

May 2018 subject reports

Global politics

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 22	23 - 34	35 - 47	48 - 60	61 - 73	74 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 22	23 - 32	33 - 45	46 - 58	59 - 71	72 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Work was generally suitable, with plenty of candidates undergoing meaningful, active engagement activities. However, many engagement activities appear to not be fully appropriate. The guide states that “candidates should choose an engagement that helps them gain an experiential perspective on a political issue”. This means the candidates should have an active role in the engagement activity and cannot limit themselves to passive observations at a lecture, seminar or a hearing (although these could be acceptable experiences in addition to an active component). It is also stated in the syllabus that “engagement should not consist of interviewing only one person” and candidates should also carefully select their interviewees.

Many candidates were able to identify a political issue directly related to the engagement activity and the course. However, at times there was a mismatch between the engagement activity and the political issue and it seemed the former could not provide valid insights into the latter. Undergoing a simulation does not necessarily provide valid insights into the rationale behind the foreign policy of country X and by volunteering in a charity shop a candidate does not necessarily gain clear understanding of the plight of refugees in country Y. Teachers should carefully assist candidates in identifying valid connections. As the guide states “[t]he political issue should be authentically embedded in the engagement, and candidates’ role in the engagement should be such that they truly learn about this political issue through what they do”.

Many candidates were able to narrow down their political issue in a way that they could successfully analyse it in 2000 words. However, often political issues were of such a broad nature that they could never successfully be analysed in-depth (criterion C). The impact of IGO membership on the sovereignty of all its members, or the general effectiveness of NGOs are not suitable political issues and candidates should be supported to make them more specific.

Plenty of reports were organised in such a way that there was clear synthesis between the engagement and additional sources. However, many reports were organised ineffectively, turning the holistic criteria

into separate sections. Teachers are strongly advised to instruct their candidates to not turn criterion A, B, C, D into section A, B, C, D.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Most candidates were able to identify a political issue (though quite often rather broad) and introduce an engagement activity connected to it. Some candidates struggled making meaningful course connections throughout the report and quite some candidates struggled explaining their personal interest in the issue, beyond the fact that they do have an interest in it or that it is an important issue in their country/region.

Criterion B

Most candidates provided insight into what they did and the lessons they've learned, though many reports did not give full insight into the thought processes of the candidate and the rationale for their decision-making in their engagement activity. Some engagement activities did not meet the bare minimum (conducting two interviews) and were more passive, for example through attending lectures or seminars.

Criterion C

Many candidates attempted to analyse the political issue they had identified, however some reports lacked depth due to the broad nature of the political issue. Many candidates failed to provide justification for their remarks, even when they had clearly been based on other sources. For example, many candidates did not justify or reference the source, concepts or theories on which they based their insight. If candidates argue that 'this is a clear example of structural violence' or that 'from a postcolonial perspective this could be viewed as ...' they need to reference the sources upon which their understanding of structural violence or postcolonialism is based.

Criterion D

Many candidates made some attempts at going back and forth between their engagement activity and additional sources. However, many reports were organised ineffectively, turning the holistic criteria into separate sections. This particularly affected the quality of the synthesis between the candidates' experiences and additional sources. Some reports were rather one-sided, for example criticising governmental actions but only exploring the views of an NGO - this limits the exploration of perspectives. It could be that an engagement activity is rather one-sided (e.g. volunteering with an NGO). In such instances, there is at least an expectation that additional research is undertaken into other perspectives on the political issue. Conclusions were usually consistent.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are advised to provide clear guidance to candidates in identifying an active engagement activity for their candidates and connecting this to an authentic and specific political issue. They are also advised to ensure their candidates do not turn the holistic criteria into separate sections and instead should encourage their candidates to show 'what they did and learned in their engagement activity',

'analysis of the political issue' and 'synthesis between the engagement activity and additional sources' throughout the report. Teachers are also advised to carefully check reports for acknowledgement of sources and are reminded that any ideas obtained from elsewhere, including course concepts and theories, should be properly acknowledged by the candidates. In addition to impacting on criterion C this could lead to an academic honesty concern. Lastly, teachers should take note of the new teacher support materials and assessed student work available on the Programme Resource Centre.

