of minor parties, rather than merely listing the roles they play in the political system, as in weaker answers.

Minor parties are those with some representation in the parliament but who lack the ability to form government. The Greens, the Nationals, Jacquie Lambie Network, United Australia Party and Pauline Hanson’s One Nation were all examples included in student responses. For the purposes of this question, it was also acceptable to discuss the role of minor parties in campaigns as having an influence on major parties and their policy platform or future mandate.

High-scoring response discussed the influence of minor parties on policy formulation through their parliamentary representation (e.g. by holding the balance of power in the Senate, dominating the crossbench in the House of Representatives, participating in committees (particularly Senate Estimates) and scrutinising the government in question time). Consideration of the role of minor parties in preference deals during campaigns was also an area of discussion as was the specific role of the National Party as a partner in the Coalition and with regard to the degree of influence this gives them. The recent example of the Nationals leveraging their partnership in relation to the emissions target set by the government prior to COP 26 was a very good example. Other examples could have included Jacquie Lambie negotiating support for the write-off of Tasmanian housing debt in return for her vote on the 2019 Coalition tax cuts or the role of the Greens as a minor party in supporting the Medevac bill.

A number of students discussed the role of minor parties as being influential in the formation of minority government, referring specifically to the part played by the Greens in the 2010–2013 ALP minority government. While this was the case in this specific instance, again this was a rare situation that has not been repeated and it is important to note that minor parties do not necessarily equate to minority government.

Question 10

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	24	52	24	1.0

Students were required to outline how global citizenship applies to contemporary Australian foreign policy.

This question required an explanation of the term ‘global citizenship’, not ‘**good** global citizenship’, which confused some students. To be seen as a good global citizen is a goal of Australian foreign policy. Global citizenship refers to the expectations of a nation to live up to their responsibilities to the international community, in areas such as foreign aid, climate change, peace keeping and treaty obligations. The extent to and ways in which Australia does this is an aspect of our foreign policy formulation and implementation.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	5	14	19	29	15	13	3.7

Students were asked to discuss the importance of two key challenges facing contemporary Australian foreign policy. Students needed to select two of the following key challenges: global and regional conflicts; humanitarian crises and natural disasters; the threat of global terrorism; climate change and environmental issues; the economic development of the region; refugees, people smuggling and trafficking in persons.

This question proved challenging for many students. Students and teachers are reminded that the area of challenges to Australian foreign policy is a key point in the study design and must be addressed during the year and in exam preparation. It was clear that many students could make general comments about the nature of some of the challenges but found it difficult to link this to Australian foreign policy.

The challenges listed in the study design need to be understood as issues or concerns that can impact Australia achieving its overall aim of protecting the national interest in the three foreign policy objective areas: forming good trade and economic relationships, protecting Australia's national security and defence, and acting as a good global citizen. Students must be able to discuss only two of the challenges listed and examine them in light of contemporary events. Each challenge may either make it more difficult for the objective to be reached or perhaps assist it.

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

Ultimately the threat of global terrorism and climate change possesses extreme importance in relation to the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. Both challenges are important as they require foreign policy to be formulated considering these challenges and addressing them as they ultimately limit Australia's ability to achieve the national interest. Climate change poses threats to not only Australia's trade and economic objectives but also Australia's ability to be a good global citizen. Similarly, the threat of global terrorism limits Australia's ability to maintain national security as well as trade and economic objectives. Thus, the government has had to focus foreign policy on targeting these issues such as Australia signing the Lombok Treaty with Indonesia to counter act terrorism in the Indo Pacific and Australia joining the Paris Agreement and attending COP 26.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	14	5	11	12	20	17	15	6	3.7

This question also proved difficult for some students. It is essential that students read examination questions carefully; this question needed to identify **one** of Australia's national interests or foreign policy objectives and analyse **two** instruments used to achieve it. Given this was a question requiring analysis and worth seven marks, a coherent and comprehensive response was required for higher scores.

Students must be able to identify and explain the various instruments or tools available to the government to reach their foreign policy goals. These instruments include bilateral and multilateral relationships; foreign and humanitarian aid; military actions and peacekeeping operations; agreements, treaties and alliances; and overseas delegations. Students and teachers must be aware of the distinction between some of these combined categories. For example, military actions and peacekeeping operations are quite different things, as is humanitarian aid distinct from the overall foreign aid budget.

There were a large number of instruments listed and any of these taken individually or as combinations were accepted. Too many students tried to repurpose material in responses to Questions 11 and 12, without directly addressing the specific questions.

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

Two key instruments that have a moderate level of success in achieving Australia's national interest of promoting Australia's trade interest is foreign aid and multilateral and bilateral doctrines of foreign policy.

