

Australian and International Politics

2011 Assessment Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
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AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give 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, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

Students and schools are to be complimented on the high quality of their work in each assessment type and also in the examination. Moderators of the school assessment were impressed by the evidence provided by the students as measured against the assessment design criteria and the performance standards. Examination markers commented on the comprehensive level of knowledge and understanding demonstrated in many papers. The combination of all four assessment types did, in many cases, provide outstanding evidence of learning.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Some schools submitted an overview summary of the folio tasks specific to their school; this was a logical guide for the students as well as the moderators. It was often the case that formal written arguments provided students with more opportunities to demonstrate evidence at the higher levels of the performance standards. Schools are reminded that comprehensive supporting evidence needs to be provided in writing if a task is designated as using either a multimodal or an oral form. This supporting evidence makes explicit the learning that the multimodal or oral assessment is intended to demonstrate.

Moderators noted that throughout the folio two assessment design criteria, knowledge and understanding, and communication, were more often in evidence at 'A' or 'B' level of the performance standards. Evidence against the third assessment design criterion, research, critical analysis, and evaluation, was often at a lower level of the performance standards. Teachers are advised that solid analysis and research requires more than a description of ideas or concepts.

Moderators commented that summaries of achievement against the performance standards were often provided in the students' folio evidence. This summary supported them in the ongoing self-monitoring of their own progress; in addition, it provided information for moderators when reviewing student evidence.

Assessment Type 2: Sources Analysis

Moderators commented that the sources analysis was the area in which students felt most confident. As anticipated, the sources analysis completed under timed conditions proved more challenging than those completed without restriction. However, this assessment type revealed quality learning. Many students demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the content; there was evidence of in-depth research, and communication was astute and coherent.

Students are advised that, when collecting their own sources, they should refer to all sources presented in their response. Moderators noted that the quality and diversity of contemporary secondary sources was excellent, but that primary sources could be improved.

In general, students produced astute and coherent responses to the sources. It was noted that when comparing sources, and assessing their usefulness, the responses tended to lack coherence because of inconsistencies in choice. This was, in some ways, compensated for when insightful understanding of 'participation' and 'power' was demonstrated at other points in the response. It is suggested that the teacher-supplied tasks need to start with the terms 'analyse', 'evaluate', or 'assess', rather than 'describe' or 'list'.

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

The investigations were of a high standard, with many students looking at non-local issues. Most responses were coherent and displayed reasoned arguments throughout the investigation. This was more evident in investigations of contemporary issues such as the carbon tax, asylum seekers, and topics relating to the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those students who looked at local topics, such as gaming, water quality, or local government issues, often had an impressive variety of primary and secondary research linked to their hypothesis, as well as some excellent focus questions. It should be noted that while the development of a hypothesis or a range of focus questions is a common methodology, these are not the only means by which material may be organised. This year, more than in the past, outstanding use was made of graph analysis using Excel. However, students should reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their own surveys to ensure that depth and quality of information remains a focus.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Examination

SECTION A: AUSTRALIAN POLITICS (Questions 1 to 8)

The Australian Constitution and Federalism

Question 1

Students used an array of headings in approaching this question. Headings relating to global, fiscal, and constitutional matters appeared in the more successful responses and these students did *assess the statement*. However, some responses missed the point and were less than convincing. Examples used came from the

debates about Work Choices, the national curriculum, health, tied grants, the River Murray and the Murray–Darling Basin Authority, the 1996 gun laws, and speed limits. All students referred to the division of powers in section 51 of the Constitution to good effect, but many arguments about separation of powers were confusing.

Question 2

This question was usually very well done. Most students followed the conventional path of discussing landmark cases of the High Court to good effect, but few students noted that reform was a matter of opinion and that a decision or resolution may not have pleased all people. Knowledge of the Railway Servants' Case, the Engineers' Case, the Uniform Tax Case, and the Tasmanian Dam Case was impressive. The term 'only' was well analysed. In general, students referred to referendums as the 'best' alternative source. The more successful responses noted the role of 'referral of power' as another alternative. Legislation relating to the CSIRO was rarely debated. This was the most popular question in Section A.

Political Representation, Parliament, and the Executive

Question 3

Responses to this question tended to concentrate on events in 2011. The ongoing debates about the carbon tax played a significant part in the responses. The difficulties of a hung parliament were often raised. The overriding 'rule' of Standing Orders was covered, but little mention was made of conventions and literal interpretations. Reference was made to the 'attacks' of the opposition in question time, (described by some as a tactic of 'relentless negativity'), and to 'strong defence', and extensive and time-consuming 'Dorothy Dixers'. The opportunity to mention such ideas as censure motions and supplementary questions in the Senate was taken up.

