GLOBAL POLITICS

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-10	11-22	23-34	35-47	48-60	61-73	74-100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-9	10-21	22-31	32-44	45-57	58-69	70-100

Higher level internal assessment – engagement activity

Higher and standard level internal assessment component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	11-13	14-15	16-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

From very good to minimal. Many engagements only have one or two interviews which does not represent the range of the political issue or provide the opportunity to effectively analyse and evaluate the chosen issue. Some centres are confused regarding what a political issue consists of and should refer to the course guide and assessment criteria.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Identification of issue and justification. Some problems here, many see the assignment as a shorter extended essay, and more discussion of what defines a political issue needs to take place. Candidates generally are able to describe what it is they did in their engagement, but often the analyses, syntheses and conclusions are basic and not well tied to course objectives.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

More time needs to be spent on defining the engagement and why it is an essential part of the course. Basic definitions of what a political issue is and who participates in them deserves substantial discussion in the classroom. Teachers should spend an appropriate amount of classroom time supporting students with the chosen political issue and helping them to examine ways in which the activity connects to the key concepts of the course.

Higher level extension

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-4	5-8	9-11	12-13	14-16	17-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range and the work submitted continues to be suitable given the holistic nature of the global impressions marking rubric. Candidates' presentations covered a wide and compelling range of subject matter with a satisfactory or better level of analysis. The assessment grants the candidate the freedom and autonomy to explore what interests them; significant guidance and structure to explore with purpose and, in some cases, compelling conviction.

Candidate performance against each criterion.

Global impressions rubric is structured differently than a standard criterion based rubric; however, student's range of performance was both suitable and consistent with last year's candidates.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

The suitability of the case studies and general research was generally pleasing. Teachers should not allow candidates to rely too heavily on reading a report. An oral presentation relies

on a different set of skills than reading from a screen or standing and delivering a pre-prepared report; and, while we do not have presentation criteria, reading directly from any medium will have consequences.

Overall, it is pleasing to note that guidance and teacher's training, are having a positive impact on the level of candidate's presentations.

Higher level paper one

Higher and standard level component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-5	6-8	9-12	13-15	16-19	20-25

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates appeared to struggle to provide relevant and contemporary own examples relating to global governance. Some examples were either historical or a rephrasing of examples given in the sources. It is important that students analyse as many case studies as possible in all sections of the course so that they are equipped to provide appropriate evidence of their own.

Some students are still not providing a running contrast and/or comparison as required by question 3.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates showed a good conceptual awareness of the topic of focus for the examination, Global governance, as well as the overall Power, sovereignty and international relations unit.

Candidates showed a good ability to extract information and evidence from the sources.

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The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1

Most candidates did well on this question and gained full marks, however there were more candidates gaining below full marks than in previous years.

Some candidates appeared to take a longer amount of time or write lengthier answers for question 1 than had been seen in previous years. Candidates are advised to look closely at the wording of the question, in this case '*ways* in which non-state actors can influence global politics' and provide three precise and succinct points.

Question 2

This question was answered well by most candidates who were able to explain both from the source and their own knowledge, reasons co-operation can be problematic.

Some candidates would be advised to structure their responses in a clearer manner. It would be advisable, for instance, to separate their answer to question 2 – a paragraph for evidence based from the source and a further paragraph with evidence from their own knowledge.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to identify a number of points of contrast between the sources.

For question 3, candidates should be advised that the exam requires four separate points of contrast and/or comparison. It is advised that each point is made in a separate paragraph. The exam requires a *running commentary* whereby to points of comparison and/or contrast in the sources are directly addressed. Comparing and/or contrasting each source separately can gain marks, however this is limited to 5 marks as the running commentary is more precise and illustrates a higher skill level.

A minority of students did not contrast the correct sources.

Question 4

Most candidates showed a good grasp of the concept of power, however not all were able to apply this knowledge to fully address a complex essay question.

Candidates should be aware that question 4 requires an essay style, balanced answer. It is therefore important that candidates explore both one view and counterclaims on the issues addressed by the question. Some candidates approached this as a mere agree/disagree question without giving attention to the command term 'to what *extent* do you agree with the claim?'

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Candidates should be aware that question 4 requires them to refer to all the sources. Some candidates appeared to misread 'with reference to Sources A to D' as 'with reference to Sources A and D' and so only referred to these two sources.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should stress the importance of reading the question carefully in order to meet its demands. For instance: whether the question requires the use of all the sources; evidence from source; examples from own knowledge; or a contrast and/or comparison of the sources.