Further comments

Despite the challenges mentioned above, there is clear evidence that this type of assessment can provide a challenging but fulfilling experience that can lead to effective synthesis of the candidates' experiences and additional research.

Higher level extension oral

Component grade boundaries

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

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 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 selected from the headlines of various news outlets prove rather unmanageable for many (not all) candidates. Candidates can spend time with the more ordinary elements of a case study, avoiding analysis altogether; or, conversely, candidates can dive into analysis untethered to any contextual information. Consider creative and compelling methods to push candidates to think and act locally.

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.

Finally, we include two reminders from the November 2017 report that still resonate with examiners:

Teachers and candidates must be keen to avoid two still-common mistakes:

- 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 contend with ideas that are complex and multifaceted. A candidate who is knowledgeable and has clearly prepared will not lose marks for the odd 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.

- 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 first point above, 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 parts 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 work 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 judgement 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 regarding 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 guide. Please be sure to consult; have your students consult, as well.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 25

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 25

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

Some candidates did not provide a contemporary example of how development can be encouraged, as required for question 2.

Some candidates did not provide a running contrast of two sources, as preferred by the exam and highlighted in previous subject reports, which is required for question 3.

Some candidates may not have taken the required time to read the question carefully so that the command terms are clear to them e.g. 'contrast' or they may mistake the sources to be analysed.

Some candidates may have found managing the time of 1 hour 15 minutes to answer the 4 questions difficult as their answers to question 4 may have been shorter than they would have liked.

For Q4, some candidates may have found it difficult to synthesise own knowledge and examples with points from the sources.

Some candidates found it difficult to show the skills of evaluation required for higher marks for Q4, clear claims and counterclaims are required for this question.

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

The majority of students were able to analyse Source A and identify the information required for question 1.

Many students were able to make good reference to contemporary examples of development.

Many students had a good grasp of various theories of development and were able to utilise them.

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

Question 1

The majority of candidates were very successful at question 1 as they were able to comprehend source and correctly identify three weaknesses of the Millennium Development Goals as required by the question.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to successfully analyse source B and extract and explain from it how development can be encouraged.

Most candidates were also able to provide some explanation from their own knowledge regarding how development can be encouraged. Some candidates only provided theory and did not support this with a contemporary example of development.

Question 3

Most candidates dealt with this question well. They were able to comprehend the two sources and understand that while both sources felt there were inhibiting factors to development, they did not share the same opinion regarding these factors.

Also, most candidates were able to analyse the source and extract direct points within the sources which contrasted and then present these as a running contrast, with each contrast on a separate paragraph, i.e. C/D, C/D, C/D, C/D.

A sizeable minority of candidates continue to write about the sources in two separate paragraphs. Please note that this restricts their ability to achieve the higher marks as they are not showing the skills of analysis, comparison or contrast required.

Candidates are also asked to take care to ensure they are analysing the correct sources and referencing these correctly in their writing as these mistakes can lead to answers becoming confused and challenging to clarify.

Question 4

In general, this question was answered well, and candidates showed good knowledge of theory and examples of development.

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

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

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

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

While it is acknowledged that candidates completing Global Politics Paper 1 are under time pressure, please stress to students the importance of maintaining clear handwriting. Where appropriate, students with typing needs should be provided this, in accordance with IB access arrangements.

For question 2 – candidates should give a real, contemporary example of what is requested by the question for full marks. It is also advised to write about the source **and** their own example in two separate paragraphs.

Practice the structure and skills required for question 3: Analyse the source and extract direct points within the sources which contrast/and or compare and then present these as a running contrast, with each contrast on a separate paragraph, i.e. C/D, C/D, C/D, C/D.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 8	9 - 16	17 - 21	22 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 49	50 - 75

General comments

The range and suitability of the work submitted.

