Summary report of the 2019 ATAR course examination:
Politics and Law

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2019	840	14
2018	892	10
2017	867	7
2016	903	19

Examination score distribution–Written

Summary
Attempted by 840 candidates   Mean 57.86%   Max 100.00% 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 questions in Section Two and in Section Three, this was divided between Part A and Part B and candidates were required to answer one out of two questions in each part. The spread of marks ranged from 0% to 100%.

Section means were:
Section One: Short answer	Mean 63.24%		
Attempted by 838 candidates	Mean 18.97(/30.00)	Max 30.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Source analysis	Mean 57.84%		
Attempted by 837 candidates	Mean 11.57(/20.00)	Max 20.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3	Mean 55.81%		
Attempted by 817 candidates	Mean 13.95(/25.00)	Max 25.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4	Mean 56.41		
Attempted by 824 candidates	Mean 14.10(/25.00)	Max 25.00	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 within questions than in previous years. All questions seemed to be of comparable difficulty. Question 4 was the least popular question in Section One and in Section Three, Questions 8 and 9 were attempted by the overwhelming majority of candidates. There was a fairly even attempt at all other questions. While there were a number of excellent papers that achieved very high scores, some candidates are not reading particular questions carefully enough and not addressing each of the issues that the question raises. The phrases 'purpose of' and 'source of' also proved problematic. The lack of specific information on some of the core elements of the course was apparent in responses in all sections of the paper.

'Evaluate' and 'analyse' are key words in terms of essays. There is a distinct difference in what is required for each term. Too many candidates respond as if the terms are interchangeable.

Candidates are still tending to write a narrative and merely making an assertion without the supporting evidence. The narrative was especially apparent in responses to Question 8. Candidates had prepared a 'High Court' essay and disregarded the focus of the question.

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.
- Ensure that examples are up-to-date and relevant.
- Understand what is required when a question asks you to 'evaluate' or '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 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 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 really be taught and understood in isolation.
- Ensure that students understand what is required when a question asks them to 'evaluate', 'analyse', 'discuss' or 'explain'.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Short answer (30 Marks)
Most candidates did relatively well in this section of the paper. This is reflected in the mean of 63.24% for this section. Although Question 4 was the least popular question, it was answered well by most candidates who attempted it. In this section, many responses reflected a lack of specific information with too many candidates discussing issues and concepts in general terms for all question parts.

Section Two: Source analysis (20 Marks)
The mean for this section was 57.83%. Question 5 was more popular than Question 6. The mean was slightly lower for Question 6 and this was reflected in part (c) in particular. For both questions, part (b) asked candidates to explain in their own words two reasons from the source. This was done well by many candidates and they were awarded full marks. Most did attempt to write the reasons in their own words. A lack of evaluation in part (d) for both questions was evident.

Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3 (25 Marks)
The mean for Part A was 55.80%. Question 8 was much more popular than Question 7. The quality of response was similar for each question. Both questions required the candidates to evaluate a claim. The most common mistake was to write a narrative concerning the topic, without heed to the various elements of the question and merely making an assertion regarding the claim.

Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4 (25 Marks)
The mean for Part B was 56.41%. Question 9 was much more popular than Question 10. The mean for Question 9 was slightly higher than for the other essay questions in Section Three. Candidates did not give detailed evidence in their analysis of the topic and too many went going beyond the topic. The lack of detailed definitions of particular terms meant that the analysis was on the whole, quite limited.