



2008 International Studies GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2008 International Studies examination was generally well handled by students and reflects a greater familiarity with the course content. The majority of students also completed the examination paper within the set limits; this is an indication of improved examination practice. Students generally coped well with the demands of the short-answer questions throughout the paper but should be reminded of the need to ensure that their responses fit within the specified limits of the questions. Examples should be provided throughout to support responses.

While there was general improvement in the quality of responses compared to previous years, the discriminating factor was again the extended response and essay questions. Responses tended towards the narrative without providing the analysis and evaluation required to achieve high marks. Students who structured their extended responses and essay and provided clear and relevant evidence were also able to score highly. Students who were able to show understanding and awareness of recent events in their analysis performed well. Students are advised to be more careful in their selection of essay question as a number of students wrote essays which did not correspond to the essay question selected but to another essay question offered. Students using pre-prepared responses were generally unable to clearly relate to the question at hand.

Overall, the examination was handled well by students and most students demonstrated sound understanding of the content. Teachers are reminded to refer constantly to the study design as it outlines the knowledge and key skills that are tested in the examination. The need to ensure that knowledge is as up-to-date as possible remains imperative, and is a determining factor in awarding marks.

The 2009 examination essay question will be on globalisation and internationalism. Teachers are advised that the best way to prepare students for this is to adapt the key knowledge and key skills components in the relevant section of the study design and turn them into questions. It is worth noting that four examination pages is a reasonable length for a student with average handwriting to be able to answer the questions and provide a strong argument and good supporting evidence.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. In some cases the answer given is not the only answer that could have been awarded marks.

Section A

Globalisation and internationalism

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	25	69	1.7

Involves an increased mobility of goods, services, labour, capital, communication and technology on a global scale

Responses needed to show an awareness that globalisation is not simply an economic phenomena. This question was well done. Examples aided weaker responses to gain marks.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	2	25	73	1.7

Objectives of the United Nations (UN) include:

- 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 and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms
- to be a centre for helping nations achieve these aims.

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The aims provided needed to be clearly different.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	10	18	30	42	2.1

Criticisms of the way the UN operates include:

- the Security Council is dominated by big powers and has problems with the historically determined veto
- diplomatic instruments of the UN are not equal to the economic and military power of the United States
- there is a lack of transparency in some agencies
- corruption of the UN, that is, aid for the oil scheme in Iraq
- the lack of a permanent UN peacekeeping force available for rapid deployment
- finance problems.

Many students chose to discuss the problem of the historically determined veto.

The following is an example of a student response.

The United Nations has been widely criticised for its inability to ‘interfere in the domestic affairs of member states’ (article three of the charter). This guideline has meant that the UN is unable to intervene in states without government approval. Critics often point to the civil war in Darfur, which has been raging since 2003 and claimed the lives of between 200,00 – 400,000 people, a war the UN has been largely unable to influence because the Sudanese government refuses to acknowledge the severity of the conflict or accept the presence of peacekeeping forces in substantial numbers.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	Average
%	14	86	0.9

Aims of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) include:

- liberalise world trade
- promote economic stability
- lay down the rules for world trade.

This question was generally well done, although a number of students confused the World Trade Organisation with other economic institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	26	33	41	1.2

Difficulties the WTO has in achieving its aims include:

- it is reliant on the national self-interest of states to work effectively, for example, protectionist positions on agriculture from the United States, European Union and Japan prevent the reaching of multilateral agreements
- it does not have the machinery to force outcomes on liberalising trade, but can impose penalties for a breach of agreements
- not all states in the world are members.

Many students encountered difficulties in responding to this question, in particular when differentiating between the stated question of ‘difficulty’ in achieving aims and the assumed question of ‘criticisms’ of the WTO. The terms are not interchangeable. Students are reminded to make the best use of their reading time to ensure that they understand exactly what the examination question is asking.

The following is an example of a student response.

The WTO has been unable to effectively pressure either the United States, or the European Union, to dismantle their massive subsidies of the agricultural industries. These protectionist policies have proven a major difficulty for the WTO as they create trading blocs which consequently limit free trade in agriculture.



Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	3	6	9	12	15	15	15	11	7	3	5.4

This was a fairly general question that asked students to demonstrate a broad understanding of internationalism and its impact on a key global issue. Students could analyse some of the positives and the negatives of internationalism on the key global issue, or they could ‘discuss the extent’ by providing a more thorough analysis of the positive influences. Students who simply went through the positives and negatives of internationalism’s impact on the key global issue, without any evaluation or analysis, were not able to gain full marks.

