

Australian and International Politics

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' 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 again to be complimented on the high quality of their work in each of the assessment types. Moderators of the school assessment were impressed by the evidence provided by the students as measured against the assessment design criteria and performance standards. Examination markers commented on the comprehensive level of knowledge and understanding demonstrated in many papers.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

As in 2011, it was beneficial where schools provided an overview summary of the folio tasks. It was often the case that the formal written arguments, as suggested in the subject outline, provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate evidence at the highest level of the performance standards. It should be noted that two of the folio tasks need be formal written arguments. Moderators noted that this also provided a logical pathway for the students. A multimodal task can only be judged by the evidence presented. Moderators stressed that schools need to ensure that ample evidence is provided if a task is either a multimodal form or an oral form; and thus would provide the students with an opportunity to demonstrate evidence at the highest level of the performance standards.

Moderators commented that throughout the folio, they found that the assessment design criteria, Knowledge and Understanding, and Communication were often in evidence at the higher levels of the performance standards. However, the assessment design criterion, Research, Critical Analysis and Evaluation was often at a lower level of the performance standard. This was mainly seen in the level of research where in the less successful responses it was little more than competent while in the more successful responses it was astute.

Moderators appreciated where a summary of the performance standards of each student across the folio evidence was provided. A word count on every assessment task within each assessment type is also appreciated. It was felt that there was room to improve in the areas of bibliography and referencing. The subject outline provides the necessary guidelines for these elements.

Assessment Type 2: Sources Analysis

Moderators again commented that students were, generally, successful in providing evidence for this assessment type. While the timed tasks under supervision were not as successful as the unsupervised tasks, both demonstrated high quality. Many students demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge, there was evidence of in-depth research and communication was often astute and coherent.

Moderators also noted that while there was excellence in the contemporary nature, and the quality and diversity of secondary sources, the quality and diversity of primary sources could be improved where a 'balance' of views should be presented. There is the need to limit the number of sources used or alternatively to indicate that perhaps students need only to refer to a majority of the sources provided.

Moderators noted that, in general, students produced *astute and coherent* responses in terms of the assessment design criterion Communication when comparing sources, but when assessing the usefulness and reliability of the sources the responses tended to exhibit only *generally clear* responses and at times were *inconsistent*. This was, in some situations, compensated for when insightful understanding of participation and power was demonstrated at other points in the responses. In a few cases, it was suggested that the questions could start with the terms 'analyse' or 'evaluate' or 'assess' rather than 'describe' or 'list'. All responses were inside the designated word limit.

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

The Investigations were, to quote one moderator, '*a delight to read*'. Students tended to opt for an even balance of local, national and international topics. Students are advised to consider the availability of both primary and secondary. The less successful responses lacked political engagement and, on occasions, selected a non-political topic to investigate.

Most responses varied from *coherent to thoughtful* in terms of the assessment design criterion, Communication. In general terms, students provided reasoned arguments throughout. This was very clear in the more contemporary of the investigations covered such as those related to Inverbrackie, the Syrian situation, asylum seekers, mental health, the live cattle trade, WikiLeaks and the Arab Spring and a little less effective with more historical topics such as the 'sacking' of Rudd and Afghanistan. Topics such as euthanasia, video ratings, the cat debate, police and the Republic seemed to be less well covered. Those who looked more at a local issue such as the redevelopment of Port Adelaide or gamers for Croydon or issues over transport usually had an impressive variety of primary and secondary research and some impressive focus questions. Yet some did not address the key words of the key questions as clearly as they should have. Students might note that while an hypothesis or a range of focus questions are popular, these are not the only methods of approach. Some impressive use was made of graph analysis through online survey tools and useful, though less effective, were some comments that came via social media. Doubtless, this potentially useful source will be developed, but needs, in itself, to be analysed in terms of value that such a cohort of replies might provide. As in years past, students need to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their own surveys. Some students only provided evidence of some in-depth research as distinct from astute and in-depth research of learning of the assessment design

criterion Research, Critical Analysis and Reflection, and thus limited the quality of their responses.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Examination

