2019 Australian and International Politics Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s 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 the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

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:

* were successful because the question was challenging
* used a range of sources where applicable
* presented the format in an astute and coherent communication style
* provided evidence of discussion through diverse examples using analytic language
* supported or challenged assertions and deductions through a wide range of research
* incisively used political language and concepts throughout
* acknowledged a wide range of perspectives to provide well-balanced judgments
* completely ‘used’ the 1000 word limit effectively
* used a/one reference system in a clear, consistent manner
* had an ‘attractive’ mode of presentation that effectively delivered the main ideas.

The less successful responses commonly:

* often did not set challenging questions
* often provided discussion without evidence to support and explain the argument
* showed limited research 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
* usually 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:

* carefully chose a range of sources
* used non-expansive sources
* had a number of questions and different types of questions
* were able to use evidence from the source material to support answers astutely
* judgments were reasoned with well-considered arguments
* addressed the question clearly and coherently
* were able to engage in evaluative consideration by referencing the nuanced differences
* completely ‘used’ the 1000 word limit
* used a/one reference system in a clear, consistent manner
* had an ‘attractive’ mode of presentation.

The less successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a description rather than an evaluation of sources
* had questions that were not answered clearly or in its entirety
* were simplistic in their 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
* were careless with the 1000 word limit
* had an inconsistent reference system
* did not have an ‘attractive’ mode of presentation to enhance understanding 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
* had a question or questions that were refined and directed at a political issue
* used a catchy hypothesis as an alternative
* maintained consistent evaluative reference to the question
* showed a balanced consideration of multiple perspectives
* made political concepts, 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 a guiding question/set of questions that were unclear and lacked political in 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 (e.g. Wikipedia only)
* considered limited perspectives and misused 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 more successful responses commonly:

* showed a good understanding of the history of the Constitution and is evident throughout their responses
* referred current debates without being sidetracked of the focus, e.g. Section 44 as a ‘political weapon’ and its connection to multiculturalism debates
* provided excellent detail to support arguments, e.g. citing the 1999 referenda and arguing it's designed to fail
* presented evidence of in-depth reflection, e.g. what a Citizen Initiated Referenda might do; how the centralisation of power goes against ‘current Australian environment’ and the desired democracy of the nation
* discussed in detail the vertical fiscal imbalance to highlight the limitations of federalism as set out in the Constitution which also showed a comprehensive knowledge and astute communication

The less successful responses commonly:

* focused primarily on perceived problems linked to Federalism where a broader range of examples are recommended
* unclear and brief argument, e.g. focused on the monarchy and connection with the United Kingdom and not linked directly to the set question
* lacked a reasoned and connected set of arguments and only a considered level of knowledge were features of this question.

Question 2

The more successful responses commonly:

* provided clear examples of a range of High Court cases and displayed well-considered knowledge
* focused on the key terms ‘only’ and ‘significantly’ to build either a thoughtful or a coherent reply, e.g. included the grants power and the issues surrounding the environment; looked at referenda, the Governor-General and COAG as other ways to extend power.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to provide clear examples to address the statement and/or often focused only on the Uniform Tax Case and/or the Tasmanian Dams Case and failed to connect these to the extension of the power of the Commonwealth
* ‘rehashed’ the answer without thinking further how it fitted into this particular statement/question.

Question 3

The more successful responses commonly:

* assessed critically by making links between an effective opposition in the Lower House and a hostile Upper House and often at both state and federal levels
* supported with specific examples, e.g. former Prime Minister John Howard’s senate majority from 2005‑2007 as a case of a lack of effective opposition which undermined the functioning of Parliament
* mused on the theoretical need for responsible and representative government and the role an opposition has in facilitating these functions
* addressed the term ‘essential’ when responding to the question.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to provide a critical assessment when answering the question
* provided an imbalanced view to demonstrate an overall knowledge of how both houses of parliament work and assist in the workings of the parliament. The term ‘effective’ was not viewed in any detail. A few mentioned the hostile senate idea but did not explore in great depth and were deemed only to have ‘considered knowledge’.

