2020 Australian and International Politics Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2020 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

2020 was the last year of teaching Australian and International Politics. The renewed subject, Politics, People and Power will be taught from 2020.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Students should undertake at least three folio assessments that cover a range of topics, one of which should have an international focus. This assessment type provides the opportunity to work in the following three assessment design criteria areas: Knowledge and Understanding; Research, Critical Analysis and Evaluation; and Communication and at least two assessment tasks should be formal written arguments.

The more successful responses commonly:

* tackled more challenging questions
* used a wide range of appropriate sources
* presented the arguments in an astute, conscience and coherent communication style
* provided evidence of discussion through diverse examples using analytic language
* supported and/or challenged assertions and deductions supported by a wide range of research
* used incisively political language and concepts throughout
* acknowledged a wide range of perspectives to provide well-balanced judgments
* used a/one reference system in a clear, consistent manner
* had an ‘attractive’ mode of presentation that effectively delivered the main arguments or ideas.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not address challenging questions
* provided discussion without evidence to support and explain the argument
* showed limited research and/or source material used or/and referenced
* used language and responses that were more descriptive rather than evaluative
* lacked clarity and structure with the informal language used
* had only one perspective with a limited range of sources used to support perspective
* did not ‘use’ the 1000 word limit
* did not use a/one consistent reference system clearly.

Assessment Type 2: Source Analysis

Students are required to undertake at least two Source Analysis assessments, including one that has an international politics focus. One Source Analysis assessment must be completed under supervision and within the 90-minute time limit. The wording of source analysis questions should be clear, and the questions should be manageable in the given timeframe. The assessment design criteria for the Sources Analysis are Knowledge and Understanding; Research, Critical Analysis, and Evaluation; and Communication.

The more successful responses commonly:

* chose a range of sources meticulously and used non-expansive sources
* had several questions and different types of questions that demonstrated the quality of analysis
* use evidence from the source material to support answers astutely
* provided reasoned judgements with well-considered arguments
* addressed the question clearly and coherently
* engaged in evaluative consideration by referencing the nuanced differences.

The less successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a description rather than an evaluation of sources
* answered questions that were not explained clearly or in its entirety
* has a simplistic or superficial analysis
* showed a limited reference to the sources or recount of what was seen
* had sources that were not explored in-depth
* demonstrated limited understanding highlighted by the lack of more critical analysis
* had limited incorporation of further knowledge that led to partial insight or analysis further.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

Students are required to investigate a local, national, or international political issue that is of personal interest. History suggests that the Investigation is often best presented as a written report and should be a maximum of 2000 words. This assessment type provides the opportunity to work in the following three assessment design criteria areas: Research, Critical Analysis, and Evaluation; Engagement and Reflection; and Communication.

The key ideas are that individual Investigation needs to be about a contemporary political issue, with a range of conflicting views with a range of conflicting sources.

The more successful responses commonly:

* were contemporary and/ or controversial with a clear focus
* displayed high-quality research using a range of primary and secondary sources
* included clear annotated graphs/ charts derived from primary data that were relevant to further the discussion
* had a question or questions that were refined and directed at a political issue
* used intriguing hypothesis to offer alternative perspectives
* maintained a solid and consistent evaluative reference to the question
* showed a balanced consideration of multiple perspectives
* made political concepts and structures central to the response
* demonstrated consistent and intelligent use of political terms and concepts throughout
* completely ‘used’ the 2000 word limit
* used a/one reference system in a clear, consistent manner.

The less successful responses commonly:

* had an unclear guiding question/set of questions that were lacking in political nature
* had simplistic questions that limited the response or questions that were too complex for the conditions of the task
* demonstrated limited research and/or often of lower quality that focused on a few sources
* considered limited perspectives and failed to optimise the 2000 word limit
* did not use a/one reference system in a clear, consistent manner.

Assessment Type 4: Examination

Students are required to undertake one 130-minutes external examination that consists of two sections: Section A, which examines topics from the ‘Australian Politics’; and Section B, which examines topics from the ‘International Politics’. Students are required to write two essays, one in Section A and one in Section B.

The essay questions in the written examination provide the opportunity to work with the following three assessment design criteria: Knowledge and Understanding (KU1 and KU2); Research, Critical Analysis, and Evaluation (RCAE2 and RCAE3); and Communication (C1 and C2).

