

# Global politics

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## Grade boundaries

### Higher level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 22	23 - 34	35 - 46	47 - 59	60 - 71	72 - 100

### Standard level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 8	9 - 20	21 - 32	33 - 43	44 - 57	58 - 67	68 - 100

### Internal assessment

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

### Higher level extension oral

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

### Paper one

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 25

### Higher level paper two

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 8	9 - 16	17 - 21	22 - 30	31 - 39	40 - 48	49 - 75

### Standard level paper two

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 25	26 - 30	31 - 50

## Internal assessment

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

Submitted work was of quite a varied nature, with engagement activities running from interviewing lawyers about the implementation of particular laws to interning at local advocacy groups. Engagement activities were often quite successfully linked to political issues, allowing the students to develop a meaningful understanding of the political issue through undergoing the engagement activity. Most reports made clear course links, through the use of prescribed content, key concepts and/or political theories. Most reports attempted to synthesise the engagement activity experience with additional academic sources.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

**Criterion A:** Most reports were able to identify a clear political issue (though at times too broad to be sufficiently covered in 2000 words). Sometimes reports did not identify 'the politics' of their issue, but rather took an Economics or Geography approach. A political issue is essentially 'who gets what, when and how'. Most reports implicitly connected engagement and the political issue and this could be enhanced. Most reports identified the student's interest, though at times this was still not developed enough (beyond 'I have always been interested in sustainability').

**Criterion B:** Most reports shared clear lessons learned from the engagement activity. A significant number of reports did not show full insight into 'what the student did'. If students undertake an interview or intern at an organisation they should not just explain what they learned from these experiences, but also take us through what they experienced. How did they prepare for the interview, what non-verbal communication took place, what did they observe? All this should not be overlooked.

**Criterion C:** Most reports offered some analysis of the political issue, though at times these were rather narrative, simply restating what other sources (either academic or from the engagement) had said. A more specific, detailed political issue usually allowed for more in-depth analysis, whereas political issues broad in geographic scope or conceptuality often affected the depth of the analysis. Most reports made clear course links, but they often lacked justification. If students use particular theories, such as realism, they are expected to explain or unpack these theories based upon academic sources. Similarly, concepts cannot just be used without exploration and substantiation. The contestability of concepts was also not always recognised. Analysing human rights simply through The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not show a clear understanding of that particular unit and the debatable nature of, in this case, the UDHR.

**Criterion D:** Most reports now show a synthesised approach in that the engagement activity and additional academic sources are used throughout. However, there is still a significant number of students who have not understood the holistic nature of the criteria and have simply turned criterion A into section A etc. This particularly impacts on synthesis. It is expected that students will demonstrate insight into engagement (criterion B) and analysis of the political issue (criterion C) throughout the report, rather than separated into sections. Most reports attempted to show different perspectives to the political issue. If the engagement activity is rather one-sided, then it is expected that additional perspectives are shown through other academic sources and/or political theories. Considering students pick a topic that is of personal interest, they are quite often rather biased about the political issue. They

should refrain from turning the engagement activity report into a political pamphlet and rather aim for a more academic approach of carefully analysing different perspectives.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