Teachers are advised that candidates should study contemporary examples and case studies for each unit of the course.

Further guidance and practice should be provided to candidates on the structure required for question 3 so that candidates provide a running commentary.

For question 4, a balanced approach to the essay, including claims and counterclaims in response to a statement could be reinforced. Students should practise this response by referring to all 4 sources and be aware of assessment markband descriptors.

Teachers are advised to discuss the best structure and approach to the answers so that their points are as clear as possible.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-8	9-16	17-22	23-31	32-41	42-50	51-75

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-5	6-10	11-13	14-19	20-25	26-31	32-50

General comments

More than in previous years, the range of work submitted covered the full range of performance from very weak to excellent. This was perhaps to be expected given that these were the first

mainstream examinations with many new schools sitting the exam for the very first time. There was some unevenness both in terms of which questions/units were chosen by candidates as well as in the quality of individual responses within a single script. What this all suggests is that candidates were far more familiar with some sections of the syllabus than they were with others. All of this points to a need for teachers to ensure that each unit within the course is given an equivalent amount of time and attention so that greater consistency across the entire breadth of the course can prevail in future.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

It seems that some candidates struggled to understand exactly what the key demands of each question were. It is clear in some instances questions were misread or the candidate was unfamiliar with the key concept(s) at the heart of a question and so substituted a different term in its stead. For instance, 'stability' might be replaced by 'equality' or 'legitimacy' by 'sovereignty'. While such terms may be interrelated, it is very important that candidates have a solid and separate understanding of each the fundamental concepts in Global Politics. How and when it is appropriate to employ such terms is increasingly important as many are frequently misapplied in the media.

Candidates continue to struggle with the integration of concepts and real world examples. On one hand, it was apparent that some candidates were simply 'ticking a box' when it came to including references to theoretical positions or to the work of particular scholars. On the other hand, many candidates cited real world examples or theoretical positions by naming a country or a scholar, providing few basic details, and expecting the examiner to join the dots or to be familiar with the situation mentioned. In any case, weaving together the abstract/conceptual and what is actually occurring in the contemporary arena of global politics remained a challenge for all but the best candidates.

Finally, too many candidates continued to stumble when it came to providing counterclaims or alternative ways of viewing the question. Given the IB's central focus on critical thinking, this was a serious oversight and one that needs to be addressed by teachers.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Students were well prepared in terms of relevant case studies and seemed to be well prepared to answer questions on the core concepts of sovereignty, globalization and peace. In addition, human rights was also a strong point for many candidates and they appeared to be quite familiar with the (in)effectiveness of human rights and some of the key debates in this area.

It was also clear that many candidates had been instructed in a wide range of theoretical or conceptual perspectives, even if these were not always well integrated into the discussion.

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The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Q1. Discuss reasons why the legitimacy of a state may need to be questioned.

The greatest challenge for candidates here was the conceptualization of the key concept of legitimacy. Many candidates confused 'sovereignty' with 'legitimacy' and while there may be some overlap between these two concepts (i.e., between empirical sovereignty and the internal bases for a state's legitimacy and also between juridical sovereignty and the external legitimation of a state) they are not synonymous and it was incumbent upon candidates to establish any such link rather than simply asserting the two as one and the same thing. This was perhaps unsurprising given the emphasis on sovereignty in Global Politics but it was also a clear sign that students would benefit from a broader or more balanced exposure to other key concepts in the course.

For those candidates who clearly focused on legitimacy, often only one dimension was explored with either the external or internal foundations for a state's legitimacy considered. Better responses, however, included explanation and analysis of both. In terms of real world examples offered, too many students offered ISIS or Kurdistan as an example of 'a state' when references to commonly recognized states would have been more compelling. In terms of the internal or domestic foundations for a state's legitimacy, far too many candidates uncritically equated 'democracy' with 'legitimacy' neglecting to consider that a host of alternative (non-Western) forms of legitimation also exist in global politics. Finally, too many students confused the legitimacy of a state's actions with the legitimacy of the state itself. Again, while there may be some overlap between the two this needed to be explicitly demonstrated rather than simply assumed.

Q2. Examine the claim that economically powerful states are able to manipulate global governance institutions to their advantage.