With a significant increase in candidates sitting exams this session there was once again the full range of work submitted. As will be discussed below, it is clear that some of the recommendations made in previous subject reports are being acted upon by teachers and/or candidates, which is a very positive sign. Nevertheless, there is still too much unevenness in terms of student performance and it is sincerely hoped that this report will help point the way for future cohorts.

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. It is apparent that some students persist in producing somewhat prefabricated responses. While such a strategy may be a means of combatting the open-ended nature of Paper Two questions, it will always be better if a candidate takes the time to carefully read the question in front of him/her and to identify its key demands before planning and crafting an appropriate response.

Weaker candidates struggled with the integration of concepts and real world examples. There is still the propensity to insert theoretical references into a discussion when the value added of doing so is unclear. There is also a tendency to make such references in the broadest terms possible, which only further detracts from their salience and/or effectiveness. In addition, some candidates included real world examples almost in passing, rather than requiring them to evaluate in terms of supporting the argument being advanced.

Finally, the key concept of peace seems to elude clear understanding, particularly the distinction between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

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

Students were well prepared in terms of relevant contemporary case studies and seemed to be well prepared to answer questions on the key concepts of sovereignty, power, globalization, human rights and conflict. There was also greater recognition of the contested nature of development as a concept although many candidates, after noting this, still discussed the concept in largely economic terms.

Probably the most significant improvement from last session to this one was the attention paid to counterclaims. Overall, candidates were much better at signposting counterclaims even if the counterclaims themselves were not always well thought through.

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

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

Question 1. Discuss the impact of resistance movements and social movements on global politics.

The open-ended nature of this question forced candidates to determine their own approach to answering it, something that some did much better than others. There was an expectation here that candidates would distinguish between the two forms of movement, but many candidates simply treated both resistance movements and social movements as one and the same phenomenon. Stronger responses offered a clear and reasonable basis or bases for distinguishing between the two. Moreover, many such responses then wove this distinction into analyses of the impact (or lack thereof) of each on global politics. On that note, too many candidates neglected to consider this key demand of the question with discussions and/or examples often grounded in a local or national context only.

Question 2. To what extent do you agree that conflicts within states are more of a threat to peace and stability than conflicts between states?

The majority of candidates answering this question were well versed in the distinction between intra- and interstate conflicts as well as the difference between a negative and a positive peace. Stronger responses also included a separate discussion on stability, particularly in terms of how intrastate conflicts and the possibility of succession or the fragmentation of states could undermine the Westphalian system of international relations.

Many responses accurately noted that, over recent decades, the frequency of interstate conflicts has waned while there has been a rise in intrastate conflict but very few actually provided a rationale for this phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, the current Syrian conflict featured prominently in many responses as a real world example of the threat posed by an intrastate conflict. However, many such discussions generalized from this discussion which meant that a large number of responses ended up presenting an argument for why the Syrian conflict or even proxy wars might be the greatest threat to peace and stability rather than intrastate conflicts, per se. In short, how representative is the Syrian conflict, or any specific conflict, of intrastate conflicts more broadly? As noted elsewhere in this subject report, it is incumbent upon candidates to explicitly connect any example to the demands of the question at hand. The strongest responses not only did this but then also concluded that in today's global politics the lines between intrastate and interstate conflict are perhaps blurring to the point that it may be inaccurate and unhelpful to distinguish between the two.

Question 3. Evaluate the means that can be used to protect and enforce human rights in countries that fall short of international standards.

While some responses neglected to identify any international standards by which human rights might be measured, most candidates ably identified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and/or various

covenants and treaties as the generally accepted benchmarks for the articulation of human rights in contemporary global politics.