There were some reports that ignored the engagement activity for the first few pages, focusing solely on the political issue. Considering this is an 'engagement activity' report, it is advised the engagement activity is introduced and justified at the start of the report. There were also many engagement activities that did not appear to meet the bare minimum expectation (two interviews) or weren't active enough in that they constituted only passive experiences (observing lectures, debates) or don't allow for active communication (a Question and Answer over email or a survey). Some reports made some basic indications of what the student did at the start and then never returned to the actual experiences. It is advised students share their experiences throughout the report, as and when relevant. Additionally, some political issues did not seem to match well with the engagement activity. A simulation cannot provide real insight into 'the success of IGOs in peacemaking'; this would either require an additional 'real' political experience or another political issue more clearly connected to the engagement. One of the reasons for a disconnect between the two seems to be that the political issue is sometimes expected to be of global significance. This is not the case and a local, regional or national focus is certainly valid. In fact, a few reports made some disconnected jumps to a global level of analysis, even though their focus seemed to lie on a more local level. Unless this is clearly stated as the purpose of the investigation (a comparison between country X and Z or province A and B) it is not expected students move away from their focus and at best this then produces an irrelevant section in the report. The more successful reports had smaller, manageable scopes and focused political issues. The broader the political issue (up to 'effectiveness of IGOs worldwide') it is more likely that claims from the engagement activity cannot be fully justified and the analysis will likely lack depth. Though many reports make course links, these often lack justification. Reports all too often mention 'legitimacy', 'soft power' a 'realist perspective' or a 'feminist perspective' without offering any academic substantiation as to where the student's understanding of these concepts or theories comes from. In addition to this being an academic honesty concern, it also undermines the justification of points made, impacting the validity of the analysis. Rather than claiming, without justification, 'a realist would argue' it is advised students read into a particular theorist and state 'Mearsheimer argues...'. Considering students may undertake the engagement activity before all course content is covered in class, teachers should encourage students to make course connections with those units already covered, as these are likely to be more developed than units that have not yet been covered. Those students choosing political issues that connect to course content that has not yet been covered, should be carefully guided by the teacher and pointed towards relevant academic material.

## Further comments

The Engagement Activity continues to offer an exciting, but challenging experience for the students. We are reminded that the engagement does not have to be limited to 'traditional politics' (councillors, MPs etc). Indeed, exploring the plight of elderly in an old folks' home, analysing the impact of environmental regulations on local farms, or interviewing local journalists about the role of the media in state politics can all constitute valid engagements.

## Oral extension internal assessment

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range and suitability were satisfactory, although there were certain topics that appeared with some frequency. One of the most important roles for any instructor is to thoughtfully guide the candidate in choosing appropriate cases studies, case studies that are smartly aligned to two of the six topics.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

Candidates performed satisfactorily against each criterion in the 5-6 range (The student demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of a political issue raised by the case study, but the analysis lacks some clarity, focus and balance); additional points were earned when employing different perspectives and when the candidate *analysed the case study within the wider context of global politics, illustrating effectively the significance of the case*. A mark of excellent or Level 5 (9/10) is - as it should be - difficult to earn. That said, performance revealed a very healthy distribution of marks.

### Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Topics were appropriate; however, we encourage teachers to push their students to identify case studies that are more local in origin with an eye towards using the presentation to analyse the case study within the wider context of global politics. Consider that local issues can be more salient to the student's daily life and lend themselves to a more focused presentation (not to mention interesting); further, many (not all) topics culled from the headlines of various news outlets prove rather unwieldy for many (not all) candidates. Candidates can spend time with the more prosaic elements of a case study, avoiding analysis altogether; or, conversely, candidates can dive into analysis tethered to any contextual information. Consider creative and compelling methods to push candidates to think and act locally. Regardless of context or location of the school, local issues should be looked at first. We also want to be sure teachers spend time with the very practical skills of researching and preparing for the HL extension. Over-reliance on one source or a shallow understanding of multiple sources typically results in no more than a satisfactory presentation. While the cover sheet does not affect marking, a more robust bibliography typically reveals a more balanced, insightful case study. Finally, we include two reminders from the November 2018 report that still resonate with examiners: Teachers and candidates must be keen to avoid two still-common blunders: 1. over reliance on reading/memorizing material. Note the subtle difference between a presentation or talk and a formal speech. We are looking to the former as candidates grapple with ideas that are complex and multifaceted. A candidate who is knowledgeable and has clearly prepared will not lose marks for the off stumble or loss of words; however, a candidate who is potentially reading from a script pasted to cue cards or from a screen off camera is vulnerable to accusations of academic dishonesty. 2. Choosing topics that are historical rather than political case studies that are significant in the present. Yes, all case studies have obvious historical antecedents, but the candidate should be looking to current and near-current events. As for the point number one, there is an on-going conversation on how to formally address in the very near future. In the meantime, please employ sound professional judgment and guidance for your students to ensure that there is no question as to the presenter's authenticity in all respects. The two most significant pieces to a candidate's analysis, centre on providing multiple perspectives and to place their case study in a global context. Put simply, students must consider case studies from the local levels and work a path to the global to understand the explicit and implicit connections to the various actors' (including institutions) perspectives. Trends and patterns should be

recognized to reinforce those connections; hence the suggestion to start locally when considering topics. In the end, the candidate does not have to be 'right;' but we certainly want to see them struggle to try and construct a clear and balanced analysis (see below).