Bilateral and Multilateral doctrines of foreign policy is when Australia engages with one (bilateral) or multiple (multilateral) nation states to achieve a certain outcome such as formal agreements. A prominent bilateral tool Australia has used is its free trade agreement with China (Chinese-Australia FTA) that came into force in 2015. An FTA works in hopes of removing or reducing tariffs on a country's imports. This has been partially effective as while this has allowed China to strengthen Australia's economy by becoming our largest trading partner it has not prevent China from applying tariffs to our exports such as barley in response to increasing tense relationship between the two countries.

Section B

The essay in Section B is assessed against the following criteria:

- development of a coherent and relevant argument that addresses the specific demands of the essay question
- demonstration of political knowledge that is accurate and appropriate for the essay question
- accurate use of key political terms and concepts
- use of contemporary examples and case studies to support explanations, points of view and arguments.

Overall, essay responses were generally of a correct depth and breadth. Questions 1 and 2 proved the most popular question choices.

Attention to the assessment criteria outlined above as a core part of examination revision is important. Practising the task of essay writing throughout the year is essential to preparing fully for the Australian Politics examination.

Higher scoring responses drew upon excellent use of contemporary examples and case studies enabling these students to also demonstrate a high level of political knowledge that was accurate and appropriate for the essay question. Such responses contained accurate use of key political terms and concepts, integrated cohesively into the essay itself.

Some responses did not develop a coherent argument or point of view in relation to the question and therefore drifted into irrelevancy and generalisation; in these essays, while students may have referred to a range of examples, where their response did not specifically address the question, such examples did not compensate for this. Students are reminded that it is important to plan essays before writing, however briefly. Students and teachers are encouraged to ensure that the criteria for Section B are a familiar part of teaching and learning during both Units 3 and 4.

Question chosen	0	1	2	3	4
%	1	41	32	10	15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	1	0.4	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	4	5	8	12	10	14	8	10	8	6	1	1	12.7

Question 1

Students were asked to explain the extent to which they agreed with the statement, 'While the prime minister has considerable power in the Australian system of government, there are effective ways to limit that power.' This proved a popular choice of question for students. There were two parts to the question, both of which

needed to be addressed: the extent of prime ministerial powers and the effectiveness of the various ways of limiting these powers, as a key aspect of a liberal democracy. Students needed to establish a contention and address this point of view throughout the essay.

Higher scoring responses could identify a number of powers given to the prime minister in the Australian system and describe how each one could also be restricted. Such responses considered the overall role of the prime minister including the fact that the most dominant role in the Australian political system is not outlined in the constitution. The range of limitations on the prime minister as part of the Westminster system of responsible government allowed for extensive discussion and the inclusion of numerous recent examples.

Some powers of the prime minister include choosing and replacing ministers, allocating portfolios, chairing Cabinet meetings, introducing/examining bills, leading a department of staff, forming relationships with foreign leaders and representing Australia overseas.

Some limitations include the conventions of responsible government, including question time and parliamentary procedures, the numbers in the House of Representatives and Senate and influence of the crossbench, federalism, the powers of the governor general, and the ability of the party room to replace the prime minister.

Too many students relied too heavily on the dismissal of Gough Whitlam's government in 1975 as the core part of their essay, demonstrating how the powers of the prime minister can be limited by the governor general. As this example falls outside the 10-year rule for case studies and examples it should not be used. Better essays included examples such as the change in prime minister due to party leadership spills based on policy issues such as between Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull, and Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison; the need for Scott Morrison as prime minister to negotiate with the Senate crossbench to get bills passed; and more recent limitations on Scott Morrison's powers, due to the pandemic raising the influence of state premiers in our federal system.

Question 2

Students were asked to explain the extent to which they agreed with the statement, 'The electoral system of the United States of America provides a more legitimate mandate to govern than the electoral system of Australia.'

This question was another popular choice on the examination paper. High-scoring responses demonstrated a very good knowledge of the key differences between the electoral systems in Australia and the United States of America. The highest scoring responses showed a clear understanding of the concept of a mandate and the ways in which its legitimacy can be enhanced through the electoral system addressing the election of both president and Congress in the United States of America and the members of parliament in order to form the government in Australia. These essays also used a wide range of examples from both systems, with effective reference in particular to the 2020 US election.

Some factors that contribute to the US electoral system developing a legitimate mandate include voluntary voting ensuring only voters who are engaged and aware take part, involvement of citizens in primary elections and frequent congressional elections.

