



2006 International Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

This was the first year of the newly accredited study design for International Studies and the examination was in a new format. The format was set up with the sample examination which was published early in 2006. The November examination closely followed the sample paper.

Overall the examination was handled well by students. The mean for the paper was higher than in previous years and there were fewer students who did not attempt all questions. The standard deviation was also much tighter than in 2005. The core of the course appears to have been well taught and most students demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the content.

There was a tendency in the longer responses for students to give a knowledge-based narrative rather than apply some analysis and support their answer with evidence in the form of examples. The essay for Section B was on Australian Foreign Policy and the same tendency applied – that is, students tended to incorporate a lot of knowledge but not enough analysis. All essay questions asked students for some analysis or evaluation. This area should be worked on in 2007.

The 2007 examination essay question will be on Power in the Asia Pacific. The Section A question on this area in 2006 saw most students focus on China and Taiwan. There was clearly demonstrated knowledge and depth to many of the answers; however, students also need to be able to place their chosen case study into the broader context of the Asia-Pacific region. In addition they will need to be very careful to specifically respond to the question in 2007. With students all responding on the same topic, and having sound knowledge, the key differentiation will need to be how well they have responded to the specific question and the quality of their analysis and supporting evidence.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A

Globalisation and internationalism

Question 1

Marks	0	1	Average
%	8	92	0.9

Response could come from or be a variation of:

- to keep peace throughout the world
- to develop friendly relations between nations
- to work together to help people live better lives
- to eliminate poverty, disease and illiteracy in the world
- to stop environmental destruction
- to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms
- to be a centre for helping nations achieve these aims.

This was a straightforward knowledge-based question which was an easy warm up for students.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	5	27	68	1.7

Positives aspects of globalisation could include:

- improvement of living standards
- development of free trade conditions
- improvement in communications.

Groups to have benefited could include:

- groups of countries (for example, developing countries)
- groups of people (for example, workers in developing countries)
- multi-national corporations.

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Many answers other than those presented here were also accepted. Some students gave aspects that some would argue were negatives but which were raised as a benefit. Value judgments were not placed on this – students were being examined on their knowledge of globalisation.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	12	33	50	2.3

Objectives of the World Bank include the following:

- to strengthen economies and expand markets to improve the quality of life for people everywhere, but especially the poorest
- to use its first-rate financial standing and access to the world's capital markets to invest in health, education and the environment, and to assist with economic reforms
- to advise globally on the investment of private capital in development projects.

A range of variations to these answers were also acceptable. Many strong responses gave specific examples of World Bank activities to support the answer. This was another knowledge-based question which students found a little more difficult.

The following is an example of a student who gained full marks for the second component.

The World Bank tries to achieve these objectives by providing loans to poor countries for development projects, lending money to assist governments undergoing structural reform to their economies. It has supported over 700 development projects.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	15	14	22	23	26	2.3

The use of the words 'potential or actual' in this question left a lot of scope for interpretation by the students. Two clear examples used were economic sanctions and support for military action. These types of actions have the capacity to challenge the ability of sovereign governments to enact the political and economic policies which they perceive to be in the national interest. The issue of treaties was also used; Kyoto is an interesting issue and was mentioned by a lot of students.

The following is an example of a strong response using the Kyoto Protocol.

The UN represents, or rather presents, a challenge to state sovereignty via the Kyoto protocol. The environment treaty asks states to sacrifice a small part of their sovereignty in the interests of the environmental future. Many argue (including the Australian government) that the sacrifice and new restrictions brought about by such an agreement far outweigh the environmental benefits and as such involve too much of a challenge to sovereignty.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	6	8	11	13	16	16	13	7	5	5.7

Students needed to choose only one of globalisation or internationalism, although there were some outstanding responses which incorporated both. Most students demonstrated an excellent understanding of the key terms in the question.

The environment was the most commonly chosen topic and it was generally handled well. However, of the three ten-mark questions in the examination, this had the lowest mean. This was, in part, due to the fact that many students gave a narrative about global warming or the Kyoto Protocol and did not deal with the 'specific state or states' component of the question. It is important that students are able to provide some analysis in responses of this length.

A significant number of students used Australia as the key state in their response, particularly in relation to the environment and Kyoto. This was a good strategy and worked well. The millennium development goals were also used, with some specific case studies being mentioned and often used well.