Many students chose to discuss the impact of internationalism on the environment (and in particular global warming) but did not fully engage in discussing the extent to which internationalism had affected this area. Students who gave a simple narrative of the Kyoto Protocol without analysing the effectiveness of the Protocol in achieving its aims were not able to gain full marks. It is an expectation that students in discussing global warming are aware of recent internationalist efforts to combat the issue and do not simply stop at the Kyoto Protocol. It is also important to note that students needed to discuss both ‘human rights **and** refugees’ to gain full marks for a discussion on this global issue.

It is important to note that not all key global issues were as easy to answer as others, for example, students who selected to analyse the impact of internationalism on technology and communications set themselves a more difficult task than those who selected the environment. Students are advised to make the best use of their reading time to ensure that they select the question that is most accessible to them.

Power in the Asia-Pacific region

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	7	18	28	40	2.9

A nation is a collective term used to describe a group of people who share common cultural characteristics, such as religion, language and a sense of historical identity. While some nations do have sovereignty over a state, such as the Japanese in Japan, many nations, such as the Kurds, do not. In contrast, a ‘state’ is a legal term, used to refer to a defined geographical area, with a permanent population, a government capable of effective rule, and, most importantly, recognition of sovereignty from other states. An example of a state is the People’s Republic of China.

Many students encountered difficulties in responding to this question. Students were required to explain the difference between a state and a nation. Simply providing definitions of both a nation and a state was insufficient to gain full marks. Students who provided examples to support their response tended to score higher marks.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	18	15	27	40	1.9

Communication between states that occurs at bilateral or multi-lateral levels. It is frequently used as an approach to avoiding or resolving conflict, promoting trade or simply developing improved relations.

It appeared that many students did not properly read that Australia could not be used as an example for this question. As a result, these students were not able to gain the mark awarded for the part of the question which asked them to give a recent example of diplomacy. Students are advised to make the best use of their reading time to ensure that they are awarded all available marks.

Question 9a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	41	59	0.6

Many examples of aid being given in the Asia-Pacific region were offered, including:

- China has donated over \$3 billion to Burma since 1990
- the US supplied military aid to Taiwan during the 1995–1996 missile crisis.

Again, it appeared that many students did not properly read that Australia could not be used as an example for this question. As the area of study for this question was power in the Asia-Pacific, either the recipient or donor of the aid had to be in this region. Students are advised to make the best use of their reading time to ensure that they are awarded all available marks.

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Question 9b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	15	29	57	1.4

Numerous examples of the motivating factor behind the provision of aid stated in Question 9a. were given. Students who had incorrectly supplied examples of Australian aid in Question 9a. were given the opportunity to gain marks for this question as Australian motivations were accepted.

The following examples were commonly used in response to this question:

- many states, including those in the US, have sanctioned aid to Burma due to unfavourable political leadership. China's 'no strings attached' approach to Burma (Myanmar) ensures the state's loyalty, especially in terms of recognising China over Taiwan
- it is within US national interest to promote regional stability and maintenance of the status quo. The provision of military aid to Taiwan was discouragement to China to disrupt regional stability by attacking Taiwan.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	3	4	6	9	14	15	16	12	7	4	5.4

This was an accessible question which should not have posed many difficulties to students. It was possible to gain full marks by concentrating on the achievement of one objective or through discussing a range of objectives.

The majority of students chose to discuss China's pursuit of objectives, in particular, territorial integrity. It was expected that in analysing the achievement of territorial integrity, awareness of more than one of China's separatist regions was shown. The best responses were those that highlighted the conflicting nature of the objectives being pursued. Again, it appeared that many students did not properly read that Australia could not be used as the focus for this question.

Students needed to show a combination of knowledge (outline and knowledge of the aim/s) and analysis (degree to which objective/s have been achieved). Purely knowledge-based responses could not receive high marks. It is disappointing that many students supplied a pre-prepared extended response that analysed the effectiveness of different forms of power in achieving objectives as this discussion on power detracted from a holistic analysis of the successful achievement of the specific state or group objectives.

Australian foreign policy

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	16	31	48	2.2

Many students encountered difficulties in responding to this question, in particular by not simply explaining the selected security relationship but explaining the significance of the security relationship. The marks allocated to each question should be used as a guide as to the detail required in the response to gain full marks. The majority of students chose to discuss the Australia-United States security relationship.