## Further comments

As a reminder to teachers and students, for the HL extension, a global impression marking rubric has been developed around the following overarching question: "Does the student present a clear, focused and balanced analysis of the case study, highlighting a global political challenge?" The assessment of the presentations is a process of holistic or global judgment around this overarching question rather than an analytical process of totalling the assessment of separate criteria. The rubric has five level descriptors describing specific achievement levels, allowing for variation in student performance across different aspects of the presentations. Because of the requirement for a reasonable mark range along which to differentiate student performance, each level descriptor corresponds to a range of two different marks.

Further, and with reference to the concerns around reading: The highest descriptor levels do not imply faultless performance and teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed. How teachers and moderators will make a judgement about the level of performance attained in a particular student response will vary. They may make a decision in the course of watching a presentation and then confirm this after the video ends, or they may register their observations as they watch and give the mark in retrospect. In either case, the described levels are to be seen as global and holistic rather than a checklist of necessary characteristics. It is recommended that the global impression marking rubric be made available to students. Instructors should recognize the above as selections from the Global Politics guidebook. Please be sure to consult; have your students consult, as well.

## Paper one

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

Most candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of the Human Rights topic. Most students utilised the sources well, to aid them in formulating their responses.

Most students were able to refer to contemporary examples in human rights.

Some students are not following the rubric and/or advised structure for paper 1 answers. Students should ensure they read the question carefully and structure their answers as advised, to enable them to meet the demands of the question in terms of content and demonstration of skills.

Interpretation of images and systematic comparison of texts still pose difficulties for some students.

Some students had some difficulty in interpreting the image in Source A.

Some students in question 3, found difficulty in the comparison of two sources or contrasted the sources, which was not required.

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

A high proportion of candidates were able to provide their own example of human rights issues which were relevant and contemporary.

Candidates had a good grasp of the theory attached to the discussion of human rights in global politics.

Most candidates showed a good level of time management and were able to complete all answers.

Most candidates displayed a good comprehension of the sources.

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

**Question 1:** Most students knew to make three clear and distinct points – although a minority did write their answer as one paragraph which made distinguishing the three points more difficult. There were many good answers to the question. Weaker answers tended to either a) simply state what they see – “a man is holding a paper which says poll politics” or b) provide a statement regarding human rights but not link it to the source – “human rights are inalienable”.

**Question 2:** For the most part, Question 2 was dealt with very well and posed no real difficulty for candidates. Candidates were able to extract and utilise relevant points from the source. In the main students have followed the advice from previous reports of separating their own example from the explanation from the source. However, some students are still either combining both the source based answer and their own example into one paragraph or using an own example that is very similar to the source (e.g. both source and own example refer to the EU) and thus it becomes difficult to differentiate the two.

**Question 3:** Most students comprehended and understood the two sources. Many candidates were able to analyse the sources and showed a good ability to compare the sources. Some candidates did not



follow the rubric/ advised approach and had some difficulty with the question. Candidates should attempt a running commentary where a point from a source is compared with a point from another source (short quotations often work well) followed by an explanation of why this is viewed by the candidate as a comparable point in the sources. Candidates are limiting their ability to access top marks if they discuss both sources separately. Candidates should be aware that question 3 can ask for comparison and/or contrast. Some candidates provided a contrast of the sources (for some this was two out of their four points made) when this was not required.

**Question 4:** This question was generally well understood and most candidates were able to sustain a discussion related to the question at hand, utilising the sources well. Many students were able to offer a relevant example from their own knowledge. Most students were able to offer both claims and counterclaims. Although Question 4 on Paper one remains a 'mini' essay, candidates should nevertheless attempt to adopt an academic essay style as to access the higher mark bands candidates are expected to show higher order skills such as evaluation and synthesis. Candidates are advised to consider which arguments and counterarguments they are going to use and connect the most relevant points from the sources and their own knowledge to expand these arguments. Candidates should consider reducing the number of paragraphs which are too focused on source analysis, e.g. "Source B claims...". Candidates are advised to include an introduction and conclusion.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

Review Paper 1 rubric with students and the advised approach/ structure to the answers as explained in this and previous subject reports.