It is important that responses to medium-length questions contain a clear structure with a good introduction. The following is an introduction to the issue of human rights and refugees by a student who used Nigeria as the specific state.

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Globalisation and internationalism have both had profound, but differing, effects on human rights across the globe. Globalisation has seen the rise of international investment and production in underdeveloped states, at times to the detriment of the people of those states, whereas internationalism has seen the increased global awareness of human rights abuses.

Global conflicts

Although the study design refers to the post-Cold War period when giving examples to support definitions, it was acceptable to use an earlier time frame to highlight a clear understanding of the concept.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	4	17	32	46	3.2

Superpower

- A term that arose during the Cold War to describe the US and USSR following the acquisition of nuclear weapons. It highlighted that these two states had military and economic power far in excess of any other. In the post-Cold War world only the US can be described as a superpower, despite many states having nuclear weapons.

Terrorist

- An individual involved in acts of terrorism which involve the use of violence against civilian populations, or other soft targets, in the pursuit of a particular cause or in an attempt to bring about radical change.

Global terrorism

- A term used to describe the methods used by militant groups operating at a global level and with the aim of bringing about radical change either locally or in relation to significant regions of the globe. The methods involve the use of violence against civilian populations or other soft targets. The groups involved are usually non-government actors, such as Al Qaeda.

Neo-imperialism

- A situation where a strong country is able to dominate weaker countries through various political, economic, military and cultural means, but without exercising formal colonial control. This type of situation has developed mainly in the post-colonial era, with the US being the main example of a neo-imperial power.

The definitions were handled well, with many students providing excellent specific examples to support their answers. It was possible to gain full marks by providing an outstanding definition without an example or a good definition with an example. The few students who defined neo-imperialism generally did extremely well.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	25	12	17	47	1.9

Possible responses included:

- the aim was to induce terror in the civilian population
- the attacks were against innocent civilians
- an aspect relating to breaches of international law.

Examples could be contemporary or historical, such as Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany. The key to achieving full marks was to explain/justify why it is terrorism. Many examples were presented but unless some clear justification was given for describing it as terrorism full marks could not be awarded. It is important to provide students with contemporary examples to work with as well as some historical examples.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	17	22	27	34	1.8

The possible 'alleged' causes of international terrorism include:

- poverty
- Middle East/Israel/Palestine, Islamic/Christian divide
- ideology
- anger against US hegemony

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- US support for jihadist fighters in Afghanistan.

In each case there needed to be some understanding shown of how the issue or issues contributed to terrorist acts being carried out. Most students linked this in with Al Qaeda and good answers often used the concept of people feeling oppressed and marginalised as being a factor.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	4	7	10	14	17	18	13	8	5	6.0

Most students identified economic and military power as being sources of US power, but there was often too little detail provided. There needed to be some supporting evidence, examples or statistical information in order to highlight exactly how the US attained its power.

Possible limitations faced in effectively using the power include:

- over reliance on hi-tech military
- inability to understand regional complexities
- a need for improved diplomacy
- perceived US hypocrisy (for example, in relation to human rights) leading to deep seated antagonism.

This question had two parts but responses to each part did not have to be evenly divided to get full marks. It was possible to score well with a detailed analysis of the sources of power and a shorter discussion on the limitations, or the other way around. As a general rule, responses to ten-mark questions need to show some evidence of analysis and supporting evidence. There was some excellent analysis done on the factors for the limitation of US power.

The following is an example of a student response to the second part of the question which uses analysis and evidence.

...superpower status has not directly translated into the US being able to achieve the national interest at will. This can be most effectively highlighted by the war on terror which began in October of 2001 and more specifically by the invasion of Iraq which occurred in March of 2003. Despite their overwhelming power, the US has not been successful in Iraq – a war which initially was believed to be short with relatively low casualties has now flourished into somewhat of a fiasco for the Bush Government. Perhaps the most significant challenge to come out of this is America’s now tarnished international image due to events which have occurred in Abu-Graib prison in Iraq and human rights abuses in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba the US is now being cast widely in an unpopular light in the international community. This has impacted the US significantly both domestically and internationally. Domestically the backlash from Bush’s handling of the war has been vicious. His Republican Party has lost power in both houses to the Democrats in the mid term elections and now will struggle to impose his political influence. Internationally this will and has lead to the US turning to more multi-lateral approaches regarding the war, being forced to abandon their preference of unilateral conduct via the use of the hegemonic power. This proves a great limitation to US power as the US can no longer successfully assert their authority in the international world as they once could. Apart from the war on terror the rise of China as a ‘strategic competitor’ is now beginning to reduce the power of the US in the international community; most significantly in an economic sense. The free market is now gravitating towards the ‘Asian miracle’ and this has forced the US also to look to Asia; effectively placing some of the former power in the ever growing potential power of the communist state.