SECTION A: AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

The Australian Constitution and Federalism

Question 1

In general terms, replies to this question were very good as distinct from outstanding. Some responses argued that Section 1 of the Constitution and references to 'a *federal parliament which shall consist of the Queen*' is indicative of a bigger problem. One marker noted that perhaps they were 'inspired' to comment by the visit of Charles, Prince of Wales and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall but others were keen to note that a referendum had been offered in 1999 and rejected. The more successful responses went on to argue whether or not Section 128 was in itself ample. The concept that the High Court decisions/interpretations of societal values were significant to this debate was well documented. Predictably, reference was made to the Whitlam dismissal and the sense in which Section 53 is unclear. Other responses noted that even though it was written in the last decade of the nineteenth century it has stood the test of time. The 'usual' debates around the Bill of Rights [religion, jury and voting etc] were covered in an analytical manner. A measure of vagueness was noted with respect to technology where there were no direct or indirect references to section 51 subsection 5, or to defence and the omissions in section 51 subsection 6. Contemporary debates around the need to refer to Indigenous Australians in the preamble were overlooked. The need to consider the place of indigenous peoples in the Constitution appeared in many papers. In the more successful responses, the students did *evaluate this claim*, but some missed the point and were less than convincing.

Question 2

In the clearer replies, the students did *critically assess this idea*, but some missed the idea and spent time listing points. The responses to this question were not as successful as the previous question. Students tended to argue that over time there has been a decline in the fundamental quality of the relationship. While students could cite examples of the referral of power and the growth of federal power from High Court decisions and fiscal matters, they did not strongly link this to the key words of the question. A good overall knowledge of Section 51 was in evidence.

Political Representation, Parliament and the Executive

Question 4

The argument tended to focus on the federal situation and the hung parliament and to argue about conflicting personalities in the House of Representatives. Reference was made to 30 second television grabs both 'on the floor' of the House and 'in the street'. Specific parliamentary examples from 2012 were clear and used to good effect. The idea that members might actually believe something with a passion which

could be mistaken for 'show' was not lost amid a level of cynicism. Clearly, students had viewed 'Order in the House' and selected appropriate examples.

Voting and Elections

Question 5

While responses discussed preferential voting, proportional and first-past the post systems, prepared answers discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the different systems which appeared with some modifications was not what the question was asking. The now 'defunct' first past the post system got more coverage than needed. While the general nature of the preferential system was understood, little reference was made to compulsory preferential and optional preferential voting and how that might/has impact/impacted on a result. As in the past, students were aware of the Hare Clark system but were unable to enunciate why it may or may not produce majority governments. Somewhat surprisingly, no reference was made to the current situation in either the Lower House in Tasmania or the situation in the unicameral ACT.

Question 6

This was the most popular choice in Section A. Lively debate centred on the 2001 federal election and the incidents around Tampa, 9/11 and Children Overboard and whether or not this was the return of popularity for John Howard. Others argued that it was leadership and others that it was popularity because of xenophobia. Students using this example invariably centred their reply on analysis not description and were to be commended. The perennial birthday cake debate in 1993 was referred to by some students. Some students spent time on the lack of popularity debate where instances of Anna Bligh in the Queensland state election of March 2012 attempting to personally attack Campbell Newman were well documented. Good use was made of 'one-off' sentences like Whitlam being popular in 1972 and Menzies being popular at times in the 50's. In general, markers were pleased to see a wide coverage of federal elections over two decades and reference to both state and federal elections.

Political Parties

Question 7

Most students gave a good explanation of the origins and core ideology of the major parties. However, some spent too much time in this area when in 2012 it was but a small part of the answer. Some debated the ideas around '*is a numbers game*' as against '*was a numbers game*' and invariably did well in doing so. Again students are advised to refrain from having 'a go at' the/their 'villain of choice'. A number of students argued that a number of ALP positions, have been pragmatic rather than ideological, but then tried to suggest a 'non-ideological' framework for the Liberals. There was also a tendency to argue that the Liberal Party of Menzies and the modern iteration under Howard and now Abbott are ideologically similar. More successful responses managed to deduce the ideological underpinning of a number of ALP positions e.g. the MRRT. More successful response also remarked upon the inconsistencies in the positions of both major parties on asylum seekers and the form of a Carbon 'Tax'. Successful responses noted that the nature of the hung parliament forced compromises on the Gillard Government, particularly the clean energy future and again The Drum was quoted. Many students successfully made much of the 'numbers game' of a Hung Parliament at federal level but invariably not at

state/territory level and not in either Tasmania or the ACT. Tony Abbott's quip that 'if there is any choice between political principle and pragmatism I'll go for the pragmatic option' reappeared from last year. References to section 23 (the Senate) and section 40 (the House) in terms of the numbers game were rare.