Increased practice of question 1, particularly using images as the stimulus.

The use of the source and own example are marked separately (2 marks each) it is advised that candidates analyse the source and their own example in two separate paragraphs.

Candidates need to read the questions carefully and not assume – for example when answering question 3.

Candidates would benefit from increased familiarity and practice with command terms, particularly the compare and contrast terms of question 3.

Analyse the source and extract direct points within the sources which compare and/or contrast and then present these as a running commentary, with each comparison/contrast on a separate paragraph, i.e. C/D, C/D, C/D, C/D.

Candidates should remember that question 4 is a mini essay and requires the structure and evidence of higher order thinking to achieve the highest marks.

Structure should include clear introduction and conclusions, a relevant thesis in reaction to the question, and the skills of evaluation, which can be evidenced by claims and counterclaims.

The best answers synthesised both candidate's own knowledge and the sources to develop their answer.

## Higher level paper two

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

With yet another significant increase in candidates sitting exams this session there was once again the full range of work submitted. What was pleasing this session was a clear decrease in the number of responses falling in the lowest of the five markbands. It is also clear that, like last year, some of the recommendations made in previous subject reports are being acted upon by teachers and/or candidates, which is a very positive sign. It is hoped that new teachers/schools, in particular, will integrate some of the recommendations that appear below. It has been noted that there were relatively few candidates achieving the top markband this session and it is sincerely hoped that this report will help point the way for future cohorts to achieve the higher markbands.

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

As in previous sessions, it seems that too many candidates continue to struggle when determining how best to answer the question in front of them. While there is greater evidence of candidates planning their responses when compared to previous sessions, it is evident that this is not yet a universal practice. Too often, it was the case that a candidate had misread or misinterpreted a question when perhaps a little more time taken to think and reflect upon its key demands would have been beneficial. It is always disappointing to read a response that demonstrates a firm understanding of Global Politics but is not clearly addressing the question at hand.

On a related note, it is apparent that some students still persist in producing somewhat prefabricated responses, centred on either a specific real-world example covered in class and/or on one of the central debates within the subject. While such a strategy may be seen as an effective means of combatting the open-ended nature of Paper Two questions, this is rarely so. It will always be better for a candidate if he/she takes the time to carefully read the question in front of him/her, identifying its key demands so as to best ensure that the response clearly addresses its key demands. Doing so would also, hopefully, encourage greater specificity and relevance in terms of the real-world examples offered in support of any argument or point being made.

Weaker candidates struggled with the integration of concepts and real-world examples. There is still the propensity to insert theoretical references into a discussion as if it is something that the candidate believes must be done regardless of the actual value added of doing so. There is also a tendency to make such references in the broadest terms possible, which only further detracts from their salience and/or effectiveness. It often seemed as if theory was being included at the expense of more fully developed real-world examples.

Finally, the concepts of collective security, politicization and well-being, all of which are prescribed content, were poorly understood by many candidates.

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

Students were generally well prepared in terms of relevant contemporary case studies and seemed to be well prepared to answer questions on the core concepts of sovereignty, power, human rights, development, peace and, conflict.

Following on from last session, it was again pleasing to see most candidates clearly signposting their counterclaim(s). While there was also an improvement in the general quality of the counterclaims, it was still the case that not all alternative perspectives were well thought through or especially relevant to the discussion at hand.

Finally, many candidates demonstrated, to varying degrees, familiarity with a wide range of theoretical or conceptual perspectives, even if, as noted, these were not always well integrated into the discussion.

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

### Q1. Evaluate the claim that sovereign states become less powerful when they join intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).

While this was a relatively straightforward question, too many candidates focused more on sovereignty rather than power, contrary to the intention of the prompt. In general, while both key concepts were well understood by candidates too few established a clear link between them with many treating them as if they were synonymous with one another.

