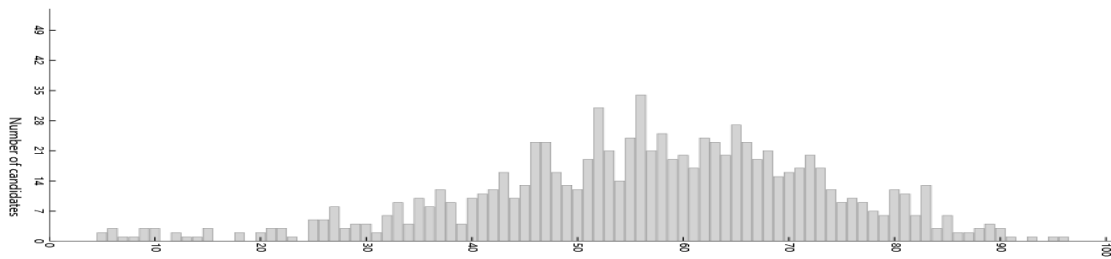




Summary report of the 2018 ATAR course examination: Politics and Law

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

Examination score distribution–Written



Summary

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, which was divided between Part A and Part B, candidates were required to answer one out of two questions in each part. The spread of marks ranged from 5.00% to 96.00%.

Attempted by 892 candidates Mean 56.28% Max 96.00% Min 5.00%

Section means were:

Section One: Short answer	Mean 61.53%		
Attempted by 891 candidates	Mean 18.46(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Source analysis	Mean 58.85%		
Attempted by 891 candidates	Mean 11.77(/20)	Max 20.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3	Mean 54.09%		
Attempted by 877 candidates	Mean 13.52(/25)	Max 25.00	Min 0.50
Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4	Mean 52.68%		
Attempted by 866 candidates	Mean 13.17(/25)	Max 23.50	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. There were some excellent papers which achieved very high scores. Candidates are not reading particular questions carefully enough and not addressing each of the issues that the question raises. Question 4 was the least popular question in Section One and the Question 7 essay was attempted by fewer candidates in Section Three. There was a fairly even attempt at all other questions. Questions 2 and 3 tended to be answered too generally by candidates without regard to the specifics of the question asked.

A different question was asked in Section Two, with candidates being asked to explain particular reasons in their own words. On the whole, candidates managed this well. The use of the words 'recent' (last 10 years) in Questions 1(c) and 3(c) and 'contemporary' (last 3 years) in Question 5(d) caused problems. Candidates ignored the time frame and used examples that were well outside the parameters. These time frames are central to the syllabus and need to be understood as such when responding to questions.

Evaluation and analysis are key words in terms of essays. Candidates are still tending to write a narrative or are far too general in their approach to the question being asked. The narrative was especially apparent in responses to Question 8. Candidates had prepared a 'federalism' and/or 'High Court' essay and disregarded the focus of the question.

Advice for candidates

- Know definitions and concepts and be able to explain their role and significance within the political and legal system.
- Ensure that you respond directly to the question asked, avoid irrelevant discussion.
- Ensure that examples are up to date.
- Be mindful of the time frame for both 'recent' and 'contemporary' examples.
- Understand what is required when both evaluating and analysing.
- Understand information rather than just learn information.
- 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 try to predict examination questions and learn a 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 and understood.
- Encourage candidates to go beyond what is in the text book and to seek out other examples and developments within the topic.
- Fact check key 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 candidates see the interconnection between the various parts of the syllabus. None of the points can be really taught in isolation.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Short answer (30 Marks)

Most candidates did relatively well in this section of the paper which is reflected in the overall mean of 61.52% for this section. Question 3, on responsible government and accountability, proved the most challenging for candidates. Question 4 was the least popular question but was answered well by most candidates who attempted it. The part (c) responses reflected a lack of specific information with too many candidates writing in general terms.

Section Two: Source analysis (20 Marks)

The mean for this section was 58.80%. There was a relatively even number of candidates attempting each of the questions. The mean was slightly lower for Question 6 and this was reflected in the part (c) and part (d) questions. The part (b) question 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. The lack of evaluation in the part (d) question was significant. The requirement of a 'contemporary' example of the exercise of legal power in Question 5(d) was ignored by many candidates. Too many used examples well outside the acceptable time frame.

Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3 (25 Marks)

The mean for Part A was 54.09%. Question 8 was much more popular than Question 7. The quality of the responses was relatively the same for each question. Both questions required the candidates to evaluate and the most common mistake was to write a narrative concerning the topic without heed to the various elements of the question.

Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4 (25 Marks)

The mean for Part B was 52.68%. Each question was done by a relatively similar number of candidates. The mean for Question 9 was slightly lower than for the other essay questions in this section. Candidates are not giving detailed evidence in their analysis of the topic..