Power in the Asia-Pacific region

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	6	11	11	15	20	33	4.3

Nation

- Nations are the groups of people who share cultural characteristics such as language and historical identity that bind them together. Not all nations have states (for example, the Kurds).

State

- The concept of a state refers to the political process of the governing of a particular geographic area, with defined territorial boundaries. The people within these borders are not necessarily culturally, ethnically or linguistically hegemonic.

National interest

- National interest refers to a country’s goals and ambitions. These can be economic, military or cultural. National interest is the term most commonly used by governments to justify their actions. The national interest of a state primarily involves the state’s survival and security.

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Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	10	15	27	23	25	2.4

This question required specific evidence or examples to be given. It was generally done quite well, although the provision of evidence was at times too vague. Students need to be encouraged to find evidence to consistently support their arguments. This type of question encourages them to go beyond a generic statement of their knowledge.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	3	4	6	8	10	15	18	15	9	5	5.8

The question asked students to discuss the use of power by a state in the 'pursuit of its objectives in this region'. This implies more than just a specific objective from a specific case study.

Most students chose China and Taiwan, although Korea was also used and some students did an excellent job with Japan. Responses on China and Taiwan were often done in a very narrow context of the objectives. Students need to be encouraged to look at the broader perspective of power in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the case study. There were some excellent answers which used the China-Taiwan issue closely but also placed this in the context of China's broader objectives in the Asia-Pacific region.

The first part of the question – evaluation of the effectiveness – was done well. The biggest issue to arise out of this question was the number of students who simply gave a narrative of events relating to China and Taiwan. In 2007 this area of study will be the focus for the essay question. With the majority of students doing China and Taiwan the key differentiation for the essay will relate to how well they answer the question specifically. Narrative responses which are an accumulation of facts will not be able to get full marks. The answers must incorporate a specific response to the question and supporting evidence. Students will need to be prepared for questions which might ask for the broader context to be examined.

Section B – Essay

Question chosen	none	1	2	3
%	2	18	74	6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	1	1	1	3	3	3	4	5	5	6	6	8	8	10	8	8	7	5	3	2	11.77

Question 1

Students demonstrated a reasonable knowledge of key events such as the Asian economic crisis, East Timor issue, September 11 bombings, Afghanistan and Iraq, Bali bombings and Jakarta embassy bombing. Some good answers referred to problems in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. The outstanding responses also incorporated the broader aspects of security, including economics and regional integration.

The question asked for the issue of security to be placed into some historical context and good answers referred to the Keating period and contrasted any changed emphasis during Howard's time. The issue of the US alliance was nearly always brought in.

Question 2

The statement in the question assumed that the relationship with the US has always been and still is in the national interest. A number of excellent responses argued against this contention.

The historical dimension was brought in to responses and could go back as far as World War 2. However, a number of students spent almost all of their time on this part of the question and did not move on to the analysis.

The question refers to the 'relationship' rather than the 'alliance' and therefore a good response had to include both security and economic dimensions. There was a tendency to focus almost exclusively on the alliance rather than the relationship. Good responses included very up-to-date information, including reference to the current state of the trade and security aspects of the relationship and whether they are still in the national interest. Many students also made interesting interpretations about how personal relationships between leaders might have an impact.

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The dot points for this question helped students come to terms with the essay writing and were of considerable assistance to weaker students.

Question 3

This question was designed for students who had studied quite a lot on one issue and wished to follow it through. There was some overlap if they took either economics or globalisation and free trade. This was also the case for human rights and refugees but, in both cases, the essay had to focus primarily on the aspect that had been chosen.

The developments of policy on these issues related primarily to the Howard period but, in order to provide for any contrast and change or to acknowledge continuity, students were asked to refer back to 1990. An evaluation of the policy direction was also needed. This question was the chosen by only a small number of students.