Section A: Australian Politics

The students attempted the following questions:

Question 1 (the second most popular question of choice in Section A)

The more successful responses commonly:

* focused on the words ‘comprehensively’ and ‘democratic values’ in their assessment/s and proceeded to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge
* covered Section 44 and assessed the view that Australia is multicultural against the idea of undivided national loyalty
* considered that in Section 128, there was the opportunity to change the Constitution to be assessed against the idea that, as in 1999 Referenda question/s, some might argue that the question by its wording was bound/designed to fail
* suggested that by its language and length, the Constitution is not democratic but added the counter view that it had served Australia well for four generations
* enhanced responses by briefly reflecting on overseas examples by citing the lack of a Bill of Rights and suggested that ‘our’ idea of separation of power was better than the Americans
* mused that Section 58 was sexist and thus by definition, not democratic.

The less successful responses commonly:

* tended to discuss matters/examples rather than critically assess the material that they presented
* discussed Chapter 3 of the Constitution as an entity in itself and/or cover the mechanics of for example two High Court cases rather than critically assessing the case for democratic values
* looked to give referenda details and not reflect on the broader issues around referenda.

Question 2

The more successful responses commonly:

* argued the case based on the instructive words of the question
* gave a brief background to/of the federation history
* argued that the protection given to the state is effective and considered methods of independence as seen in the Senate representation based in part on the American model
* evaluated the debates around vertical fiscal imbalance and the Grants Power in Section 96 and the consequent GST
* considered the role of the High Court in the context of Sections 109, 51 and 29 and applied to understanding to for example the Tasmanian Dams Case and argued with conviction the relative positions
* provided lively debate centred on the comparative roles of the Federal racial discrimination act against the state-based equal opportunities act
* provided examples that reflected a highly proficient critical analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* tended to discuss matters/examples rather than to argue a case
* gave the background to the federation history far too much
* spent time on the details of the theory of comparative federalism and failed to reflect on its application to Australia.

Question 4

The more successful responses commonly:

* focused on the instructive words ‘critically assess this statement’ and assessed the range of debates surrounding the key concept of separation of power
* balanced view provided to argue what is responsible government.

The less successful responses commonly:

* gave an extensive theoretical cover of the concept of separation of power as it applies to both Australian and America without further explanation.

Question 5

The more successful responses commonly:

* launched immediately into a ‘conversation’ with the term ‘cornerstone’
* provided an impressive grip on the voting style and looked at the situation in comparison to preferential voting and indeed the [now defunct in Australia] first past the post system
* mused on the impact of voluntary voting and compulsory voting to add a different dimension to the response/s
* looked to cover whether this or any other, form of voting is ‘the’ or ‘a’ cornerstone of democracy.

The less successful responses commonly:

* gave an extensive theoretical cover of proportional voting in the Australian context at both Federal and state levels but in a stilted rather than an argumentative style.

Question 6 (the most popular question of student choice in Section A)

The more successful responses commonly:

* enunciated clearly the basic idea that the personality of a leader is one only of the matters for electoral success
* well documented attempts to cover/list/exemplify the plethora of other possibilities that led to a demonstration of comprehensive knowledge
* provided amid the range of specific examples at the Federal level, the campaigns in 2019, 2007, 1996, 1993 and most of the 1980s
* provided examples that came from state and territory elections and indeed local government were often seen at the elite level of the responses
* noted in a positive sense that the/an electoral voting system itself received more cover as a determining factor of electoral outcomes than in the recent past.

The less successful responses commonly:

* repeated material during the response and often it seemed determined to prove the/a point rather than to analyse the view
* covered some case studies in some detail without addressing the ideas around ‘main factor’.

Question 8

The more successful responses commonly:

* mentioned the scrutiny factor, especially in Upper houses and commented on current and past situations, for example, Queensland and both territories.
* introduced new ideas and reflected on some of the work of Nick Xenophon in the past
* noted that minor parties were the only representation for single-issue matters and cited HEMP
* took the view that minor parties and independents appealed to a younger cohort in a post-materialist world.

The less successful responses commonly:

* spent too much time on the virtues of minor parties per se.

Section B: International Politics

The students attempted the following questions:

Question 12

The more successful responses commonly:

* argued for the idea that democracy was strengthened by an unregulated media with certain provisos using astute and coherent communication
* presented a balanced view of the debate and the highest echelon saw it as multifaceted
* referred to a diversity of examples to support the argument
* used international examples to reflect the pre-2020 election in America, for example, the clashing role/s of the New York Times and New York Post, whether Fox News was ‘fair and balanced’ and the polarising role of Rupert Murdoch
* referred to a range of media types and considered the point that individual owner was the regulator.