Many responses included relevant contemporary real-world examples of IGO's and how membership affects the power of nation-states, e.g., the E.U, the U.N, NATO, 'Brexit', etc. The strongest responses injected a degree of nuance by recognizing that the answer to the prompt depends both on the state in question as well as the particular IGO which the state is joining. In some cases, it might be that weaker states gain more/less power by joining an IGO while in other situations stronger states might benefit more. In addition, not all IGO's impose the same limitations on member states. Better responses also distinguished between the separate dimensions of power and how membership of an IGO may affect these differently.

Weaker responses tended to confuse a key demand of the question by focusing on the effect that IGO's can have on a state and/or state power (in the form of sanctions or humanitarian intervention) rather than concentrating on the effects that *membership* of an IGO may have on the exercise of state power.

### Q2. Evaluate the effectiveness of collective security in responding to threats from state and non-state actors.

Relatively few candidates attempted this question and, given the poor conceptualization of the key term 'collective security' shown, this is perhaps unsurprising. Many candidates who did attempt this question confused 'collective security' as security that is collective in nature rather than correctly identifying this as a bilateral or multilateral security arrangement. As noted below, this question is a good reminder that candidates should be familiar with all of the prescribed content in the Global Politics guide.

Some responses did include relevant examples of collective security such as NATO and attempted to describe how such organisations have responded to transnational concerns beyond the capability of individual actors in global politics to manage/resolve. However, many responses were far too narrative in

this respect with candidates neglecting to actually *evaluate* the (in)effectiveness of collective security. The strongest responses did so, by analyzing how individual state interests within such organisations might clash or not coincide with those of the majority, e.g., Turkey in NATO.

### Q3. Discuss whether the politicization of human rights has hindered their universal application.

This was another question where many candidates struggled to precisely define the key term and many clearly had difficulty operationalizing ‘politicization’. A clear majority equated politicization with an issue being used as a political tool (e.g., in partisan politics to block an opposing party or in identity politics as a means of mobilizing support). Stronger responses accurately demonstrated how a human rights issue had been *politicized* to achieve a different goal, e.g., humanitarian protection being employed as a guide to promote regime change in Libya. Stronger responses also then extended such examples to discuss how the universal application of human rights is affected by such politicization.

Many weaker responses, perhaps misled by the prompt’s reference to ‘universal application’, attempted to answer a different question about cultural relativism, universalism and human rights. While this could have been a potentially salient and even fruitful approach, far too much was assumed with candidates generally neglecting to clearly establish how the non-Western bias injected by cultural relativism into the conceptualization and practice of human rights qualifies as politicization.

### Q4. “For human rights laws and treaties to be effective, states must give up some sovereignty”. Evaluate this statement.

Most responses demonstrated a good understanding of both human rights and sovereignty. A similar number of responses identified relevant, contemporary real-world examples of how states would be required to sacrifice some sovereignty for human rights to be effectively implemented or protected, e.g., the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar. The very strongest responses noted how the (in)effectiveness of human rights laws and treaties depends on more than just sovereignty, adding a level of sophistication to such analyses.

Unfortunately, many responses neglected to address the two key demands of this prompt. Very few responses accurately identified relevant laws and treaties, instead limiting their focus to the much broader discussion of the practice and enforcement of human rights in general. Additionally, relatively few responses focused on the effectiveness of such laws/treaties. Without a metric or benchmark by which to assess this it is difficult to see how a candidate could fulfil the command term here. Finally, in a strange, perhaps premeditated move, too many candidates focused their analysis on the debate between cultural relativism and universalism when the relevance of doing so in the context of the question was not at all evident.

### Q5. Discuss the view that development damages well-being.

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the multidimensional and contested nature of development. However, the same was not true for the other key term in the prompt with relatively fewer candidates offering a clear definition of well-being; some candidates incorrectly treated the terms as synonymous. Weaker responses, unsurprisingly then, tended to focus on development being harmed rather than discussing how it may or may not damage well-being. Weaker responses also confused aid and development, particularly with reference to Haiti, without establishing a clear link between these two concepts/practices.

Stronger responses incorporated a clear focus on well-being, for instance, via reference to Maslow’s hierarchy. Such responses also recognized the contested nature of both development and well-being,

discussing how the answer to the question may depend on one's definition or conceptualization of both key terms and that one can advance arguments in favour of both the claim and the counterclaim. The strongest responses neatly integrated references to World Systems theory, arguing that the development of one group may very well rely on damaging the well-being of another group.

