![Government of Western Australia — School Curriculum and Standards Authority]

Summary report of the 2020 ATAR course examination:
Politics and Law

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2020	794	12
2019	840	14
2018	892	10
2017	867	7

The number of candidates sitting and the number attempting each section of the examination can differ as a result of non-attempts across sections of the examination.

Examination score distribution–Written
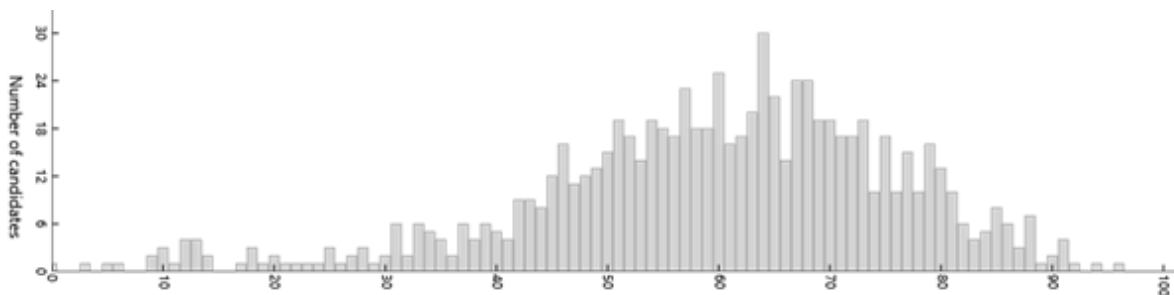
Summary

Attempted by 793 candidates   Mean 59.22%   Max 96.00%   Min 0.00%

The written examination consisted of three sections that required candidates to answer three out of four questions in Section One, one out of two in Section Two. Section Three was divided into Parts A and B, and candidates were required to answer one out of two questions in each part. The spread of scores ranged from 0% to 96% and the standard deviation was 16.50.

Section means were:

Section One: Short answer   Mean 58.79%
Attempted by 793 candidates   Mean 17.64(/30.00)   Max 29.00   Min 0.00
Section Two: Source analysis   Mean 61.40%
Attempted by 792 candidates   Mean 12.28(/20.00)   Max 20.00   Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3   Mean 58.86%
Attempted by 772 candidates   Mean 14.72(/25.00)   Max 25.00   Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4   Mean 58.35%
Attempted by 777 candidates   Mean 14.59(/25.00)   Max 24.00   Min 0.00

General comments

Most candidates completed the paper answering the appropriate number of questions in each of the sections and there were fewer non-attempts than in previous years. All questions seemed to be of comparable difficulty. While there were some excellent papers which achieved very high scores some candidates did not read particular questions carefully enough and thus did not meet all requirements. Question 3 in Section One was attempted by the least number of candidates. In Section Two, Question 6 was far more popular than Question 5 and each achieved a similar mean. In Section Three, Question 9 was the most popular and Question 10 the least popular question. The lack of specific information on some of the core elements of the course was apparent in all sections of the paper.

Section Three essay responses were detailed. Candidates knew relevant material but many did not use the information to write an analytical or evaluative response. 'Evaluation' and 'analysis' are key words in terms of essays and the final question in Section Two Source analysis. There is a distinct difference in what is required for each of these terms. Too many candidates respond as if the terms are interchangeable. Candidates were still tending to write a narrative and make an assertion with minimal supporting evidence. Question 7 was a comparative essay and was done well by most candidates.

Candidates appeared to find Question 2 more difficult than the other questions in Section One with more attempting and achieving a higher mark for Question 4.

Advice for candidates
- You should know definitions and concepts in detail and be able to explain their role and significance within the political and legal system.
- Ensure that you respond directly to the question asked and avoid irrelevant discussion.
- Break down the question and understand its focus.
- Ensure that examples are up-to-date and relevant.
- Understand what is required when a questions asks you to 'evaluate' and 'analyse'.
- Understand information rather than just learn information.
- You should be able to use information to argue a point of view, and then be able to argue against that point of view using relevant and up-to-date information.
- Do not use abbreviations that are not widely used.
- Do not try to predict examination questions and pre-prepare a learnt response.

Advice for teachers
- Ensure that examples are up-to-date and that the underlying principles and concepts of the Australian political and legal system are known in detail and understood.
- Encourage students to go beyond what is in the textbook and to seek out other examples and developments within the topic.
- Fact-check examples. Do not rely on one source to be correct.
- All points of the syllabus are treated equally. No one dot point in the syllabus is considered more important than any other.
- Ensure that students see the interconnection between the various parts of the syllabus. None of the points can be really taught and understood in isolation.
- Ensure that students understand what is required when a question asks them to 'evaluate', 'analyse', 'discuss', 'explain' or 'distinguish'.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Short answer (30 Marks)
Most candidates did relatively well in this section of the paper. Question 2 was not done well by candidates as most overlooked the focus of the question which was the lawmaking process. Many responses reflected a lack of specific information with too many discussing issues and concepts in general terms for all question parts.

Section Two: Source analysis (20 Marks)
The source was well understood by candidates as evidenced in part (b) responses and most attempted to explain in their own words. The failure to directly answer parts (c) and (d) and the generalised information used was problematic.

Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3 (25 Marks)
The mean for Part A was 58.86%. Question 7 was more popular than Question 8. Rather than analysing the components of the question many candidates wrote a narrative for

Question 7, although they had a sound understanding of the executive and judicial powers of a country. Question 8, analysis of the mandates in Commonwealth Parliaments, was well written by many candidates.

Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4 (25 Marks)
There were excellent responses for both questions with a detailed evaluation of the claim. For many there was no attempt to evaluate the claim and many wrote a narrative. The components of the question were not addressed and many candidates just wrote on the main subject matter.