Too many responses offered a list of the many ways in which international standards have not been met or provided a 'shopping list' of different organisations/institutions/norms designed to protect and enforce human rights without actually focusing clearly on the different *means* available. Moreover, the command term here was often overlooked, as even when means were the focus of the response they were often not evaluated. As such, some responses did not actually answer the question as it was asked.

Question 4. Discuss the claim that power is the main variable affecting human rights.

This was possibly the most challenging question in this session's exam and yet it was an extremely popular question and so candidates should be commended for attempting it. Some candidates did misread the question slightly and argued that power is, indeed, an important variable when it comes to human rights. Unfortunately, the question asks whether or not it is the *main* variable thus once again highlighting the need to always carefully read and understand what a question is asking one to do.

Stronger responses recognized that (abuses of) power can certainly lead to human rights violations but that power, particularly in terms of access to material resources, is necessary if a state or government is to have the capacity to protect/enforce human rights. Many such responses also distinguished between the hard and soft dimensions of power and how each affected human rights differently. Culture was often presented as an alternative main variable but only the strongest responses then explored the relationship between power and culture.

Some of the very best responses neatly argued that it is not necessarily power that is the main variable when it comes to human rights but, rather, power differentials or asymmetries that matter most. Such responses highlighted how both power and powerlessness play a role when it comes to human rights violations, e.g. the Burmese state's treatment of the Rohingya, as well as linking these to foundational concepts such as sovereignty to further explain how or why such egregious violations can still occur in today's world. In addition, the 'universal' representation of human rights in documents such as the UDHR was rightly criticized by many candidates for being a manifestation of Western (normative) power.

Question 5. To what extent does successful development rely on interdependence?

While some responses still tended to narrowly define 'development' in economic terms only, many candidates demonstrated a more multidimensional understanding of this key concept. Many candidates also acknowledged its contested nature although not many outlined the bases for such contestation. Attempts to identify criteria by which development might be considered 'successful' were also disappointingly rare.

Interdependence was more clearly defined and conceptualised, with many candidates nicely linking this concept to globalization, although some responses neglected to highlight the mutually beneficial nature of interdependence. This led many candidates to uncritically offer international aid, especially emergency aid after a natural disaster, as a real world example without actually explaining what both sides gained in such cases.

Many candidates offered dependency theory as a counterclaim to this question, highlighting that the gains from interdependency are not equally distributed. For the most part, this was done well. The most compelling arguments, however, explored the distinction between dependency and interdependency, opining that it is the former rather than the latter that better characterises the nature of contemporary global politics.

Question 6. “Environment and sustainability are now more critical considerations for development than economic and political factors.” Evaluate this view.

Generally, the responses to this question were sound with the key concept of ‘development’ clearly understood by the majority of candidates. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive narratives of development rather than comparing/contrasting different aspects of development. In the same way, some responses neglected to consider which factors were *more* critical than others and so failed to adequately address a key demand of this question.

Stronger responses took a much more critical approach by either distinguishing between short-run and long-run priorities or by analyzing how countries at different levels of development have different ‘critical considerations’. For example, that a state must first have political and economic stability before it can ‘afford’ to take care of the environment. The very strongest responses problematized the question itself by arguing that it presented a false dichotomy – it is not the environment *or* the economy/polity but rather the environment *and* the economy/polity that must be considered if development is to be successfully achieved.

Question 7. Discuss which type of conflict is most threatening to efforts to build a lasting peace in the world.

For the most part, the key concepts contained within this question were well understood although some responses did overlook the reference to a lasting peace, which then limited the quality of the answer.

A surprising number of candidates chose to distinguish between violent and non-violent conflict. It was rare to see this done well, as it led to stating the obvious - that violent conflict is a greater threat to lasting peace in the world. Moreover, candidates then found themselves in the very difficult position of having to advance a counterclaim in which non-violent conflict could somehow present a greater threat to lasting peace. Unfortunately, another common binary approach was to divide conflicts into interstate and intrastate and present a variation on their answer to Q2 above. Some did this well, but many were apparently limited by the answer they had already given for a different question. Finally, some responses identified religion as being ideological, which is incorrect; religion is an identity. Extremism might be ideological in nature, but this is hardly limited to religions.