Question 4

Invariably the responses started with strong statements about the current hung parliament and made comparisons with the federal situation in 1940. The knowledge of the 2011 political 'numbers' and 'names' in the House of Representatives was impressive. The concept of wider consultation was understood and a range of current examples was given. However, the answers tended to lack depth of debate and, in some cases, length.

Voting and Elections

Question 5

The responses to this question were not as strong, although in all papers there was a strong opening paragraph. The general nature of the preferential system was understood, but no reference was made to compulsory preferential and optional preferential voting. Some students were keen to show mathematically the exact mechanism of 'bottoms up' preferential voting, which, while interesting in itself, was not needed in this question. Students were aware of the Hare–Clark system but were unable to enunciate why it may or may not produce majority governments.

Question 6

There were few responses to this question. One marker noted that the term 'volatility' might have distracted the students. There is a sense in which this question played on the ideas of short-term and long-term factors. Students are advised to make it clear which election they are discussing; for example, stating 'the 2010 election' is, at best, ambiguous — 'the 2010 federal election' would be more precise. The more successful responses focused on the changing fortunes of the major parties before and after the *Tampa* affair in the lead-up to the 2001 federal election. Some mentioned the rapid fall in popularity of the Rann government after the alleged Chantelois incident. The knowledge of most elections was good, but some students focused on a description rather than an assessment of the statement. This was often noted in the depth of description of the 'birthday cake' debate at the federal election in 1993, rather than on the fall of John Hewson from popularity.

Political Parties

Question 7

There were many impressive responses to this question and a wide variety of examples were noted that exemplified the general points that were made. The concept that, as issues become more political than ideological in nature, the original principles might be 'moved', was not lost on students. While the 'traditional' study of Hawke and Keating with the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas in the 1980s was well documented, the more successful responses also added the issue of Costello and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. A number of students referred to Playford and the Adelaide Electricity Supply Company and the cross-party link to Chifley. Most made some reference to both the carbon tax and also to Tony Abbott's quip that 'if there is any choice between political principle and pragmatism [he'll] go for the pragmatic option'. The ABC program *The Drum* was quoted by students. Some argued that the upcoming minerals resource rent tax does reflect Labor principles in terms of wealth distribution. In the less successful responses, students spent too much time on the history of the 1890s. Some confused the two words, 'principles' and 'principals'. This was the second most popular question in Section A.

Question 8

Students had a good understanding of this topic. All papers centred to a greater or lesser extent on the post-2010 federal example. Most students also looked very briefly at the comparative federal position in 1940 in terms of a hung parliament. However, no one considered that the role of minor parties and independents has often been pivotal in South Australia for over forty years. Well-documented examples included Andrew Wilkie in Tasmania receiving \$50 million for an ICT Centre at state level, and how Nick McKim of the Greens gained a ministerial position after the 2010 Tasmanian election. The role of the 'WOW group' — Wilkie, Oakeshott and Windsor — featured in answers. Bandt and Crook were generally ignored, but Katter was a popular inclusion. Again, as in the past, students should resist the temptation to make extremely unfavourable comments about individual politicians.

The example of Peter Lewis, in the outcome of the 2002 South Australian election where he 'won' concessions (over fishing in the Murray and the elimination of branched broomrape weed near Bow Hill) as two conditions for his support of the incoming Labor government, was well documented. The impact of the Democrats in the 1998 federal election, in relation to the GST, was used to advantage.

SECTION B: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS (Questions 9 to 20)

In Section B, some complete topics, and some individual questions, attracted no responses. These have not been listed here. Furthermore, where only one response was completed, no reference has been made to this question to ensure that individuals are not the subject of comment.

Global Media

Question 12

The cable and satellite Fox News Channel was used as an example by nearly all students. Most argued that it had a right-wing political position and added that the news anchors and reporters at Fox News deny any bias in the news reporting. Many students effectively explored the mantra ideas of 'Fair and Balanced' and also 'We Report, You Decide'. Also, the phone tap and hacking scandal, involving mainly the *News of the World*, was given extensive coverage. As a follow-up, many students made mention of the upcoming bid by James Murdoch for BSkyB and also the attack on this by the Avaaz team. There was detailed knowledge of the activities of Silvio Berlusconi.

