

May 2015 subject reports

## Global Politics

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-10	11-24	25-36	37-49	50-61	62-73	74-100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-12	13-23	24-34	35-47	48-59	60-71	72-100

### Internal assessment

#### Higher and Standard Level Internal Assessment Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-5	6-8	9-10	11-13	14-15	16-20

### Internal assessment

#### The range and suitability of the work submitted

Despite some excellent work in evidence this year, there are continuing weaknesses in this component. As commented last year, more emphasis needs to be placed on the IA in the structure of the course, as an essential part of course activities, rather than as simply another component to be completed, and on the importance of the IA in concretizing course concepts and analysis. Too many students treated the IA as a smaller extended essay, did not tie the IA

back to course units, and used very limited sources in their work (such as the use of only one interview, often conducted by telephone or e-mail). Students also frequently used known individuals as their sources, such as parents or relatives, without showing awareness of the potential of this to bias the report and limit the analysis. Disappointingly there were only a few reports in this session that really met the potential of the exercise or the connection between the exercise and the rest of the course, and some teachers did not follow the directions sufficiently carefully, giving credit to students for work that did not fit the task guidance and assessment criteria.

It is important to emphasize that the engagement activity has been designed to allow students the opportunity to explore a political issue that is of particular personal interest. There seemed to be some cases where the teacher had assigned the entire class the same IA task, which prevented the students from taking ownership of the task. This compartmentalizes the activity from the units of the course and it was sometimes difficult to understand why the student chose to do the IA that was completed.

Many of the better reports were based on engagement with political issues affecting everyday lives in the students' local communities. It is not the intention of the IA that students necessarily engage top political leadership or ruling segments. The focus of the course is on "people, power and politics," making it possible to include segments of the entire population(s) in the analysis. While it is clearly not possible to do in-depth analyses on all political levels, the focus need not be on powerful individuals or groups. These segments should be mentioned for a comprehensive understanding of the political issue, but it is not necessary to make them the centre of activity. Interaction between and among various stakeholders is a key focus of the course. It is often difficult for a student who is using limited sources (for example a single interview) to include a wider view of the political issue and a variety of points of view. The student should state any bias insofar as he or she is aware of it, including recognition of his or her own bias.

It is also important to note that necessary research informs a meaningful engagement, but research alone is **not** an engagement activity. Similarly, engagement activities undertaken **without** supporting research often produce assumptions without justifications. The importance of both the research and experiential elements, and the interaction between the two, should be emphasized from the outset, in initial discussions of this task.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### A. Identification of issue and justification

The vast majority of students successfully identified what their engagement activity and political issue were. Too often, however, it was unclear why this issue was chosen, particularly where there was not a clear link to the course units. Stating that the issue is important, or important "for my home country," is not sufficient justification.

## B. Explanation of engagement activity

Explanations of the engagement activities were generally clear although explanations and descriptions of simulation activities and activities such as Model United Nations were often weak. It is important that the student develops his/her own reasoning for engaging in these activities as well as specifically tying them to the rest of the course. It is crucial that it is clear what the student actually did.

A wide variety of engagement activities were seen. Candidates who used **only** simulations, or very limited interviewing (often as few as one or two interviews) had a tendency to miss, or over-simplify, aspects such as the complex negotiations and important variables that take place within and among groups and stakeholders. The most effective engagement activities were those where students interacted with groups of people who may have (messy) differences in their approach to their goals, whether for or against any particular issue. Those using only simulations or very limited interviewing tended to struggle to make connections to the course as a whole, particularly around power, globalization, and how people interact.

