

Global politics

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Internal assessment

Range and suitability of submissions

The quality of the reports seems to have improved in that more attention is given to the engagement activity and the justification of the political issue. There are some recurring themes which makes us wonder whether subject reports are really accessed by all teachers. With no individual school feedback provided this year the subject report has become even more important than other years. This report should be read in conjunction with subject reports of previous years.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Candidates generally indicate the political issue they have investigated, their interest and course links. The engagement itself is not always justified, or even introduced. It is assumed that the reader understands the link between the political issue and the engagement. Additionally, interest is sometimes not explained, or only in terms of the significance of the political issue. The political issue that the candidate has identified is often rather broad, also impacting the depth of analysis (criterion C). The legitimacy of human rights Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is a rather broad topic, potentially covering dozens of organisations. However, the legitimacy of human rights NGO X in dealing with issue Z is much more focused.

Criterion B

Candidates usually explain the lessons learnt from the engagement. 'What they did' is not always explored in depth. The process of the engagement, how they undertook the interview or other engagement, is not always sufficiently explained. There are still reports that do not meet the minimum expectation of engagement, which is two interviews. Sometimes engagements are too passive (just attending events such as lectures or debates) and sometimes the people with whom the student has engaged do not appear to be valid political actors (asking classmates or family members about a general political issue). Many reports still focus heavily on the engagement in the first half of the report and then largely ignore it in the second half. The engagement should be justified at the start and then come back throughout the report. Emails or questionnaires cannot substitute active engagement and don't allow for real-life interaction between the student and the political actor – they can be done in addition to active engagement. Video conferencing does allow for actual contact and allows the student to ask follow-up questions, to gauge non-verbal communication etc.

Criterion C

Candidates often provide some basic analysis of the political issue with some course links, but many reports do not show a detailed understanding of the course concepts and theories. Additionally, course links are often not justified through referencing academic sources. Topics that have been discussed in class should still be referenced through academic sources in the report. Candidates should particularly justify their understanding of course concepts and theories. Definitions or explanations of, say, globalisation, human rights and realism or universalism should be backed up by academic sources. Broad political issues (see criterion A) impact the depth of analysis. As students engage with a topic of personal interest, they sometimes overemphasise their perspective in the analysis. They should be guided in providing a more balanced analysis (see also criterion D, multiple perspectives).

Criterion D

More reports show the understanding that the holistic criteria should not be turned into separate sections. More reports are showing a sustained attempt at synthesising the engagement with additional sources. At the same time, there are still many candidates that do separate engagement from analysis and introduce the former at the start of the report and then barely return to the engagement in their analysis of the political issue. Considering candidates are pursuing a political issue of their interest, they also all too often struggle with providing different perspectives and sometimes turn the engagement activity report into a political pamphlet (see also criterion C). Sometimes engagements can turn out quite one-sided, when, say, two interviewees provide quite similar perspectives. It is then important for the candidate to consider other perspectives through accessing additional sources or employing theoretical perspectives that challenge the perspective of the interviewees. Conclusions at times contain new information, or claims not evidenced in the report, impacting the consistency of the concluding remarks.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are reminded to instruct their students to not turn the holistic criteria into separate sections. The engagement should be discussed throughout the report. Additionally, students should be instructed to provide more reflective insights on their experience; what they saw, felt and this impacted their understanding of the issue and perhaps led to additional questioning or engagements. Every idea obtained from elsewhere should be justified as per the IB's academic honesty expectations, either by referring to an engagement experience or additional sources.

Oral extension internal assessment

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A broad range of contemporary global challenges were chosen by candidates that reflected the emergent, evolving, and often turbulent subject matter of the global politics course. Case studies often sought to dissect complex and sensitive issues, from changing state and citizen power relationships, to human rights and environmental concerns. Teachers are reminded to carefully guide candidates to frame their case study in relation to two of the six global challenges.

Candidate performance against each criterion

The preposition '*within* the wider context of global politics' is of particular significance when supporting candidates to reach a Level 5. Often, candidates are unable to reach the higher level, despite strong and articulate analysis of their case study, because they have only made brief links or connections to other case studies. Candidates are advised to work a path from the local level to the global, whereby the significance of their case study becomes illustrative of the global political challenge. Rather than dedicating too much time to the historical context, candidates should analyse the significance of the case study within the wider global context.