#### Q6. Evaluate the claim that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a limited effect on development.

Most candidates clearly recognized the multidimensional and contested nature of development as well as demonstrating a good understanding of the nature of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A disturbing number of candidates, however, misread or misunderstood the question and focused their response on non-state actors, more generally, than on NGOs more specifically. In particular, too many candidates confused NGOs with multinational corporations (MNCs) and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) with many references to the World Bank, the IMF and WTO.

While the stronger responses centred their analysis and evaluation on the degree to which the soft power wielded by specific NGOs can and does affect development many of the weaker responses neglected to mention NGOs by name. These latter responses also tended to equate aid with development. Certainly, these may be linked but they are not one and the same and it was incumbent upon candidates to establish any such link rather than simply asserting one as fact.

#### Q7. To what extent do you agree with the claim that addressing structural violence is increasingly important to achieving lasting peace?

Most responses showed a good understanding of the key terms 'structural violence' and 'lasting peace'. The latter was generally identified in terms of a positive peace and contrasted with that of a negative peace. Weaker responses tended to be more confused about the distinction between cultural and structural violence. Stronger responses neatly argued that the different forms of violence identified by Galtung often overlap in reality and so addressing any one form alone is unlikely to achieve lasting peace, if it is even possible to address structural violence alone. Many responses overlooked a key demand of the question – the degree to which addressing structural violence is *increasingly* important as opposed to simply being significant; only the very best responses clearly tackled this requirement.

#### Q8. Evaluate the claim that conflict resolution is not always possible through negotiations and treaties.

Stronger responses were able to reference specific treaties and/or negotiations and also demonstrated a sound understanding of the basis/bases for negotiations to occur, usually with reference to conflicts involving a state and a non-state actor, such as ISIS or Boko Haram. Many such responses further argued that the answer to this question may depend on how one interprets 'resolution', specifically whether the resolution of a conflict requires a positive peace or whether the presence of a negative peace alone might qualify. In addition, better responses recognized that conflict resolution often requires more than just negotiations and/or treaties.

Weaker responses neglected to mention specific treaties/negotiations and often seemed to be answering an adjacent question focused on conflicts but not the role played by negotiations or treaties in their possible resolution. Average responses often referenced relevant real-world examples but failed to analyse how or why negotiations/treaties were (un)successful. There was generally little attempt to distinguish between different case studies in this respect, i.e., to explain why negotiations/treaties were

successful in resolving one specific conflict but not another. There was also a tendency to focus the discussion on the de-escalation or management of a conflict rather than on resolution, per se.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates.

As in previous sessions, it was apparent that many candidates struggled to identify clearly the key demands of a question. It is very difficult for an examiner to award a mark in even the middle markband if the candidate has not actually answered the question at hand, no matter how familiar a candidate may be with the course content in general. Some candidates misread the question entirely but many others showed an incomplete understanding of the question, which meant that they often answered an adjacent question, one that was related to the question but was not the actual question. There were also more than a few candidates who adapted the prompt so it would fit a more predetermined response. It remains the case that there is a need for direct instruction in how to 'unpack' questions so that candidates are more skilled in identifying: a) what specific course content is relevant given the context of the question; b) the task posed by the question (i.e. the command term) and; c) the scope of the question. It was surprising how many candidates neglected to meet the requirements of the specific command term employed in the prompt.

On the whole, there was an improvement in the structure of most responses this session although there were still quite a few candidates who neglected to define the key terms contained within a prompt and/or a clear thesis around which they could build their analysis/evaluation. Again, I do not think it is unreasonable to expect students in the last year of their IB diploma to include a clear thesis in the introduction to each response, ideally accompanied by some sense of how this thesis will be justified in the paragraphs that follow. It should also be impressed upon candidates that it is not enough to conclude a paragraph by simply asserting that a point or argument has been proved, this needs to be clearly established.