The main challenges for candidates with respect to this question were twofold. In the first place, many responses did not clearly reference an institution of global governance or, sometimes, the institution(s) included were either not actually organizations of global governance (e.g., NATO or the ICC) or were institutions that might be best conceived of as 'global governance adjacent' (e.g., the EU). In the case of the latter, it was the responsibility of candidates to establish such organizations as institutions of global governance rather than just asserting them as such. Secondly, many responses did not clearly focus on the *manipulation* of an institution of global governance by an economically powerful state (or states). Many candidates who did accurately identify institutions of global governance failed to clearly explain how economically powerful states are actually able to manipulate such institutions, for example via increased voting rights according to financial contribution (the IMF and World Bank) or through the use of veto power (the P-5 states in the UN Security Council). Better responses saw candidates clearly analyse such processes and the very best papers saw candidates explore and evaluate how the operating procedures of institutions of global governance might vary in this regard as the nature of global governance has evolved since the creation of the UN.

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Some candidates misread the question and demonstrated how economically powerful states were able to influence global governance rather than institutions, per se, which made it difficult for them to attract marks.

Q3. Examine the claim that human rights as presented in treaties and covenants are not enforceable and are therefore of little use to vulnerable populations.

In general, candidates displayed a good understanding of human rights violations and were able to clearly discuss the non-enforceability of human rights treaties and covenants in the context of the anarchical nature of international relations. Many relevant real world examples were offered in support of the central claim although not all examples were explicitly linked to the issue of enforceability. The most frequent explanations given for the lack of enforceability of human rights lay with the principle of state sovereignty on the one hand and, on the other, the existence of cultural relativism. While better responses saw candidates clearly connecting these ideas to the lack of enforcement of human rights there were still far too many candidates who left these relationships relatively unexamined.

Very few candidates were able to factor in the second part of the claim dealing with 'vulnerable populations' and this meant that such responses were unlikely to score in the top markbands. The best essays demonstrated that despite the unenforceability of human rights treaties they might still be of use to vulnerable populations, i.e., as a normative reference point for resistance to violations or as an aspirational goal.

Finally, finding an effective counterclaim proved to be something of a challenge for many candidates. Frequently, candidates pointed to the existence of the ICC and/or the practice of humanitarian intervention under the auspices of the Responsibility to Protect as examples of human rights being enforced. The better responses, however, explored and evaluated such phenomena to highlight how even these involve a rather restricted enforcement of human rights.

Q4.   Discuss the claim that development in industrializing countries often violates universal rights to a clean environment and to the humanitarian treatment of labour.

This was a relatively straightforward question for those candidates who attempted it with many grounding their discussion in relevant real world examples although many responses lacked balance by focusing more on *either* environmental degradation *or* the violation of labour standards rather than both equally as the question demands.

Better responses included a detailed conceptualization of development and then clearly demonstrated how specific industrializing states were prioritizing economic growth over other elements commonly included in broader conceptualizations of development. The challenge with this question for many candidates was to identify and include a counterclaim and thus fulfil the requirements of the higher markbands. In this regard, successful candidates often pointed to the historical experience of industrial states as they industrialized, highlighting the apparent hypocrisy present in critiques of contemporary industrializing countries.

Q5. Evaluate the claim that inequality encourages, rather than prevents, development.

A relatively straightforward question although many students only considered rather narrow, principally economic, definitions of both development and inequality. While this was perfectly acceptable, it meant that such responses were unlikely to possess the depth and nuance required to achieve the top markband.

Most candidates, unsurprisingly perhaps, took the negative view contained within the question and demonstrated how the presence of gross inequalities clearly undermines broader conceptualizations of development. The best responses recognized the multidimensional aspects of both of the key concepts and neatly intertwined them by demonstrating how, in general, inequality delays development but also how, in some specific instances/forms, inequality can spur development. For example, the existence of racial or gender inequality can and has acted as an impetus for resistance and change, which has then resulted in greater economic, political and social development.

Q6. To what extent is the achievement of political and social stability essential for development?

This was a challenging question for many candidates as they struggled to conceptualize both political and, especially, social (in)stability and the relationship of each to development, which itself was treated rather vaguely. Again, it was frequently the case that political and/or social stability was uncritically equated to democracy when this is not accurate.

With few students capable of defining or conceptualizing these key concepts, many responses were limited to a general discussion of developing, often conflict-ridden, states (e.g. Syria) to show how instability hinders development. This meant that many essays were very descriptive, lacking relevant and specific real world examples in support.

Counterclaims were similarly challenging with many candidates considering the importance of economic or financial stability as more important for a state's development without evaluating how each form of stability might, in reality, be tightly intertwined.