## C. Analysis of issue and D. Synthesis and evaluation

Please see General Comments. These two criteria saw the poorest performance from candidates. Many IAs were overly descriptive in nature. Emphasizing that the analysis should relate back to the units may help with this problem. It is crucial that this activity is seen as an integral part of the course, the “on-the-ground” application of the concepts that are contained in the units rather than a separate and compartmentalized activity that sometimes seems unconnected. Many responses were primarily descriptive or narrative in nature, rather than analytical, and where there was critical analysis this tended not to be well developed. Candidates also seemed to struggle to effectively synthesise the research and experiential aspects within their response.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

As emphasized earlier, engagement activities need to be fully integrated into the mainstream of the course—as the direct application of course learning. Because it takes on a different form than class discussion, it becomes easy to see this exercise as an addendum rather than an essential component. Comments made on the form of the exercise, the sources, and importantly, the emphasis given by the teacher on the importance of the exercise may help students engage this activity with more energy and commitment, directly applying course learning into the reality of global politics.

## Paper One

### Higher Level and Standard Level Paper One Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-6	7-8	9-12	13-15	16-19	20-25

### General comments

#### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

One key area students struggled with was time management on this paper, with many spending too long on the early questions and running out of time for the final question.

#### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

On the whole, candidates seemed to have good understanding of the sources, which suggests that they had been well prepared on the unit examined. The fourth, extended response question which required an examination of the claim about the involvement of both rich and poor countries for successful development, was dealt with in an exemplary fashion by many candidates.

#### The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

##### Question 1

Most candidates obtained full marks as they followed the demands of the question - weaker students wrote too much and did not answer the question.

A significant minority of responses just repeated/ listed statistics rather than deducing something from them. A significant minority of candidates spent far too long on this question, some writing lots of factual information about undernourishment. Perhaps they were hoping to demonstrate knowledge about the topic, failing to recognise that they were simply to interpret the data. The key to success for this question was answering the question in a succinct fashion.

##### Question 2

Many responses identified challenges from the source, but failed to develop/explain the factors.

Most candidates focused on two developing points in detail. It is obvious to state, but the question focuses on source B which was not always evident in all scripts.

### Question 3

Most candidates were able to address the demands of the question and were well rewarded. The reason why some candidates struggled was mainly because they answered the question by outlining both contrasting *and* comparing points, i.e. both similarities and differences. The candidates that recognised that this was a contrast response (requiring discussion only of differences) often adopted a useful and methodical structure. They identified an explicit point of contrast and quoted from the sources to demonstrate the contrast very clearly. The best organised responses used key contrasting markers such as "on the other hand", "whilst" or "alternatively"; identified 4 contrasts, and separated each point with a new paragraph. The weaker responses simply repeated large chunks of the sources and the examiner was left to infer the contrasts.

### Question 4

Question 4 brought a wide range of responses, but in order to access the higher marks candidates needed to use the sources and relevant own knowledge and put forward a balance of viewpoints with a solid conclusion.

The stronger responses demonstrated a good appreciation of the need for alternative factors to be identified and developed, with the best offering some evaluative comments as to what may be considered the "most important factor". Weaker responses did not even acknowledge counter-arguments and often talked in idealised tones about rich countries helping poor countries, with little explanation of how this may happen or any examples.

It was pleasing in this question to see so some many different case studies being put forward, which illustrated a real passion for the subject.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates need to be taught the expectations of the global politics command terms: many candidates were clearly unsure what was required by the command word "contrast", and that identifying specific differences was required.

The need for a balanced approach in the final question could be reinforced.

Exam technique often seemed to be an issue, rather than understanding of the material: time management was an issue for some candidates, and a significant minority wrote more for Q1 than Q4. More effective use of paragraphs could help candidates organise their responses better in the final two questions.

## Paper Two

### Higher Level Paper Two Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-4	5-17	18-25	26-35	36-42	43-50	51-75

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Unpacking the concepts that appeared in the questions seem to be the most difficult area that most students faced. Students tended to use the concepts without demonstrating clarity in their understanding of them. This lowered marks for many who otherwise had some good ideas that could have been made clear if the concepts had been used correctly, and worked against the examples that the students provided.

Although there seemed to be a good understanding of the main aspects of liberalism and realism, candidates otherwise showed a tendency to drop in names of theories or political approaches with the assumption that the reader knows the theory as well as the connection with the question. They also seemed to have difficulties in managing questions which crossed over two units, and in drawing connections between concepts.