Question 14

The Arab Spring was mentioned by a number of students. The details of events in Egypt were well covered. Students are advised to check the accuracy of their geographical information; some were uncertain of the location of significant places. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in December 2010 received extensive coverage, and students noted that this event, with the aid of the alternative media, forced Ben Ali to step down. The Internet being shut down in a number of countries was also mentioned by most students.

Individuals such as the Twitter blogger Greg Jericho (Grog's Gamut) received effective coverage. Other responses made good use of the example of Pensions & Investment Research Consultants, the investor activist group which is working against Lachlan Murdoch's reappointment. Others chose to focus on the Occupy movement that is gaining popularity across the world, and some students argued that the movement is achieving a radical shift in the way some people think about politics. Other responses looked back to the Great Firewall of China — the Golden Shield Project — to illustrate their arguments. A few reflected on the fate of Shi Tao in China, and his years in prison since 2005, for attempting to use alternative media. The more successful responses argued that it is not only the major media owners that have great power but also the countries.

Australian International Relations

Question 15

Students focused on the term 'major powers' in the question and discussed the 'great and powerful friends' concept in a historical sense. Relevant contemporary Asian examples were also discussed, and the more successful students linked their responses to headings such as social, economic, and political challenges.

The United Nations and Human Rights

Question 18

Students generally argued that the United Nations did a fair job, but that the phrase 'a paper tiger' was a better descriptor. A wide geographic range of examples was used and usually to good effect. Many responses referred to the Falun Gong as an example of a minority group whose interests were not well defended. Others used examples such as the Tibetan people or the Congo asylum seekers. These formed the basis of the rebuttal in the better-quality replies. Higher-quality responses were characterised by knowledgeable examples relating to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as examples from both China and Cambodia.

The more successful responses referred to Silvia Cartwright as being well-known for defending human rights via the United Nations, and for furthering international justice, as well as for her deep analysis of the 'victim experience'. Her current role in the United Nations and previous role as governor-general of New Zealand were less important in the context of this question. This pattern of including superfluous information was repeated in the less successful responses. In the more successful responses, selected examples of the Thirty Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were referred to with good effect.

Question 19

This question was generally well done. The notion of 'prevention' was explored by the more successful students, as was the understanding of what constitutes a region. Invariably, examples and debate covered Africa, with past cases like Rwanda in 1994 (the Hutu massacre of the Tutsi people), recent examples from Darfur in Sudan, and the current situation in Libya included in the answers. Well-written examples about Tibet, the Kurds in Turkey, and the Uyghurs in Western China were also used.

The United States of America and World Affairs

Question 24

There was a range in the quality of responses to this question. Most were very successful in the sense that the words 'critically examine' were the focus of the response, and analysis followed as distinct from description. Students focused on a number of interpretations of global leadership. All responses contained some mention of the military and political spheres. Many covered the economic aspect, but only in the more successful responses did the social or any of space, sport, or moral perspectives receive coverage. Markers commented on the quality and significance of the detail in some answers; the use of statistics was also better than in previous years. Students should resist saying that the lack of ability in a certain president was the cause of the decline. Some students suggested that the shift of power to the East, and the rise of the Asia-Pacific region will continue to define our times. Others argued that the USA is on the brink of a calamity and that, after the financial crises of 2008 and 2011, it is no longer in control of its own destiny. The more successful responses referred to Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae and the Lehman Brothers collapse. This was the most popular question in Section B.

Question 25

Students were well prepared for this question. There was a very good level of knowledge about both the foreign policy of the Clinton years and the often-quoted

Bush Doctrine. Few went down the path of arguing that it was expansionism but in a different form. Students gave ample background about the Cold War without falling into the trap of giving too much historical detail. The better responses referred to Noam Chomsky as a critic of American foreign policy, while the less successful responses focused on a discussion of his biography. This was the second most popular question in Section B.

Question 26

This question attracted a limited number of responses. These focused on Australia's common links with the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. Considerable debate was generated by the Korean War and much more about the Vietnam War. Reference was made to the changing position in what some see as the upcoming Asian century, but all students made mention of the recent announcement of the deployment of American troops to Darwin. Much lively debate was centred on past and present US bases in Australia. Some questioned whether or not this initiative (more US troops in Darwin) would expand and deepen military cooperation between Australia and the United States.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The packaging and presentation of materials for moderation was generally of a high standard. The learning and assessment plans were attached, but the information about changes to the amended plans was not always made perfectly clear in the addendum.

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