Question 8

Many responses successfully discussed the 'WOW Factor' [Wilkie, Oakeshott and Windsor] and their strong position in the current parliament as 'Kingmakers' as part of the 'numbers game.' They also were able to list a number of 'pay offs' / 'pork barrelling' for these members. Strong responses were able to look critically at the personal agenda of each of these members, plus the Members for Melbourne [Bandt] and Kennedy [Katter] and able to critically assess their success at pursuing their particular agendas. Specifically they referred to Oakeshott on asylum and parliamentary reform, Katter on rural issues, suicide and supermarket monopolies and Wilkie on poker machine reform. Good discussion was centred on Nick Xenophon at both state and federal level and when in parliament he has been numerically significant and when he has not been numerically significant. The more successful responses noted that influence need be only 'in' parliament.

Very few students paid attention to the role of minor parties and independents in the State Parliaments. Some focus was on the National Party and the phrase 'aggressive, agrarian right wing' appeared more than once. At a state level the Queensland situation was well covered but some did not make it clear how the rise of Campbell Newman may impact on the balance within the LNP at state level. Relevant information about Bob Katter referred to as 'everybody's favourite politician'— dotted the papers. His role at state and federal level, the role of his son, his brother and the alleged egg throwing incident with the Beatles all received coverage. However, occasionally analysis was lost amid entertaining detail.

SECTION B: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

In this section the topic, Comparative Political Systems, and some other individual questions e.g. questions 10, 11, attracted no responses. Where only one response was provided by students, little or no written comment has been made.

Global Citizenship

Question 9

A good understanding of this movement and its momentum was noted. Markers would have liked to have seen more discussion on the concept of global citizenship.

Global Media

Question 12

Few students attempted this question. Reference was made to 'media mogul' Rupert Murdoch in both the USA and UK and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy as well as what was described as the partisan nature of Fox coverage and its 'echo effect'. References to 'fair' and 'balanced' again dotted responses. The more successful responses touched on newspapers as well as electronic media. Strong responses were able to avoid developing the essay into a 'history paper'. Markers would have liked to have seen analysis of '*always*' in reference to the statement 'Media owners have *always* been

concerned with political power' and in this sense there was the need to provide the counter argument.

Question 13

Most, if not all students, took the statement at face value and constructed a case accordingly. Students might have explored the notion that main stream media may have other commercial responsibilities as well. Some cover appeared of the phone tap/hacking scandal involving mainly the News of the World and other British tabloid newspapers.

Murdoch and Fox were popular case studies and stronger responses included items such as misleading coverage, blurring of boundaries between editorial and news, visual cues. More detailed responses considered the word '*all*' from the question and also discussed alternative and government run media outlets as well. There was some argument as to whether Andrew Bolt's and Alan Jones' writings in the Sydney Morning Herald really created informed or confused citizens.

Question 14

This question attracted a range of responses. The more detailed responses took into consideration a number of different forms of alternative media such as social media and online media and amateur media [Blogs]. The more successful responses discussed such events as the 'Arab Spring' and explored social media as a means of both organising and publicising these events that gave an alternate view to state run media. Others referred to the campaign in response to Alan Jones' remarks in Australia, the 'Hacked Off' collective and the Occupy movement globally. More successful responses mentioned the shifting paradigm of new media or referred to 5th estate writers like Nate Silver of The New York Times and Greg Jericho and Peter Brent using mainstream media as a platform. Ideas around 'Challenge to the Gatekeepers' and 'Information Silos' were noted.

Australian International Relations

Question 16

The limited number of responses focussed on agreements mainly with the USA and, therefore, found it problematic to refer to more than one bilateral and one multi-lateral agreement. There was a strong focus on the economic and defence aspects of the debate which provide some room for analysis.