Following on from this, students need to be clearly instructed on how best to structure their thoughts in the context of a timed examination involving open-ended questions. While not advocating any particular format, it should be emphasized that essay structure matters and that it is definitely worthwhile for candidates to take some time at the start of the examination period to adequately plan the order of their essay as there is a general correlation between doing so and higher marks being awarded as a result. Each paragraph should be crafted around a single point and/or real-world example, ideally building to a coherent and reasonable conclusion. To this end, students should be given ample and regular opportunities *throughout the duration of the course* to practice answering questions in exam-like situations with IB or IB-like exam questions. In many respects, Paper Two is a marathon and if a candidate's first run at such questions is just before the IB exam then there is little chance that they will be at their best in May. Unsurprisingly, the more practice students can be given with actual IB or IB-like questions, the better their performance will be on the day.

Furthermore, this would then also give students a chance to practice and, hopefully, hone their handwriting skills. While candidates expressly are not marked on their handwriting, the fact of the matter is that examiners can only mark what they can read and so the more students can practice writing clearly and precisely, the better it will be for all involved.

Students largely deployed contemporary real-world examples in an effective fashion again this year. However, it was clear in many instances that a single case study must have formed the basis of a class unit with many candidates determined to refer to it in their response even if it was not relevant to the question. It is unlikely that a familiarity with just the case studies covered in class will suffice if the top markbands



are the goal and students should be encouraged to read widely. On a similar note, it is vital that candidates critically appraise any example they choose to include. As noted above, it is always incumbent upon the candidate to establish a coherent link between an example (or a concept/theoretical position) and the point being made; it should not be up to an examiner to join the dots.

Some candidates felt that they needed to include one or more theoretical references when the value added of doing so was not readily apparent. Students should be reminded that IB Global Politics is not, at heart, a theoretical course. This is not to say that candidates should shy away from mentioning theory – a well-placed conceptual reference to a particular school of thought can demonstrate sophisticated critical thinking – but this must be more than a ‘box-ticking’ exercise, otherwise such references only feel forced and tend to detract from the flow and force of the response as a whole.

As noted above, this session’s candidates showed a much greater awareness of the need to include a counterclaim as part of their response. However, it is not enough to simply state or signpost a discussion as a counterclaim. For higher markbands to be reached, a candidate must fulfil the associated level descriptors, which means that a counterclaim must be considered/explored/evaluated. For example, students need to be able to apply core concepts or theories to contemporary events and be able to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of these theories, or vice versa. Direct instruction of the skills and practices involved in critical thinking would undoubtedly aid students in this endeavour. A final point on this requirement is worth repeating: counterclaims do not necessarily have to take a dichotomous form (i.e., black vs. white) and the consideration of different perspectives is an entirely valid way of fulfilling this expectation. In fact, many of the best responses embraced and evaluated the various shades of gray that exist in global politics.

Some candidates may have expressed a measure of surprise at the content of one or two of this session’s prompts, i.e., the reference to ‘politicization’ in Question 3 and that of ‘well-being’ in Question 5. Both terms, however, are part of the prescribed content listed in the IB Guide and so this is a good reminder that candidates should be familiar with the entire syllabus if they are to be as prepared as they can be for their IB assessments.

Finally, the same concluding mantra as in previous sessions bares worth repeating: practice, practice, practice. As the bank of exam questions continues to grow and as more and more professional development resources are made available, there are increased opportunities for teachers to have their students practice with actual IB questions. The value of doing so – and doing so in exam-like situations and assessed according to IB standards throughout the duration of the course – cannot be underestimated.

## Standard level paper two

This was the third May session for Global Politics examinations out of pilot, and again we've seen strong growth in the number of new candidates. There appeared to be some marked improvement in candidate performance, though many continued to struggle with core concepts and the analytical development necessary of an interdisciplinary subject.

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

Students had difficulty across the units of study dependent on the question rather than the unit. Those questions that students struggled with were from Human Rights, Development, and Peace and Conflict, but the alternative questions from those units did relatively well. This suggests that the issue does not lie with the individual units of study, but with coverage of topics within them. Students gravitated to the topics within the units that were less complex and more easily argued. This is hardly surprising and strategic on the students' part; however, as a multidisciplinary topic, these units have a good deal of divergent material in them and students should be comfortable with a wider range of the prescribed content.