Stronger responses made sure to meet a key demand of the question by unpacking a range of global conflicts to show how each was motivated by different goals or forces and how these in turn threatened the realization of a positive peace in the world. The strongest responses went one step further, using these examples to illustrate how it may be inaccurate to categorize any conflict as strictly singular in nature (identity-based or territorial or ideological or interest-based, etc.) when, in fact, any number of forces might be overlapping thereby rendering the realization of a lasting peace more complicated.

Question 8. Evaluate the claim that third-party intervention in a conflict is a valuable tool for peacemaking.

The quality of responses to this question tended to be a little uneven. In general, this depended on how well the candidate understood the key terms contained within the question, particularly 'peacemaking'. Stronger responses clearly conceptualized 'peacemaking' in terms of achieving a negative peace while weaker responses tended to confuse 'peacemaking' with either 'peacekeeping' or 'peacebuilding'. Sometimes, candidates covered all three in some depth, which, unfortunately, was beyond the scope of the question.

Although there were some strong responses to this question, there were recurring false assumptions that held candidates back to varying degrees, e.g. the assumption that third-party intervention means only military intervention or Responsibility to Protect or, more narrowly, military intervention by the West or even in one or two cases intervention solely carried out by the US. Hence, some responses did not meet the demands of the question. Such approaches were sometimes combined with confusion over the term 'third-party intervention', and the fact that this term has been used euphemistically by US and British politicians and media for what would more accurately be considered expeditionary wars. Both Afghanistan and Iraq were frequently employed as real world examples in this context. However, while the war in Afghanistan from 2001 could just about be characterised as a third-party intervention, Iraq in 2003 was clearly not as it did not feature two parties in conflict such that a third party's intervention was required. Exploring and explaining just how valuable interventions were, as a tool for peacemaking was limited by this approach and such examples.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Paper Two continues to be a challenging component for many students, most likely because it is not as prescriptive as the other assessment tasks and so candidates are compelled to make choices in terms of the best approach to any question before them. 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 marks if the candidate has not actually answered the question posed, no matter how impressive one's grasp of the course content may be. 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. Still others lacked the confidence to address what a question was specifically asking and so gave much more, often irrelevant, information than was required. There is little doubt in my mind that direct instruction in how to 'unpack' questions so that candidates are more skilled in identifying: a) what content is relevant given the context of the question; b) the task posed by the question (essentially, this is the command term) and; c) the scope of the question. Arguably, the last element is the most important as it will, hopefully, mitigate against students answering too little or too much.

On a similar note, I would expect candidates 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.

I am confident that most teachers are structuring units around contemporary case studies to assist students in framing succinct but suitably detailed examples. As such, it was unsurprising to see real world examples deployed effectively to help substantiate arguments. However, there were instances

where it seemed as if the candidate only had one or two such examples as his/her disposal and so was determined to include them even if their relevance to the question was not immediately apparent. Candidates should be encouraged to not only read widely but also to critically appraise the inclusion of any example. 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.

On a related note, there were still too many references to historical events of the early and mid-twentieth century (or earlier). This is not to imply that examiners deducted marks for such dated historical references, but it is the responsibility of the candidate to show how past events inform the present, and the future. A clear point of difference between Global Politics and many other Group 3 subjects is the inherently contemporary nature of the course. There is so much going on in the world right now that there is little excuse for not being current.

For the benefit of those for whom this is the first examination, it is not unusual for candidates to be taking both Economics and Global Politics. It is always worthwhile reminding these candidates that they should be very wary of approaching questions on development from the perspective of the former. While there is some clear overlap between these two IB subjects in this regard there remain some crucial differences and examiners are keenly aware of these.