Those candidates who demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the political issue raised by their chosen case study, (awarded 5-6 marks), may have lacked clarity, focus and balance in their analysis, with a tendency towards descriptive narrative. Rather, candidates' presentations would benefit from more detailed and expansive research into: data; principal actors; the nature of the global political challenge; the causal factors; the political, social and economic impacts; the multi-level responses; the competing stakeholder perspectives, and so on. Those candidates who only reached a Level 2 mark will likely have examined their case study in isolation, or with only superficial links made between case studies. Many candidates proved adept at employing theoretical and stakeholder perspectives to support their analysis.

As indicated, candidates who complete an 'excellent' presentation (9-10 marks) will have effectively demonstrated the significance of his/her case study as illustrative of a broader global political challenge, such as: border control and division; independence movements; infringement of identity rights; migration patterns; declining health standards; environmental sustainability; and so on. Moreover, to achieve a Level 5 mark, candidates will be satisfying all descriptive strands of the rubric.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The HL Extension component provides opportunities for the development and application of many core IBDP teaching and learning approaches, including inquiry-based research and enhanced communication skills. A differentiated approach will be required to support students who require a more structured approach to their research. More able students will identify pertinent theories or stakeholder perspectives and will seek to analyse the impact and significance of the case from the local to the global level.

As mentioned in the N19 subject report, a concept-based approach to the component task is valuable in helping candidates to transfer their conceptual understandings from their chosen case study, to other related case studies, and to draw out the nuanced differences between contexts. We recommend that candidates select a relevant local case study, thus drawing upon their existing knowledge, the wider significance of which can be considered globally. Therefore, a concept-based approach would advise that candidates discover the *relationship* between two or three concepts in the context of their case study,

before *transferring* that understanding to different contexts that are related to the global political challenge. Students may wish to articulate a statement of conceptual relationship as their research question; for example, the treatment of the global political challenge of borders might raise the following conceptual question: ‘what is the relationship between power, sovereignty and legitimacy in the context of [Brexit/Catalonia/Hong Kong/South China Sea, Etc]?’

It has been noted in recent exam sessions that students often treat the presentation as a formal speech in which they read from a script or slides adjacent to the camera. This is not in the spirit of the task and students will be penalised by one or two marks if it is evident that they are over reliant upon their notes. Teachers should remind candidates of the course guidance, which states: ‘students may use limited notes or prompt cards when delivering their presentations, but the content may not be written out and read aloud.’ Therefore, students should be sufficiently familiar with their material before the presentation so that they only make infrequent glances towards their notes. Rather than memorise verbatim, candidates are encouraged to speak knowledgeably about an issue that they have carefully researched and analysed, and which culminates in a thoughtfully-structured and well-rehearsed presentation with only glancing reference to supporting cue cards.

Given the challenges of home learning for many centres leading up to this exam session, teachers are reminded of the need to ensure a high-quality recording, with clear sound and visual of the candidate, even if undertaken through video conferencing. It is also of vital importance that teachers confirm video files to have been correctly and fully uploaded to IBIS. In-school background noise should be avoided, with the camera microphone located close to the candidate. Slides are of limited value, unless to graphically illustrate patterns and trends, and text should not be read from slides. Candidates should use the full time available, but not continue beyond the designated ten minutes.

Further comments

Teachers are encouraged to include concise and supportive comments when uploading files to IBIS, making direct reference to the rubric to justify marks awarded. Currently, teacher comments are inconsistent between centres, with some teachers quoting the rubric directly, others providing amplified formative feedback which was clearly directed at the student, and others providing extensive comments that are subsequently truncated. A short paragraph that addresses the key strands of the rubric would suffice and would support examiner’s moderation.

This year, inevitably, many presentations made reference to the Covid-19 global pandemic, albeit in its early stages. This is a topic and global political challenge that will continue to underpin many aspects of international relations and can be approached through several of the global political challenges. Given its global reach, candidates would be advised to adopt a particular angle on the crisis starting from their local context, and working outwards, thus avoiding taking a sweeping global approach that does not directly address the assessment requirements.

Candidates are advised not to complete both presentations on the same day, or in close succession, but rather situate them at appropriate points of the course, with adequate reflection time between the two presentations. Teacher feedback from the first presentation will no doubt aid the second. For some candidates, whose written skills are weaker, the HL presentation offers an opportunity to promote their stronger oral skills and build academic confidence, while ensuring that all candidates develop a range of transferrable communication skills, and conceptual understandings, throughout the course.

Finally, it is important that both candidates and teachers have a close understanding of the rubric. To reiterate the key advice from previous sessions, the global impression marking rubric has been developed

around the following overarching question: “Does the student present a clear, focused and balanced analysis of the case study, highlighting a global political challenge?” The awarding of marks is, then, a judgement based upon a holistic or global evaluation process stemming from the overarching question and drawing upon the specific elements and descriptors from the rubric.