Question 4

The more successful responses commonly:

* debated the idea that the creation of the ‘political class’ has greatly limited the ability of citizens to influence parliamentarians, particularly when considered in conjunction with partisanship; a brief cover of the role of citizens in organised social media campaigns had much to commend.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided mediocre quality responses, e.g. only noting protests, petitions and contact representatives as methods of influence
* stated examples with limited evaluation, e.g. passing mention of the recent climate strikes.

Question 5

The more successful responses commonly:

* had a clear focus of the keywords of the question
* were able to explain the preferential voting system and identified where it favoured major parties and groups that might exchange preferences, e.g. mused on the idea that preferences advantage democracy and ensured greater representation
* compared to/with overseas examples.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided a limited link to the questions, e.g. donkey votes and its relevance to informal voting; minimal cover was given to either multi-member proportional voting for the senate or consideration to voting above or below the line
* failed to outline what was meant by ‘advantage’ or provide a thorough critical assessment.

Question 6

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated comprehensive knowledge by using a multitude of examples and often from both state and federal elections in Australia
* used appropriate references, e.g. referenced the 2001 election as an indicator and that national security is an electoral factor and linked/ reflected on Tampa
* demonstrated insightful argument related to non-security factors such as the economy
* included quotes, e.g. from Keating in 1993 referring to Hewson a ‘feral abacus’
* demonstrated astute considerations of the Playford election victory and the various factors that contributed to his lengthy success
* included a critical analysis of the 2018 SA state election.

The less successful responses commonly:

* limited in their arguments and any analysis best described as competent with mostly accurate use of correct political terms
* struggled to highlight national security as a direct causal factor nor discuss what other causal factors
* dominated by mere description with limited direct quotes or specific statistics.

Question 7

The more successful responses commonly:

* focused on the term ‘evaluate’ and cited examples, e.g. what the major parties did in relations to their traditional ideologies
* demonstrated a broad list of comprehensive understanding, e.g. using the ALP in the 1980s such as privatising former government industries (Commonwealth Bank, QANTAS) and floating the dollar; how the Liberal Party attempted to reach the political centre by looking at Thomas Playford with ETSA and SAHT
* demonstrated astute focused on the reasoned argument, e.g. most of the time, major parties focus on their fundamental beliefs.

The less successful responses commonly:

* consisted of descriptive communication of factual information and a level of understanding best described as ‘considered’.

Question 8

The more successful responses commonly:

* defined the parameters of ‘political process’ clearly by considering a discussion about the processes of passing legislation, representing the constituency and enacting a parliamentary mandate amid other matters
* debated well on the various iterations of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party
* considered the view that the political process needed disruption of the ideology on the/ a minor party was to be implemented.

The less successful responses commonly:

* made broad statements without supporting with examples
* had an inadequate link between quotes/ mantra used to the question leading to a significant deficiency in both knowledge and understanding
* were limited responses to the term ‘independents’ and on occasion entirely omitted; hence students must ensure that the question is being addressed in its entirety.

Section B: International Politics

The students attempted the following questions:

Question 12

The more successful responses commonly:

* made explicit response and evaluation of the claim clearly
* defined and explained the terms ‘political processes,’ and ‘excessively influences’ well
* examined the role of media concentration with multiple international examples to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge
* had coherent communication of government censorship and/ or control influencing the political process through suppression, e.g. in China, North Korea, and Latin America
* evaluated continuously with excellent link using the words of the question which provided the basis of proficient critical analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to define ‘excessively influences,’ and ‘political processes’ and thus only demonstrated a basic understanding
* made broad claims without relevant examples or critical evaluation that limited the level of communication
* showed limited analysis of responses that touched on the concentration of ownership specifically in the USA, Australia and the UK, e.g. responses that fell into the trap of attacking an individual, rather than examining the claim.

Question 13

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a well-considered knowledge with the discussion of Fox and coverage of Obama and President Trump while highlighting different approaches and bias
* showed and reflected a comprehensive knowledge in explaining the various platforms of media and how these platforms inform what/how people think about political processes
* used examples of censorship in China, Latin America, North Korea and Africa to highlight strict control of the political narrative with the stronger responses referenced the Arab Spring to illustrate how carefully crafted civilian-led protests often on social media were able to bypass state media.