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 worthwhile for candidates to take some time to adequately plan their essay and to craft it around a clear thesis. 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.

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 key 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); in fact, many of the best responses embraced and evaluated the various shades of grey that exist in global politics.

Finally, as in previous subject reports, the same concluding mantra 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 students to 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

Component grade boundaries

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

Question 1. Discuss the impact of resistance movements and social movements on global politics.

The open-ended nature of this question forced candidates to determine their own approach to answering it, something that some did much better than others. There was an expectation here that candidates would distinguish between the two forms of movement, but many candidates simply treated both resistance movements and social movements as one and the same phenomenon.

Stronger responses offered a clear and reasonable basis or bases for distinguishing between the two. Moreover, stronger responses then wove this distinction into analyses of which kind of movement had the greater impact on global politics and why. On that note, too many candidates neglected to consider this key demand of the question with discussions and/or examples often grounded in a local or national context only. Even when the focus did shift to global politics, some discussions centered on the impact a specific example or examples had rather than the impact of social and/or resistance movements, *per se*, i.e., the impact of the Syrian or Yemeni manifestations of the Arab Spring on global politics rather than resistance movements more generally.

Question 2. To what extent do you agree that conflicts within states are more of a threat to peace and stability than conflicts between states?

The majority of candidates answering this question were well versed in the distinction between intra- and interstate conflicts as well as the difference between a negative and a positive peace. Weaker responses simply presented a list of intra/interstate conflicts without much analysis. Some responses concentrated on the threat posed by each form of conflict or on how each form can and does threaten peace and stability instead of analyzing and evaluating which was the *greater* threat, and why?

Many responses accurately noted that, over recent decades, the frequency of interstate conflicts has waned while there has been a rise in intrastate conflict but very few actually provided a rationale for this phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, the current Syrian conflict featured prominently in many responses as a real world example of the threat posed by an intrastate conflict. However, many such discussions generalized from this discussion which meant that a large number of them ended up presenting an argument for why the Syrian conflict or even proxy wars might be the greatest threat to peace and stability rather than intrastate conflicts, *per se*. In short, how representative is the Syrian conflict, or any specific conflict, of intrastate conflicts more broadly? As noted elsewhere in this subject report, it is incumbent upon the candidate to explicitly connect any example to the demands of the question at hand.

Stronger responses included a separate discussion on stability, particularly in terms of how intrastate conflicts and the possibility of succession or the fragmentation of states could undermine the

Westphalian system of international relations. The strongest responses not only did this but then also concluded that in today's global politics the lines between intra- and interstate conflict are perhaps blurring to the point that it may be inaccurate and unhelpful to try to distinguish between the two.

Question 3. Evaluate the means that can be used to protect and enforce human rights in countries that fall short of international standards.

Most candidates ably identified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and/or various covenants and treaties as the generally accepted benchmarks for the articulation of human rights in contemporary global politics. However, too many responses neglected to address a key demand of this question by concentrating on the *means* by which such standards can be met. Moreover, the command term here was often overlooked, as even when means were the focus of the response, they were often not evaluated. As such, some responses did not actually answer the question as it was asked. Finally, the real world examples employed in many responses did not actually support the arguments being advanced.

Question 4. Discuss the claim that power is the main variable affecting human rights.

This was possibly the most challenging question in this session's exam and yet it was an extremely popular question and so candidates should be commended for attempting it. Some candidates did misread the question slightly and argued that power is, indeed, an important variable when it comes to human rights. Unfortunately, the question asks whether or not it is the *main* variable thus again highlighting the need to always carefully read and understand what a question is asking one to do.

Stronger responses recognized that (abuses of) power can certainly lead to human rights violations but that power, particularly in terms of access to material resources, is necessary if a state or government is to have the capacity to protect/enforce human rights. Many such responses also distinguished between the hard and soft dimensions of power and how each affected human rights differently. Culture was often presented as an alternative main variable but only the strongest responses then explored the relationship between power and culture.