The less successful responses commonly:

* tended to be a ‘rant’ and went on to attack specific moguls by name or by paper
* mentioned invariably only print media and often were limited in the range of case studies used.

Question 13

The more successful responses commonly:

* looked initially at the simple mechanics of the situation citing how a powerful owner might filter and pass this to editors and sub-editors
* referred to the power of the’ gatekeeper’ in print media came through with conviction in terms of headlines, placement of articles and letters to the editor
* used specific examples from a range of global locations for a balanced view
* demonstrated highly proficient and critical analysis by using examples from Great Britain (‘Red Ted’ Miliband, images of Miliband eating pork pies and the reference to ‘porkies’)
* used other case studies for example from Tunisia and the government of Ben Ali attempting to filter against cell phone protestors, secure HTTP outlet
* argued that the ABC tried to inform and not persuade whereas an unregulated media might/would/does attempt to persuade and selectively inform.

The less successful responses commonly:

* focused on fewer examples and/or factually inaccurate material
* seemed to know the narrative but did not address the instructive words ‘critically assess’ in a convincing mode.

Question 14

The more successful responses commonly:

* focused on the key terms/ideas for example ‘evaluate’ and ‘positive change’ to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge
* reflected on the clash between [former] President Trump and Facebook CEO Zuckerberg over the debate between perspectives and misleading information
* used contemporary arguments around misleading information and covered well the American polls
* creative use of the ideas and language of ‘lamestream’ and ‘mainstream’ media in a range of specific examples
* covered the death of George Floyd within the context of the words of the question set
* used the examples from alternative media to show how it played a positive role in broader campaigns for instance, where trending hashtags made an impact, Women’s Rights and Indigenous Rights, MeToo Movement and the Arab Spring of 2011
* opined with minimal subtlety that Obama and Twitter in 2012 removed a specific political problem that led to positive change.

The less successful responses commonly:

* focused on a chat about international media with some interesting but not always relevant issues
* focused considerably on the history of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
* spent too much time on the use of Twitter by [former] President Trump in 2016
* missed the instructive word ‘evaluate’ when suggesting that the greater the diversity is, the better the situation appeared more than once as did the position that alternative media was not a force for positive change.

Question 15

The less successful responses commonly:

* took a generalised pathway and led to mediocre results
* ignored keywords such as ‘should,’ ‘totally’, or ‘regional’ or specific examples were too vague.

Question 24 (the most popular question of student choice in Section B)

The more successful responses commonly:

* took a longitudinal view soon after World War Two that demonstrated comprehensive knowledge and highly proficient critical analysis
* used coherent communication to cover a range of external challenges in Asia and the Middle East both past and current to challenges at home citing President Trump on a range of issues
* took the view that if not for President Trump there would be more significant challengers and challenges
* used well-worked case studies involving the Caribbean Sea, Clinton in Africa and 9/11 amid other impressive examples.

The less successful responses commonly:

* failed to resist the opportunity to vilify a particular politician
* ignored the keyword ’evaluate’ and often becoming side-tracked.

Question 25

The more successful responses commonly:

* stayed on track with the terms ’defensive actions’ and used a time sequence approach starting with either Pearl Harbour or Hiroshima
* acknowledged that the Cuba situation was not defensive and mounted strong cases for the end of the Cold War, the events in the 90’s, 9/11 and its multiple aftermaths with a focus on ISIS
* looked carefully at the precise wording of the question and made much of the wording the ‘main’ focus as distinct from the ‘only’ focus
* argued well around the actions of both China and America with One Road One Belt initiatives and activities in the South China Sea archipelagos.

The less successful responses commonly:

* spent an undue amount of time trying to make the point that American foreign policy was either always aggressive or always only a force for peace.

Question 26

The more successful responses commonly:

* explained well by addressing either or both of the word/s ’continues’ and/ or ‘security’ and/ or any number of the different types of security
* spent time on an analysis of the ‘bases’ debate with Pine Gap North West Cape and Robertson
* enhanced critical assessment by looking at activities such as Five Eyes, Ausmin or Talisman Sabre

The less successful responses commonly:

* seemed to take the view that America was a hazard with little critical assessment
* missed the point that the quotation itself was to be critically assessed.

Question 28

The less successful responses commonly:

* took a too generalised pathway without explaining specific details of the two countries of choice
* lacked in clear contrast in the nature of the countries chosen and/or with their political systems.