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

Students seemed well prepared to discuss sovereignty, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and development and well-being. The former two come from the foundational unit, and again, it appears this unit is getting good coverage in the classroom. The repeated use of the same examples across students suggests these cases are being taught along with the topics. While this is an excellent teaching tool, more emphasis should be placed on students covering the news daily and bringing cases to bear on their own. This would help their critical thinking and analytical skills, and develop their ability to make necessary connections and answer questions on these more complex issues.

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

The lowest scoring questions, were Questions 3, 6, and 8, from Human Rights, Development, and Peace and Conflict respectively. While Questions 3 and 8 may have been topically difficult (i.e., politicization and conflict resolution), Question 6 was surprising given it concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a topic that students are typically interested in, are taught case studies, and have done well in the past. While all of these are prescribed content, it appears some of these areas are not being well covered as students struggled both with the concepts themselves and developing honed responses to the questions with appropriate examples.

Fewer students attempted Questions 2 and 3 on collective security and politicization, suggesting that they were not comfortable with the material. These topics were chosen from the prescribed content as they had little testing in these areas prior and we have a desire to test the curriculum in full; this likely explains the low levels of engagement.



**Question 1:** This was the most-answered question on the examination, and overall, candidates did well. The question linked the key concept of sovereignty and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), both from Unit 1 and both issues that students are well versed. Students who scored higher marks typically did so by clearly defining and discussing relevant IGOs and their relationship with state sovereignty. This was the most-popular and highest-scoring question as both issue came from the foundational unit and was very direct and easily argued.

**Question 2:** Question 2 was the least frequently answered question and students did not seem familiar or comfortable with discussing collective security. While the question allowed them to link this to state or non-state actors, many candidates could not produce a relevant example of a collective security agreement or arrangement, and therefore had difficulty evaluating the effectiveness of such.

**Question 3:** After Question 2, this was the second least frequently attempted question, and as with collective security, candidates did not seem familiar or comfortable with the concept of politicization despite this being prescribed content in Unit 2. Markers were directed to accept a broader range of examples here, as few candidates were able to discuss politicization as such. Examples were typically not of overt politicization, but of human rights as a political issue.

**Question 4:** Surprisingly, candidates struggled with this question despite common terms and a direct construction. Many conflated sovereignty and power, a common problem, or did not directly answer the question of effectiveness.

**Question 5:** Candidates generally did well in discussing development and well-being. The statement they evaluate easily lends itself to argument and counter-claim, making this a relatively easier question than some of the others. Overall, they were able to use relevant examples effectively.

**Question 6:** This second question from Development proved more difficult for candidates, and this was one of three of the lowest scoring questions despite being on NGOs and development. It seemed candidates did not have a wealth of relevant examples of NGOs working in the development field and therefore had difficulty developing an effective argument and the relationship between NGOs and development.

**Question 7:** This question required an understanding of both structural violence and lasting peace, and overall, students who attempted this question were comfortable with these terms even if they had difficulty drawing examples and linking them back to lasting peace. Often, candidates relied simply on peace without developing the relationship between structural violence and lasting peace.

**Question 8:** This question required an understanding of conflict resolution and the ability to identify relevant negotiations and treaties from contemporary conflicts. This latter requirement was difficult for candidates, many of whom had some general information about a conflict or two, but not necessarily any details about how negotiations or treaties were used to resolve it. This made linking the use of such treaties to the resolution of conflict difficult.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Greater emphasis should be put on all areas of the prescribed content with the understanding that all of these are testing topics. The difficulty students had with issues such as collective security, politicization, and conflict resolution suggest there are areas of the curriculum being neglected. As in the past, greater emphasis should be placed on students working with key concepts to gain greater comfort and familiarity, and identifying examples so they are able to apply those concepts to contemporary examples.

- Candidates should be reminded to develop their response to the question, guaranteeing they are answering the question posed.
- Most candidates would benefit from overtly defining the main terms at the start of their response.

- While teaching examples is extremely helpful for students, they should also be encouraged to follow news coverage and bring examples into the classroom of topics currently being covered.
- Candidates should be reminded that their primary examples should be drawn from their lifetimes even if they introduce historic examples to build upon.
- Candidates should be reminded to offer multiple perspectives in their responses.
- As in the past, many candidates had difficulty attacking questions and remaining focused on their responses. Candidates should be reminded to revisit the question while writing the response.