Some factors that contribute to the US electoral system contributing to a weakened electoral mandate include the use of simple majority voting, the absence of an impartial electoral body, the use of gerrymandering and voter suppression, and the role of the electoral college.

Some factors that contribute to the Australian electoral system developing a legitimate mandate include the expectation of compulsory voting, which ensures through a high turnout of voters that the elected government has the support of a majority of voters; use of preferential voting system ensuring the most preferred candidates are selected, not just the most popular; the role of the AEC as an independent and impartial authority to conduct elections and count votes; and the formation of government in the House of Representatives based on a majority of seats.

Some factors that contribute to the Australian electoral system contributing to a weakened electoral mandate include the impact of proportional voting in the Senate often leading to a hostile Senate or crossbench with the balance of power, party control of preselection process, and the PM not being 'directly' elected by the people.

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

Australia is one of the few countries in the world to have compulsory voting, however this could be said to give it a more legitimate mandate to govern (or consent from the people) compared to America's use of voluntary voting. In Australia voter enrolment and the enforcing of voting is the responsibility of the Australian Electoral Commission. This sees a high voter turnout with an average 95% of eligible voters voting in federal elections, however this lowered to 92% in the 2019 federal election. This both increases participation and the consent of the people or the government to govern as it ensures that every Australian voice is represented in parliament as they have to vote. However there is the minor debate about whether compulsory voting diminishes the legitimate mandate by forcing ill-informed people to cast a vote ... Whereas in the United States voting is voluntary. At the 2020 presidential election it was estimated that only 66% of eligible enrolled voters voted during the election ... and this brings into question whether elections in the US do give a legitimate mandate to govern.

Question 3

Students were asked to evaluate the following statement with reference to one or more contemporary domestic policies: 'The successful implementation of domestic policy is more challenging than its formulation.'

Fewer students attempted this question. While a number of responses dealt with the question very well and articulated the nature of the challenges involved, some students struggled to articulate the particular nature of these challenges.

Students needed to write with a clear evaluation of the topic in mind; it was possible to agree that policy implementation is more challenging than policy formulation, or to suggest the counterpoint, or even to judge that both implementation and formulation are equally difficult.

Higher scoring responses explained what comprises successful policy and could identify broad factors that affected both implementation and formulation before elaborating with reference to specific policy case studies. Some high-scoring responses drew upon detailed examples and evidence, including such policy examples as JobKeeper, the vaccine rollout, the NBN rollout, tax cuts, the same-sex marriage legislation, the introduction of the NDIS and more. Students who fell into a narrative description of policy development failed to address the challenges referenced in the question.

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

It can be said that due to the competing interests that exist in the realm of domestic policy, that the successful implementation of domestic policy is more difficult than its formulation. It is indeed correct that there are many competing influences and external realities which do underline that successful domestic policy implementation is more difficult than its formulation. The need to continually monitor and alter policy in response to evolving scenarios, the competing influences of both the media and ministerial advisers, underscore the greater difficulty in successfully implementing domestic policy.....Although there are occasions when the Senate is hostile and crossbenchers propose amendments, vote against bills and withdraw from negotiation, nonetheless the successful implementation of domestic policy is more challenging than its formulation.

Question 4

Students were asked to explain the extent to which they agreed with the statement, 'Economic conditions are the most significant influence on the formulation and implementation of Australian foreign policy.'

This essay topic required students to demonstrate thorough knowledge of the different factors that can affect the formulation and implementation of Australian foreign policy and help it achieve its overall goals. A list of influential factors is included in the study design, but students did not necessarily only need to draw from this list. Many students were able to discuss these factors in detail and assess whether economic conditions were the most significant factors or more commonly one of a range of influences. A broader view about the relative impact of various factors on foreign policy formulation and implementation allowed students to discuss a range of areas and incorporate a number of current and relevant examples. Higher scoring responses also made the point that the processes of forming foreign policy does not remain stagnant and in fact can evolve over time. Some students were confused about the focus of the question and discussed the various objectives or outcomes of Australian foreign policy instead, which did not allow them to fully address the topic.

Students could have discussed both internal and external economic conditions and their impact on foreign policy decision making. External examples such as the Australia-China trade relationship, Australia's searching for new trade markets and free trade agreements (FTAs), the effect of the pandemic on global trade and the economic stresses in our region were all mentioned, as were the effects of domestic economic conditions such as the effect of the pandemic on employment and markets in Australia and our reliance on foreign markets for Covid vaccines. Other significant influences on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy alongside economic influences could include the roles and offices of the prime minister, foreign minister, trade minister and cabinet overall; the bureaucracy, especially Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade staffs and advisers; intelligence agencies; and elections, public opinion, interest groups and the media.