Australia's security relationship with America is solidified in the 1951 ANZUS treaty, and continues to be relevant and nurtured on a bi-partisan basis. The alliance guarantees 'consultation' in the event of security threats in the region and provides Australia with access to US weaponry and intelligence.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	11	16	38	35	2

Almost any regional state could be chosen to describe the benefits Australia gains from one regional relationship. It was expected that students discuss more than one benefit. Common benefits included those of trade, security, stability, culture, migration, regional diplomacy and international standing. America, China and Japan were the most frequently selected states.

Australian provision of aid to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is beneficial to Australia as it works towards ensuring regional stability by reducing the risk of a failed state. Such ventures also increase Australia's appearance of being an 'international citizen', demonstrating their commitment to providing military and humanitarian aid.

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Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	13	29	27	24	2.5

To attain full marks, students needed to provide a response which sought to identify and explain a change in Australian foreign policy orientation and goals. Students typically sought to explain one change in orientation and goals based on the change in government, Labor/Liberal ideological differences, changing security and economic environment. Typical changes selected and explained were: deployment of troops in Iraq; ratification of Kyoto Protocol; emphasis on the multilateral approach; veto of sale of uranium to India. Students should be aware of making sweeping statements, especially in regards to Australia's approach towards China; it is erroneous to state that only with the election of the Rudd government did Australia engage with China.

The following is an example of a student response.

The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (2007) is indicative of a greater emphasis on internationalism by the Rudd government. Prior to the election, Howard government refusal to sign the agreement was demonstrative of a clearer focus on the economy to the detriment of multilateral cooperation.

Question 14

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	13	4	8	8	10	13	12	13	10	6	4	4.8

This question had the lowest mean of the three 10 mark questions, which reinforces the need for students to read the questions carefully and respond to the question asked, rather than simply giving broad knowledge. A significant number of students wrote exclusively on the extent to which economic considerations influenced Australian foreign policy decision-making without reference to any other factors. Conversely, some students wrote exclusively on the extent to which security has influenced Australian foreign policy decision-making with no reference to economic considerations. Others gave a list of economic-related events but did not analyse the extent to which this meant that economic considerations dominated Australian foreign policy.

Better responses provided analysis on 'the extent' to which economic considerations dominated. Most did this through highlighting that other factors (such as security and internationalism) have also been important. Exceptional students were able to discuss the changing economic environment as a factor in Australian foreign policy decision making. Appropriate examples included debate over ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, the sale of uranium to India, Howard's versus Rudd's trade policy, participation in the coalition of the willing, engagement with the 'arc of instability'.

Section B – Essay

Global Conflicts

Essay	None	1	2	3
%	1	10	35	54

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	5	6	4	7	6	8	8	9	8	7	6	6	3	2	11.7

Teachers and students should carefully study the key knowledge and key skills in the study design. Converting these into questions for essay responses is the best way to prepare for the essay component of the examination. Students are also advised to practise writing essays under examination conditions.

Question 1

This question asked students to evaluate the causes of one post-Cold War conflict. The question was very narrow and therefore required considerable specific detail. Analysis of the causes, in terms of weighting which causes were more responsible for the initiation of the conflict, was required. Detailed examples to support the view were also required. Students who attempted this question tended towards the narrative, which precluded them from being awarded high marks. A number of students also chose to describe the causes of a range of conflicts across the post-Cold War period, however marks could only be awarded for the depth of discussion of one conflict and as a result, it was difficult to attain high marks. Students are advised to make the best use of their reading time so as to ensure that they understand exactly what the question is asking and to start planning their response in their minds. This was not a popular question.

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Question 2

This question examined the impact that terrorism has had on the power of the United States since 2001. Many students had a good understanding of the knowledge required to answer this question well but gave a pre-rehearsed response which failed to link sufficiently to the question at hand. The determining factor was how well students linked a challenge to US power to terrorism. It was encouraging to see students discussing possible changes to US power limitations as a result of the election of Obama. It was unfortunate that a number of students selected to write on Question 2 but in fact responded to Question 3, and in such instances it was difficult to award marks.

Question 3

This was by far the most popular question in Section B, perhaps a reflection that it was not dissimilar to one of the key area of study knowledge dot points. The popular case studies were analysis of America's aims in the War on Terror (students were not penalised for analysing the achievement of aims in only one conflict) and al-Qaeda and Russia's aims in the recent South Ossetia conflict. Students who chose to discuss the Rwandan genocide or the 1992 conflict in Somalia tended towards the narrative with a limited appreciation of the aims of the groups involved and resolution of the issue. Teachers and students are encouraged to focus on conflicts post-2001 and ensure that students' knowledge is as up-to-date as possible.