The strongest responses neatly argued that it is not necessarily power that is the main variable when it comes to human rights but, rather, power differentials or asymmetries that matter most. Such responses highlighted how both power and powerlessness play a role when it comes to human rights violations, e.g. the Burmese government's treatment of the Rohingya, as well as linking these to foundational concepts such as sovereignty to further explain how or why such egregious violations can still occur in today's world. In addition, the 'universal' representation of human rights in documents such as the UDHR was rightly criticized by many candidates for itself being a manifestation of Western (normative) power.

Question 5. To what extent does successful development rely on interdependence?

While some responses still tended to narrowly define 'development' in economic terms only, more than enough candidates demonstrated a more multidimensional understanding of this key concept. In fact, there was a tendency here for key terms/concepts to remain un(der)defined. Many candidates also acknowledged its contested nature although not many outlined the bases for such contestation. Interdependence was more clearly defined and conceptualised, with many candidates nicely linking this concept to globalization, although some responses neglected to highlight the mutually beneficial nature of interdependence. This led many candidates to uncritically offer international aid, especially

emergency aid after a natural disaster, as a real world example without actually explaining what *both* sides gained in such cases.

Attempts to identify criteria by which development might be considered 'successful' were also disappointingly rare although some of the stronger responses did attempt to disaggregate 'successful development' and to consider how interdependence might help achieve some but not all dimensions of development. The very strongest responses then adopted a contextual approach, arguing that as 'successful' development might not be the same thing for all states, the benefits of interdependence might also vary.

Many candidates offered dependency theory as a counterclaim to this question, highlighting that the gains from interdependency are not equally distributed. For the most part, this was done well. The most compelling arguments, however, explored the distinction between dependency and interdependency, opining that it is the former rather than the latter that better characterises the nature of contemporary global politics.

Question 6. "Environment and sustainability are now more critical considerations for development than economic and political factors." Evaluate this view.

Generally, the responses to this question were sound with the key concept of 'development' clearly understood by the majority of candidates. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive narratives of development rather than comparing/contrasting different aspects of development. In the same way, some responses neglected to consider which factors were *more* critical than others and so failed to adequately address a key demand of this question.

Stronger responses took a much more critical approach by either distinguishing between short-run and long-run priorities or by analyzing how countries at different levels of development have different 'critical considerations' and so the answer will be different for less developed states vs. more developed states. That is, a state must first have political and economic stability before it can 'afford' to take care of the environment. The very strongest responses problematized the question itself by arguing that it presented a false dichotomy – it is not the environment *or* the economy/polity but rather the environment *and* the economy/polity that must be considered if development is to be successfully achieved.

Question 7. Discuss which type of conflict is most threatening to efforts to build a lasting peace in the world.

For the most part, the key concepts contained within this question were well understood although some responses did overlook the reference to a lasting peace, which then limited the quality of the answer. In addition, some candidates confused 'violence' with 'conflict'. Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that a number of candidates, chose to distinguish between violent and non-violent conflict. It was rare to see this done well, as it led to stating the obvious - that violent conflict is a greater threat to lasting peace in the world. Moreover, candidates then found themselves in the very difficult position of having to advance a counterclaim in which non-violent conflict could somehow present a greater threat to lasting peace.

Unfortunately, another common binary approach was to divide conflicts into interstate and intrastate and present a variation on their answer to Q2 above. Some did this well, but many were apparently limited by the answer they had already given for a different question. Finally, some responses identified

religion as being ideological, which is incorrect; religion is an identity. Extremism might be ideological in nature, but this is hardly limited to religions.

Stronger responses made sure to meet a key demand of the question by unpacking a range of global conflicts to show how each was motivated by different goals or forces and how these in turn threatened the realization of a positive peace in the world. The strongest responses went one step further, using these examples to illustrate how it may be inaccurate to categorize any conflict as strictly singular in nature (identity-based or territorial or ideological or interest-based, etc.) when, in fact, any number of forces might be overlapping.