United Nations and Human Rights

Question 18

This was the most popular question in this section. Responses often started off with an acknowledgement of the limitations of this institution in that the UN lacks real power and authority. A small number of students got caught in a discussion of its history and some of the details of the 30 UDHR Articles. This was often supported by a wide geographic range of examples, usually used to good effect. The debate around the term *unworkable* was well covered in the more successful papers and the argument that a 'well intentioned person in a blue hat' can do little in a war zone appeared. It was noted by some students that the key premise of Article 1 where '*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*' and then strongly linked this to the terms '*in practice*' in the question.

Question 19

Students, one marker noted, seemed determined to agree with the view as it stood rather than to *critically assess* the view. Examples and debate came from Africa with past case studies like the Hutu massacre of the Tutsi people and more recent examples from Darfur in Sudan and briefer references to the Kurds in Turkey were also used. The reverse debate, that war in the medium term, can actually spread human rights if only after bloodshed was lost on some students. Others mentioned sanctions and peacekeeping missions as being useful.

The United States of America and World Affairs

Question 24

The words *critically examine* were noted by students and analysis followed as distinct from mere description. While the subject outline term 'hegemony' did not appear in the question, it did appear in the answers. The general level of language sophistication was impressive. The responses attempted to prove that the USA had attained global domination and then to debate whether or not it was at an end. This domination was seen through success in fields like the military and the economy, as well as levels of social and political leadership. Peripheral fields such as space and sport dotted a few papers. Those taking a more historical perspective referred to seeing off communism, looking at the role of the USA in multilateral organisations and then examining the more recent 'threats' of China and Islam. A limited number covered congressional gridlock as a problem. Others used an array of economic indicators as evidence drawn from other subject areas and as in the past, markers commented on the quality of the depth of detail in some answers. There was good the use of statistics when referring to demographic statistics, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae and the 2008 Lehman Brothers collapse.

Question 25

This was the most popular question in Section B and a wide range of examples were used. The wide range of achievement reflected the ability, or not, to *critically assess* or to merely produce a 'history chat'. Usually a wide range of examples were given from the Cold War examples centring on Vietnam and Korea to conflicts in Afghanistan. Students gave ample background about the Cold War without falling into the trap of giving too much historical detail. References to Noam Chomsky as a critic of American foreign policy dotted the papers.

Some previously not mentioned examples appeared such as the debate over the role or otherwise of the Reagan administration in the defeat of Communism; and the debate around the role of Pinochet with Nixon's help in Chile which suppressed communism but did not bring democracy. Whether or not democracy was established in the Middle East with the passing of Saddam Hussein was covered in a number of responses.

There was a very good level of knowledge about both the foreign policy of the Clinton years and the often quoted tenets of the Bush doctrine. Few went down the path of arguing that it was expansionism but in a different form.

Question 26

The term 'strategic partner' was not handled all that well. Students tended not to look at other strategic partners. That said, the 1970 Menzies phrase of '*great and powerful friends*' [from Measure of the Years] did appear. Many took the brief historic view and some began with 1941 and Pearl Harbour and followed it up with Singapore and Darwin February 1942 and the Battle of the Coral Sea. While a time frame was not stipulated, markers felt too much time was spent in some of these areas. Most referred to 1951 and ANZUS and knew of the actions in 1984 of New Zealand. Few missed the opportunity to refer to Vietnam and our supportive and the Holt quote of *All the way with LJJ* appeared. Knowledge of the last decade was good and many were aware of the more recent reference by Hillary Clinton that '*America has no better friend*'. Some response did reflect a level of cynicism about this. Knowledge about AUSMIN and the Robertson 'base' dotted many papers. Much lively debate was centred on past and present US bases in Australia. Some questioned whether or not this initiative would expand and deepen cooperation between Australia and the United States. While all of this analysis was sound, it was hoped that the military would not be the only point of focus. Students tended to refer only to military strategy and the stronger responses looked further afield for areas to debate.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Learning and assessment plans were provided as required, but teachers did not always clearly use the addendum where changes had been made to their programs. The packaging and the presentation of materials was again of a sound standard.

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