The units in which candidates seemed to have most difficulty were peace and conflict, and human rights. The weakest responses were in Q. 7, specifically relating to Peacebuilding. Unit 4 generally posed greater challenges and produced descriptive responses.

On the whole, candidates structured their answers better than they did last year, but for some this still proved problematic. Although some candidates did provide very in-depth examples to support their answers this was not the norm. In many cases examples were stated and explained, sometimes at length, without connecting them to the argument or to the question at hand. Some candidates went to great lengths to explain an example, then stated their argument in just a line and didn't build on it, leaving it to the examiner to draw inferences and connections.

In some instances, students used incorrect terminology. Some responses called the United Nations an NGO. Also, a lot of candidates confused the NATO-led bombing of Libya with Syria.

Counterclaims were weak in all questions and often not present. Some candidates did mention an alternative point of view, but then failed to provide any evidence to support it. This is an area that needs to be emphasized and the reason for providing counterclaims explained.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates seemed to be well prepared to answer on the core concepts of power, sovereignty, development and globalization. For the most part, the answers were well organized, although again, at times the misuse of concepts confused the progression of their argument.

Most candidates managed their time well, and very few left their papers unfinished.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

*Q1 Examine the claim that increased interactions and interconnectedness in global politics have fundamentally changed the nature of state sovereignty.*

Most students were able to unpack the concept of state sovereignty successfully and connect it with the concept of globalization, although for many students sovereignty often became solely the interaction among states, rather than a more holistic view of the concept, what it represents, and who is involved. The idea of "interconnectedness" in this question was particularly problematic, as it was often not mentioned, or was mentioned solely with reference to R2P and NGOs; it was often assumed that it represented (mistakenly) the homogeneity of cultures, rather than including issues of trade, corporations, internal differences and particularly globalization. Students seemed to have trouble conceptualizing globalization and that seems to indicate that more time needs to be spent on this phenomenon and what it represents.

Many students were able to use the concepts of soft and hard power to augment their answers. There was some good knowledge of pooled sovereignty, internal sovereignty and external sovereignty, although ideas such as responsible sovereignty were not referenced by most. Collective dilemmas (e.g. global warming) tended not to be referenced, nor was the increased role of civil society.

Many candidates failed to show how the case studies they mentioned are the result of increased interactions and interconnectedness, or that these were responsible for a change in the nature of sovereignty. For example, one very popular example for this question was the Arab Spring. However, many candidates failed to effectively show how this event was the result of increased interconnectedness and interactions, or even how it challenged state sovereignty.

Some candidates used examples that were unhelpful or even inappropriate. The invasion of

one country by another, say Russia's actions in the Crimea or the US invasion of Iraq, is not really a good example of the effects of globalization. Nor have these changed the nature of sovereignty as the act of one country invading another existed long before the classical model of sovereignty began to be challenged due to increased interconnectedness.

Few candidates added counterarguments on the continued primacy of the state, to balance their answer.

*Q2. Power is often assumed to be linked to the possession of, or access to, resources. Discuss the validity of this view.*

The question was straightforward and many students were able to answer it appropriately, with some strong responses. Generally, the concept of power was understood; "resources" not so well.

Many candidates struggled to link the concept of "power" with "resources", and often the focus was on how different schools of thought view power, which was not really the prime focus of the question. Some candidates confused resources simply with goods, which led to poor analysis.

Soft power was not as well understood as hard power.

*Q3: "Human rights covenants and treaties can limit development in newly industrializing economies." To what extent do you agree with this claim?*

Some candidates effectively used the idea of generations of rights in their responses. Many also understood the main issues surrounding industrialization, such as child labour, poor working conditions and exploitation of resources.

Few candidates focused on the issue of inequality within poorer countries, or explained what is meant by a "newly industrializing economy", and, subsequently, many used examples from countries that are not "newly industrializing". Other examples did not focus on the "industrializing" aspect of the question, but instead used examples from perhaps the fishing or agriculture sectors, which were not linked to industrialization.

