

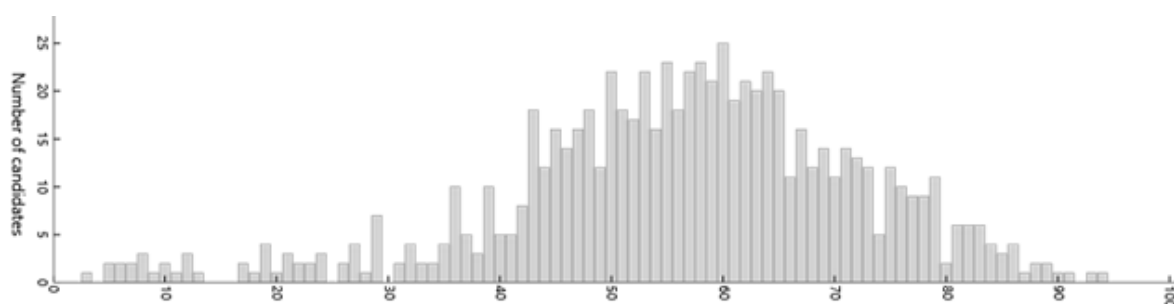


Summary report of the 2023 ATAR course examination report: Politics and Law

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2023	744	13
2022	723	24
2021	819	20
2020	794	12

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



Summary

The 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 one out of two questions in each part of Section Three. The scores for the examination ranged from 2.5% to 93.50%.

Attempted by 744 candidates	Mean 55.99%	Max 93.50%	Min 2.50%
Section means were:			
Section One: Short answer	Mean 56.48%		
Attempted by 744 candidates	Mean 16.94(/30)	Max 29.50	Min 2.00
Section Two: Source analysis	Mean 54.42%		
Attempted by 743 candidates	Mean 10.88(/20)	Max 20.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part A Unit 3	Mean 55.58%		
Attempted by 721 candidates	Mean 13.89(/25)	Max 24.50	Min 0.00
Section Three: Essay: Part B Unit 4	Mean 57.06%		
Attempted by 720 candidates	Mean 14.26(/25)	Max 24.50	Min 0.00

General comments

Most candidates attempted the required number of questions. There was very little difference between the percentage mean for each section of the examination paper. Questions 1 and 3 were the more popular questions in Section One, with Question 1 being the most attempted by candidates. Question 4 achieved the highest mean of 62.9%. In Section Two, both Question 5 and Question 6 were chosen equally. In Section Two, a slightly differently worded question was asked in part (b) relative to the source. Many candidates did not respond to the question asked but instead assumed it was the same question as in previous years. Questions 7 and 10 were the more popular questions in

Section Three, Question 10 had the highest mean (60.37%) while Question 9 had the lowest (51.73%).

Candidates did not read questions carefully enough and consequently did not address all the issues that a particular question raised. This was evident across all sections of the examination paper. Section Three essay responses tended to be detailed narratives. Most candidates knew relevant material but too many did not use the information to write an evaluative or analytical response. What is meant by key terms and/or concepts in questions was overlooked by many candidates. Key terms such as 'responsible government', 'democratic principles', 'Westminster system of parliamentary government' and the difference between 'parliamentary accountability' and 'executive accountability' were not clearly understood. 'Evaluation' was a word used in Section Three essay questions and the final question in Section Two. Candidates were not evaluating what was being claimed and merely wrote a narrative. The application of concepts and how the various elements of the political and legal system interconnect were often overlooked, and the parliamentary committee other than Senate Estimates in terms of executive accountability appeared not to have been known in any detail.

Advice for candidates

- 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.
- Read the question carefully, break it down and understand its focus.
- Ensure that examples are up-to-date and relevant.
- Understand what is required when evaluating and analysing.
- Understand information rather than just learn information.
- Use evidence and examples to argue a point of view, and then be able to argue against that point of view using relevant and up-to-date evidence and examples.
- Do not use abbreviations that are not widely used.
- Do not try to predict examination questions by supplying prepared responses.

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 a textbook and to seek out other examples and developments within the topic, especially within the last three years.
- Fact-check examples and information. Do not rely on one source to be correct.
- All points of the syllabus are treated equally. No one content point in the syllabus is considered more important than any other. Ensure that the syllabus is taught in its entirety.
- Ensure that students see the interconnection between the various parts of the syllabus, including between Unit 3 and Unit 4. None of the syllabus content points in either unit can be taught and understood in isolation.
- Ensure that students understand what is required when a question asks for: evaluate, analyse, discuss, explain, outline, identify.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Short answer (30 Marks)

Many responses lacked precise information when discussing terms such as 'the opposition', 'mandate theory' and roles of particular committees of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Section Two: Source analysis (20 Marks)

There was a lack of evaluation when answering part (d) of both Questions 5 and 6 and this is reflected in the low mean.

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

Question 7 was slightly more popular than Question 8 and had a slightly higher mean. Both questions were not read carefully enough and there appeared to be prepared essays written for both questions, especially for Question 7.

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

Question 10 was far more popular than Question 9. Question 10 also had the highest mean of all four questions in Section Three. Both Questions 9 and 10 were often misread by candidates though who failed to address all aspects of the question and hence provided little, if any, analysis.