Question 8. Evaluate the claim that third-party intervention in a conflict is a valuable tool for peacemaking.

The quality of responses tended to be a little uneven with many overly descriptive accounts dominating. In general, this depended on how well the candidate understood the key terms contained within the question, particularly ‘peacemaking’. Stronger responses clearly conceptualized ‘peacemaking’ in terms of achieving a negative peace while weaker responses tended to confuse ‘peacemaking’ with either ‘peacekeeping’ or ‘peacebuilding’. Sometimes, candidates covered all three in some depth, which, unfortunately, was beyond the scope of the question.

Although there were some strong responses to this question, there were recurring false assumptions that held candidates back to varying degrees, e.g. the assumption that third-party intervention means only military intervention or Responsibility to Protect or, more narrowly, military intervention by the West or even in one or two cases intervention solely carried out by the US. Hence, some responses did not meet the demands of the question. Such approaches were sometimes combined with confusion over the term ‘third-party intervention’, and the fact that this term has been used euphemistically by US and British politicians and media for what would more accurately be considered expeditionary wars. Both Afghanistan and Iraq were frequently employed as real world examples in this context. However, while the war in Afghanistan from 2001 could just about be characterised as a third-party intervention, Iraq in 2003 was clearly not as it did not feature two parties in conflict such that a third party’s intervention was required. Exploring and explaining just how valuable interventions were as a tool for peacemaking was limited by this approach and such examples.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Paper Two continues to be a challenging component for many students, most likely because it is not as prescriptive as the other assessment tasks and so candidates are compelled to make choices in terms of the best approach to any question before them. As in previous sessions, it was abundantly apparent that many candidates struggled to identify clearly the key demands of a question; it is very difficult for an examiner to award marks if the candidate has not actually answered the question posed, no matter how impressive one’s grasp of the course content may be. 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. Still others lacked the confidence to address what a question was specifically asking and so gave much more, often irrelevant, information than was required. There is little doubt in my mind that direct instruction in how to ‘unpack’ questions so that candidates are more skilled in identifying: a) what content is relevant given the context of the question; b) the task posed by the question (essentially, this

is the command term) and; c) the scope of the question. Arguably, the last element is the most important as it will, hopefully, mitigate against students answering too little or too much.

On a similar note, I would expect candidates 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.

I am confident that most teachers are structuring units around contemporary case studies to assist students in framing succinct but suitably detailed examples. As such, it was unsurprising to see real world examples deployed effectively to help substantiate arguments. However, there were instances where it seemed as if the candidate only had one or two such examples as his/her disposal and so was determined to include them even if their relevance to the question was not immediately apparent. Candidates should be encouraged to not only read widely but also to critically appraise the inclusion of any example. 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.

On a related note, there were still too many references to historical events of the early and mid-twentieth century (or earlier!). This is not to imply that examiners deducted marks for such dated historical references, but it is the responsibility of the candidate to show how past events inform the present, and the future. A clear point of difference between Global Politics and many other Group 3 subjects is the inherently contemporary nature of the course. There is so much going on in the world right now that there is little excuse for not being current.

For the benefit of those for whom this is the first examination, it is not unusual for candidates to be taking both Economics and Global Politics. It is always worthwhile reminding these candidates that they should be very wary of approaching questions on development from the perspective of the former. While there is some clear overlap between these two IB subjects in this regard there remain some crucial differences and examiners are keenly aware of these.

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 worthwhile for candidates to take some time to adequately plan their essay and to craft it around a clear thesis. 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.

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 key 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); in fact, many of the best responses embraced and evaluated the various shades of grey that exist in global politics.

Finally, as in previous subject reports, the same concluding mantra bears worth repeating: practice, practice, practice. It was unfortunately evident from the brevity of many responses that for far too many candidates this exam was probably their first attempt at such assessment. 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 students to 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.