Many candidates never mentioned, by name, any specific human rights covenants or treaties. Others mentioned the UNDHR, but not any specific aspects of it. Trade agreements were generally not referenced.

Differentiation between alternative and orthodox development helped give focus to those essays which made this distinction.

This question generated mainly one sided arguments – few counterclaims were explored.

*Q4: Discuss the extent to which cultural relativism can be used to justify different concepts of human rights.*

Even though the concept of cultural relativism was generally understood, many candidates only showed how the argument of cultural relativism is used by individual countries, without

exploring more widely whether or not it can be used to justify different understandings of human rights. Descriptive responses focusing on issues such as Sharia Law made up the majority of some essays. The weakest responses appeared to have no knowledge of collective rights.

Many candidates showed how cultural relativism could not justify different ideas of human rights by using examples of honour killings; however, fewer candidates were able to provide any examples of the value of cultural relativism.

*Q5: Evaluate the view that globalization harms rather than benefits the poorest people in countries with the lowest incomes.*

Most candidates who answered this question understood what is meant by globalization. Many used good examples of globalization, such as increased NGO presence or development and humanitarian aid.

However, only a few candidates actually considered what is meant by the “poorest people” in the “lowest income countries”. Many used examples that did not fit into this characterization, such as Argentina, and generally wrote about less developed countries. Also, no candidate looked at the issue of what characterizes a “lowest income country” and how this term itself might be contested. For example, many candidates used China or India as examples, but did not examine if these indeed should be considered appropriate examples for the question.

Responses that referenced the difference between orthodox and alternative understandings of development were able to provide an effective framework within which to measure the impact of globalization. World Systems Theory was used in the responses from one school, but generally there was a lack of theory in replies to this question.

There was also a lack of counter-arguments in responses to this question.

*Q6: Discuss the view that sustainable development will never be achieved until state and non-state actors can be persuaded or forced to act in the common interest.*

This proved to be, overall, a difficult question for candidates. Very few candidates could draw out the issue of how the term “common interest” can be differently understood; the ones that did well here were the ones that could do this. Other candidates could not draw out how the “common interest” may mean different things for different people: even fewer could dwell on the question of the need, or not, for persuasion, or for forcing actors to act in the common interest. Many answers simply provided examples of how actors can willingly cooperate, without the use of any coercive measures; others only examined hypothetical ways in which the issue of climate change could be addressed by various actors in a cooperative manner.

On the whole, candidates also failed to unpack what is meant by “sustainable development”, which then meant that their responses did not always focus on the “sustainable” aspect of “development”. There was little discussion and focus on the value of sustainable development in the responses.

Answers tended to be weak on specific case studies/examples. Non state actors were not included in most responses; MNCs were also generally not mentioned.

Arguments 'for' were dealt with far better than arguments 'against': the idea that coercion is not needed was rarely seen in answers

*Q7: Peacebuilding is arguably more important than peacemaking, yet it is given much less funding and attention. To what extent do you agree with this claim?*

Most candidates struggled with some of the concepts and terms in the question and therefore had problems in building the argument appropriately. Most candidates were very clear on what “peacemaking” is and how it is accomplished, but many candidates failed to explain what the specific aspects of “peacebuilding” involve. As well, there was a general inability to provide comprehensive examples of “peacebuilding” efforts.

There was little awareness demonstrated of the dynamic nature of conflict and the conflict cycle.

*Q8: Discuss why non-violent protest is sometimes able to achieve success against even the most powerful of opponents.*

This was not a popular question, and, in general, was not well answered. Most candidates understood what is meant by “non-violent protest”, however few discussed what it entails in-depth. For the most part this question generated descriptive responses, and non-violent protest was only identified as marches and street protests: the different methods of non-violent protests were not explored. Exactly how and why these protests are on occasion effective was not normally considered. Some candidates used violent protests as their only examples.