The less successful responses commonly:

* failed to link the question back to issues related to politics
* made superficial consideration that started off track and remained off-track, e.g. checking Facebook but failed to make a connection to any political theory; Trump’s use of Twitter during the 2016 election, but little else.

Question 14

The more successful responses commonly:

* outlined a clear interpretation of the question by defining alternative and mainstream media well
* pursued the analysis that alternative media facilitates both action and awareness
* demonstrated astute and coherent coverage that argued alternative media using the examples of Arab Spring, Iran and the Green Movement, Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia
* argued their cases successfully with convincing arguments, e.g. using the last two presidential elections in the USA have been won due to the use of social media.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to define the mainstream and alternative media which narrowed the range of political terms indicated other weaknesses
* failed to outline what was meant by facilitating action and facilitating awareness
* were unable to effectively use the wording of the question and making a connection by explicitly highlighting the argument being made
* used a few case studies or examples to highlight argument made
* were distracted by moving off tangents, e.g. about President Trump using Twitter with minimal to the specific words of the question.

Question 15

The more successful responses commonly:

* were able to critically assess and argue whether the USA can guarantee the security of Australia using examples related to Pine Gap, Robertson Base, HEH and ANZUS
* provided comprehensive knowledge with a coherent cover of more recent examples such as AUSMIN and Talisman Sabre.

Question 21

The more successful responses commonly:

* showed well-considered knowledge through providing working definitions to unity and diversity, and established a stance on the statement
* focused analysis and communication on the limitations to achieving unity due to a series of religious, economic, geographic and military differences.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to assess the specifics of the question critically.

Question 24

The more successful responses commonly:

* provided clear lines of argument and the range of global examples that indicated a comprehensive understanding of American supremacy/hegemony
* discussed well the America’s military and economic strengths as enabling its position as a global leader
* discussed current events, e.g. current trade war between the US and China and the growing influence of China
* demonstrated astute communication that put forth a convincing argument with consistent attempts to link to the contended statement
* explained and referenced well, e.g. the hard and soft power in regards to American leadership.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to establish the parameters of the argument, e.g. discussed respect being an element but limited their communication by focusing more on fear without detail
* contained oblique reference to questions as discussion/description was more about North Korea and the various summits with the US; arguments focused on Trump administration alone and how its loss of international respect
* engaged in commentary without arguing the case, e.g. focused too much on what seemed to be prepared answers and failed to convert the knowledge into the question asked
* focused too much on military power and not the factors that helped the US gained or lost respect
* vilified an individual national leader without providing a balanced viewpoint.

Question 25

The more successful responses commonly:

* defined ideas around foreign policy and established the parameters of what was meant by a ‘better world’
* gave a clear and thoughtful introduction with strong evidence of astute use of political terminology and political theory, e.g. analysis moved to a range of foreign policy areas such as humanitarian, economic and military
* explained well the positives of American foreign policy using the example of the Marshall Plan to create a ‘better world’; the Gulf War of the 1990s; the pursuit of terrorism; Al-Baghdadi
* analysed negative American foreign policy including the Bay of Pigs, Pinochet in
* evaluated statement with clear and incisive use of political terms.

The less successful responses commonly:

* analysed the Vietnam War as a failure but little detail was included
* used sparingly the terms of the question which limited the quality of evaluation
* limited examples used, e.g. reference/examples made to Latin America was poorly done as the basic facts were just not known or confused.

Question 26

The more successful responses commonly:

* analysed the terms ‘mutually beneficial’ well using the examples of the Australian-American relationship and the establishment of ANZUS and the on-going security relationship between the two nations
* discussed the weakness in regards to the growing Chinese presence in the south-west Pacific and Australia’s economic reliance
* referenced Australian ‘blind loyalty,’ with consideration of involvement in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan as being of no benefit to Australia
* used terminology of the question and provided a two-sided consideration of the claim.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to come to grips with the ideas around ‘mutually beneficial,’ e.g. ANZUS was referred to like a security blanket, there was little by way of discussion about the relationship being mutually beneficial
* mentioned cultural similarities broadly but included no specific examples or details
* did not use the terms of the question and failed to successfully ‘evaluate’ the claim.