Q7. Compare and contrast *two* different approaches to peacemaking in *one* armed conflict you have studied.

Very few candidates attempted this question, which comes as little surprise given that this was probably the most challenging question in the exam. In the first place, many candidates were unable to accurately define and conceptualize 'peacemaking' instead confusing it with 'peacekeeping' or, even, 'peacebuilding'. While most of those who attempted this question were able to identify a relevant and contemporary real world case study (e.g., Syria or Colombia), only a very small number actually examined different approaches to peacemaking. Far too many responses were simple narrative and/or historical descriptions of a conflict.

Q8. Discuss the view that peace is more than simply the absence of war.

In contrast to the other question in this section, this was a very popular question, possibly the most commonly answered question on the exam. Many students were able to accurately define

both the negative and positive dimensions of peace and to clearly connect these to realist and liberal conceptualizations of peace, respectively. Most responses did, in fact, make mention of 'peace' (or a lack of it) in non-conflict situations with frequent references to the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA being a compelling, contemporary real world example in this context. However, far too many candidates also referred to irrelevant and/or outdated examples such as the Cold War.

Better responses also intertwined Galtung's conflict triangles to link direct violence and peacekeeping to an analysis of negative peace and cultural and structural violence along with peacemaking and peacebuilding to any consideration of positive peace. The best responses did this while also framing the question within the context of post-conflict peace-building, or how a positive peace could be created after the cessation of a war or active conflict.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates must have a firm grounding in all the key concepts contained within the course guide. As was clear from this examination session, far too many candidates lacked a complete understanding of these core terms.

Global Politics is first and foremost a contemporary course and this should be reflected in the choice of real world examples. Far too many students are still referring to very outdated examples such as the League of Nations, World War Two, the Korean War, the Cold War and even the Industrial Revolution. This is not to say that all such historical references are inappropriate but they should always be employed in the service of explaining either how the contemporary world came about or to provide a point of contrast with current events. On a related note, candidates who are taking both Economics and Global Politics should be very wary of approaching questions on development from the perspective of the former. While there is some clear overlap between these two IB subjects on this topic there are also some key differences and examiners are keenly aware of them.

Students need to be given clear instruction on how best to structure their thoughts in the context of a timed examination involving open-ended questions. They should then be given ample and regular opportunities to practice answering such questions in exam-like situations with IB or IB-like exam questions. It was apparent that many candidates in this session did not understand how to plan and logically structure their thoughts and arguments, which made for some quite challenging marking.

On a related note, this would then also give students a chance to practice and, hopefully, hone their handwriting skills. While candidates expressly are not marked on their handwriting the fact of the matter is that examiners can only mark what they can read and so the more students can practice writing clearly and precisely, the better it will be for all involved.

Following on from a point raised above, candidates often provided only very basic details when it came to real world situations and/or the work of particular scholars, expecting the examiner to fill in the gaps. For instance, quite a few candidates ended each response by trying to apply a number of conceptual frameworks to whatever issue was under consideration. Such an

approach always feels very forced, and often results in unconnected paragraphs. Relevant theories can be included but ideally, they need to be seamlessly interwoven into the response, not singled out separately. In a similar sense, some candidates included descriptive and sometimes irrelevant details to their examples, forgetting to link these to the argument or counterclaim they were advancing. Teachers should definitely include some contemporary case studies in class to assist students in framing succinct but suitably detailed examples.

It is worth emphasizing here that quality trumps quality. Candidates should be strongly encouraged to think carefully about what details are salient to the argument they are advancing and to take only these into account when composing their response. Carefully chosen case studies will also help candidates better understand key concepts, allowing them to weave these more seamlessly into their overall analysis and evaluation.

It has been mentioned in previous subject reports but bears mentioning again in light of the mainstreaming of this course: students must have a better understanding of and practice with counterclaims. All too frequently, responses were unable to earn higher marks simply because the candidate had not entertained or assessed alternative perspectives and/or understandings. That final point is worth repeating: counterclaims do not necessarily have to take a dichotomous form (i.e., black vs. white); in fact, many of the best responses embraced and evaluated the various shades of grey that exist in global politics.

Finally, it is worth repeating: practice, practice, practice. It was unfortunately evident that for far too many candidates the May exam was probably their first attempt at such assessment. As the bank of exam questions continues to grow and as more and more professional development resources are made available, there are increased opportunities for students to practice with actual IB questions. The value of doing so – and doing so in exam-like situations and assessed according to IB standards – cannot be underestimated.