The answers were mainly generic in nature without a specific focus on success “against the most powerful opponents”. Candidates who referenced ideas such as Galtung's triangle were often not able to integrate these appropriately or talk about symmetric and asymmetric conflicts.

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## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- More time would seem to need to be spent on the key concepts of the units and on what they represent in varying situations. Because by nature they are abstract, grounding them in examples and emphasizing the need to have clarity on what is meant by them would seem to be a priority. Perhaps short practice essays using the key concepts may help in this respect. Examples and reference to current events become confusing and unclear when the concepts used to explain them are not clearly understood or are used randomly.
- A crucial area is the importance of specific examples to support claims. It is also important that teachers and students are reminded of the need to use current rather than historical

examples. There is a wide range of ways to expose students to different examples, for example through documentaries.

- As well, teachers need to make sure that they explore counter claims with the students. Every perspective that is taught should be accompanied by a counter-statement that shows an alternative point of view.

## Further Comments

The global politics subject guide provides advice and examples of how to use the required content for the units. It may be that teachers are, understandably, focusing on the interests of the students and the good discussion that provides, and, whilst this is valuable, it is also necessary to cover the range of what each unit requires.

It needs to be emphasized to students that their answers are severely hindered if they do not have clarity about the concepts they are using and why they are using them. Most of the concepts in the units are common words, so that the students already have a perfunctory idea of what they represent, but in fact, they are generally far more complicated than the students realize, and this needs to be emphasized during the class discussion.

## Standard Level Paper Two Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-5	6-11	12-16	17-22	23-27	28-33	34-50

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Once again, at standard level, the more theoretical or conceptual dimensions of global politics were largely absent from most of the candidate responses. Where such references were made to theory these were more often than not, piecemeal in fashion and dropped into essays apparently as a means of 'ticking a box' rather than being employed in a substantive sense in order to illuminate the overall argument(s) being advanced

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

In general, candidates were well prepared in terms of being able to employ relevant real world examples to support the main points or arguments that they advanced. Many of the examples in student responses were both compelling and contemporary. The only caveat in this instance is that it was apparent, painfully so at times, that candidates had been 'coached' to refer to a particular example (the tragic Rana factory collapse in Bangladesh, for example). More often than not, this particular example worked well for the given question but there were numerous

occasions where this was not the case and the use of an example was very much a case of trying to shove a square peg in a round hole. A greater variety of real world examples needs to be part of a candidate's toolbox when it comes to the exam.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Q.1: Candidates were relatively strong when it came to dealing with the concept and effects of globalization as a phenomenon but were far less accomplished when it came to considering the key concept of sovereignty.

Q2. Most responses to this question were relatively weak and lacked a clear understanding of what is meant by 'power'. This can be a relatively nuanced concept and most candidates neglected to deal with the concept as a whole in a meaningful fashion. Too much was asserted rather than established.

Q.3: This was a stronger question for many candidates. There was an imbalance of sorts in response to this question as it was easier for candidates to identify how human rights might limit the development of non-industrializing countries (NICs) than the reverse. Many responses were overly vague and general; for example very few made reference to actual covenants and treaties.

Q.4: Many students misread this question and neglected to consider how the concept of cultural relativism might be employed to justify different conceptualisations of human rights. Instead, they generally offered a litany of cases where cultural relativism has been present without taking the extra (necessary) step of analysing just how this has then provided the basis/bases for a conceptualisation of human rights that is different to the more Western, 'universal' conception. Again, students were quite strong in identifying different real world instances but most responses lacked the sophistication in response for which the markscheme asked.

Q.5: Possibly, the strongest set of responses for any question this year. Students in general seemed on much firmer ground here and most responses were able to offer relevant and contemporary real world examples in support of their argument. The only real weaknesses present were that many candidates did not really engage with what is meant by terms such as 'countries with the lowest income', 'poorest people' or 'harm' in any real sense.

