Summary report of the 2016 ATAR course examination:
Politics and Law

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2016	903	19

Examination score distribution

Summary

The examination had a mean of 60.16% with a standard deviation of 15.46%. The reliability of each section with the total examination was 0.82.

Attempted by 903 candidates   Mean 60.16%(/100) Max 97.00% Min 4.00%

Section means were:
Section One: Short answer	Mean 18.96(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.50
Section Two: Source analysis	Mean 12.68(/20)	Max 20.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay	Mean 28.60(/50)	Max 49.50	Min 0.00

General comments

Most candidates completed the paper answering all questions in each of the sections. There were fewer 'parts' of questions that were not answered than in previous years and there were more 'better papers'. Some questions were less popular, especially Questions 4, 8 and 10 with the mean for Questions 3 and 8 below that of the other questions in the respective sections. The mean for all other questions within sections was somewhat similar. Key terms such as 'Cabinet', 'reserve power', 'natural justice', 'public servant' and 'Westminster conventions' were problematic for many candidates. There was a lack of specific information and candidates tended to talk in generalities especially in Question 9. As was the case last year, the accountability of parliament was confused with the accountability of the executive. Evaluation was not done well as was evident in the (d) question parts of Section Two: Source analysis.

Advice for candidates
- Know key definitions and be able to explain their significance within the political and legal system.
- Ensure that you respond directly to the question asked.
- Ensure that examples are up-to-date.
- Be able to support generalisations with specific examples.
- Understand what is required when evaluating.

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.

- Differentiate between the accountability of parliament and the accountability of the executive.
- The procedures and processes of the Commonwealth Parliament that contribute to its accountability needs to be taught explicitly.
- When a group is studied it is studied with sufficient detail and the focus is 'political and legal rights'.

Comments on specific sections and questions
Section One: Short answer
Attempted by 902 candidates   Mean 18.96(/30)   Max 30.00   Min 0.50

Overall Questions 1, 2 and 4 were done well by candidates whereas Question 3 proved problematic. Key terms and concepts were not known which impacted all question parts. Questions 1(a) and 1(b), 2(a) and 2(b), and 3(a) and 3(b) were asking quite different things, but candidates tended not to differentiate between the questions. Judicial review and the accountability of parliament was confused with the accountability of the executive. There were some excellent responses, which were awarded full marks.

Section Two: Source analysis
Attempted by 901 candidates   Mean 12.68(/20)   Max 20.00   Min 0.00

Question 5 was slightly more popular than Question 6 with both questions being answered quite well. The part (d) questions are still proving problematic in terms of the lack of evaluation by many candidates and Westminster conventions were too often seen as synonymous with the Westminster system.

Section Three: Essay
Attempted by 900 candidates   Mean 28.60(/50)   Max 49.50   Min 0.00

The standard of essays was better than in previous years with more, higher marks being awarded than in previous years. The biggest issue is the failure of candidates to define terms and as a consequence any evaluation or analysis lacked focus. Question 7 was answered by many candidates and achieved the highest mean whereas Question 8 although very topical achieved the lowest mean of the four essays.