Q.6: Candidates who answered this question generally did a reasonable job of considering the concept of 'sustainable development', although in some cases the "sustainable" aspect was weak. Many neglected to explore what was meant by 'the common interest' or to show how state and non-state actors needed to work together to achieve this. That is, some candidates at best were able to show how each might play a part but not how they needed to act in concert (or not).

Q.7: Another example where key terms needed to be clearly understood and distinguished

from one another. Some students managed to do this quite well but, in general, responses then did not explore adequately enough how the two were related. Like many of the questions above, candidates were much more capable of dealing with component parts in isolation / separately from one another instead of seeing the whole and how different aspects might be related.

Q.8: Most candidates were able to identify instances of non-violent protests but many failed to then explain how such non-violence might (or might not) prevail against much stronger opponents.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

- Much more attention needs to be given to helping students better utilise the theoretical dimensions of the subject, not just in terms of being able to repeat key phrases but to see how theory actually informs and explains (in) action in global politics.
- Students need more practice in actually reading questions in order to better understand what questions are asking of them, what they are expected to do. All too often, it seemed as if candidates had not fully read the question in front of them and so only answered part of it.
- On a similar note, quite often responses dealt with the separate dimensions of a question but failed then to see the whole and how each part might affect another. As a consequence, most responses lacked the sophistication necessary to attract the highest marks.

## Higher Level Extension

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-5	6-10	11-16	17-22	23-27	28-33	34-40

## General comments

This was the last year of marking using the current HL extension assessment criteria, and the last where it will be externally assessed. We will work with the new global impression marking system next year.

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Weaker presentations tended to include only a superficial application of theory. Stronger presentations not only included appropriate theory and or concepts, but explained the concepts in relation to the topic.

Candidates tended to struggle to evaluate, offering only one perspective, or simple and/or superficial alternative perspectives. Very few candidates challenged definitions, concepts etc.

Most students could make connections between the case study and a general global issue, but few did so effectively. Global was defined by all as relating to other countries. The definition of global as involving and requiring many actors was not always identified or discussed. Connections were made between the case study and a global issue, but the implications were not always well explored or evaluated.

Some candidates identified the links to the course only in the concluding part of their presentation and therefore the application of the concepts was somewhat artificial and the links were not as well explained as they would have been if they were integrated at the appropriate place in the presentation.

Some case studies were specific to the local/home area of the candidate and, at times, assumed knowledge meant the case study or its implications were not as well explained as required.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The work submitted reflected a wide range of topics, and demonstrated high levels of suitability. The work and learning demonstrated by each candidate was pleasing—knowledge tended to be good. Those students who made explicit reference to sources scored better in criterion A—this criterion is not challenging, so students should be able to score well.

Good presentations made purposeful use of key concepts, theories and ideas from the core units. The best presentations tended to be on topics which the candidate had a strong personal connection or interest. Analysis and evaluation were evident in the best work.

An improvement was shown in candidates' presentation skills as they moved away from reading notes, or on reliance on PowerPoints or other visuals.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should continue to focus on appropriate topic selection, as well as on the best use of case studies to view events and analysis in a global context.

The use of relevant questions throughout allows the discussion of the case to be connected more effectively to both course theory and concepts—presentations that have an argument or thesis are far more focused.

Teachers need to teach the global politics concepts comprehensively: sometimes barely appropriate theory was evident, as if found in a business management textbook.

Candidates should focus on a particular argument or theory, and structure their presentations in a similar way one would structure an essay or written research project. Simply giving information is not good enough for a high mark - students must show they understand how a political concept or theory applies to their case study.

By all means candidates can hold cards with brief notes and details, but under no circumstances should they read their oral presentations (neither a 'presentation' written on paper nor one written on a screen hidden from view of the camera). Reading extensively from notes can be considered an academic honesty issue, and could be further investigated.

Candidates should not talk too quickly, but can allow themselves to show their passion for the topic.

## Further Comments

Overall, the assessment is an effective one where students are challenged in a number of areas, technical demands notwithstanding.

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