2021 Geography Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2021 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Geographical Skills and Application

Students undertake four tasks for Geographical Skills and Applications to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of geographical concepts and to examine geographical features, patterns, and processes.

Tasks for this assessment type should be to a maximum of 4000 words in total (or 24-minutes for multimodal or oral presentations), and teachers have discretion in allocating word/time limits to individual tasks.

Schools should ensure they are using the current subject outline when designing tasks and note the change to the Analysis and Evaluation specific features that were made in 2020.

AE1 Insightful analysis of the complex interactions between, and interdependence of, people and environmental, social, *and/or* economic factors.

AE2 Comprehensive analysis and evaluation of information to determine possible outcomes, make justifiable and ethical recommendations, form conclusions, *and/or* solve problems.

The more successful responses commonly:

* approached a selected number of the specific features which made in-depth responses easier to attain at the highest level
* used the ‘key words’ of the performance standards in their overall response(s), such as environmental, social and economic factors
* used a variety of multimodal options to present their work, including electronic broadsheets, movies, Sways, PowerPoints with voiceover, Prezis, Screencasts etc.
* came from task design that enabled students to pick areas of interest/case studies rather than heavily scaffolded tasks
* used a diverse range of examples and case studies of different countries to demonstrate change over time, for example in Population Change responses, and this enabled comprehensive Knowledge and Understanding
* used recent research findings and primary data to back up generalisation provided by the largely secondary sources
* used images that were clearly and accurately annotated, and referred to these images in their written text
* used a range of GIS maps, photographs, graphs and other images that were accurately annotated, labelled using a diversity of methods which supported in-depth analysis to form conclusions
* made full use of the 4000 word count (24 minutes) limit.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were generally descriptive and lacked analysis and explanation of geographical concepts and issues
* provided limited explanation resulting in a lack of opportunities to demonstrate comprehensive Knowledge and Understanding
* did not refer to images in the written text and images generally lacked annotation and explanation of the relationship to the geographical issue
* did not make use of case study information, including specific countries or regions, and this resulted in generalised and sometimes vague responses, conclusions and recommendations
* used a presentation format that did not add value or support understanding, including voice-overs that read information from PowerPoint slides
* were disorganised and lacked coherent structure, and not always followed assessment task instructions
* did not include appropriate referencing or bibliography, and used secondary sources with limited geographical data
* presented work in paper version, for example broadsheets, which included images which were at times unreadable.

Assessment Type 2: Fieldwork Report

Students undertake one individual fieldwork report with a focus on a local topic or an issue of personal interest. They collect and analyse primary data using a wide range of data-collection techniques. Students integrate this data using visual representations, including the use of spatial technology. They analyse patterns and geographical concepts from the data they have collected to reach conclusions and may make recommendations, if appropriate, based on their data analysis.

The fieldwork report should be to a maximum of 2000 words and may be written or in oral or multimodal format.

Schools to take note of the change to the Analysis and Evaluation specific features that were made in 2020, specifically the removal of the requirement to provide recommendations.

AE1 Insightful analysis of the complex interactions between, and interdependence of, people and environmental, social, and/or economic factors.

AE2 Comprehensive analysis and evaluation of information to determine possible outcomes, make justifiable and ethical recommendations, form conclusions, and/or solve problems.

The more successful responses commonly:

* made a clear statement about their question or hypothesis in the introduction and then addressed this often during the course of the report and in the final summary
* ensured the research question or hypothesis was clearly linked to geographical concepts or issues and relevant geographical context/theoretical information was provided
* included a wide range of fieldwork methods, including; bi-polar analysis, transects, interviews and surveys, measurement activities (e.g. pH, nitrate, phosphate), compaction tests and quadrats. These data collection techniques also included extensive use of downloadable applications to measure windspeed, light, sound and also survey apps
* had an extensive methodology table, detailing the purpose of each data collection technique and provided spatial and/or temporal information
* demonstrated strong locational context using mapping skills, evident in both GIS and hand-drawn formats, which supported analysis of spatial findings
* presented findings using a wide range of visual representations, (including a variety of graphs and maps, kite diagrams, cross-sections, annotated sketches and photographs etc.). These visual representations demonstrated geographic conventions where appropriate (e.g. maps had BOLTS)
* effectively integrated primary and supporting secondary data into their analysis in order to support findings and reach conclusions
* demonstrated appropriate use of geographic terminology throughout and correctly identified visual representations
* used statistical analysis where appropriate, including descriptive statistics such as inter-quartile range and statistical tests including Spearman’s Rank Correlation.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not clearly state the research question or hypothesis or refer to it throughout the report or in the final summary/conclusion
* used a large amount of the allocated words on the historical background of the issue and in general statements about the area and issue being studied
* used secondary Google maps rather than self-produced maps to show location and fieldwork sample sites
* were similar in both issue choice and structure to other students from the same school, suggesting heavily scaffolded tasks which did not provide opportunity for students to achieve highly
* had limited primary data collection techniques and relied heavily on photographs and secondary sources of data, and did not specify spatial and temporal aspects of their fieldwork methodology
* were descriptive rather than explanatory in their analysis and/or lacked overall findings or conclusions
* were limited in the use of visual representations, these were largely graphs and annotations, photographs and observations that limited analysis and did not support findings
* underutilised the word count.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Students undertake one 2-hour examination. The examination has two sections: Section 1 focusing on geographical skills and Section 2 on Topic 1: Ecosystems and People and Topic 3: Population Change.

Students use a range of geographical skills to interpret written and visual materials, including maps, and apply these skills in unfamiliar contexts.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a clear understanding of key topographic map features, including specific ways of showing elevation such as contour lines, spot heights and hill shading
* demonstrated the ability to calculate scales as a ratio from linear scales
* were able to accurately locate features across different maps with precise use of six figure grid references
* provided a wide range of physical and human features that influence the location of features as seen in questions 1(d) and 1(f) with clear reference to features on the maps and explicit explanation as how they may influence the sites of either a MTB race or resort. Drainage features, height, vegetation, along with a range of human features were explored by the more successful responses
* were able to use the information provided to interpret a wind rose and apply this to features on a satellite image
* were able to explain the sampling pattern shown on the waterway in the satellite image with explicit reference to differing influences and/or how water quality may change along the waterway
* were able to justify the relevance of specific fieldwork data-collection techniques with clear knowledge of what data would be collected
* referred to two different specific displays of data with a clear understanding of what each type of visual display would show
* were able to both extract information from sources and use the information to explain services such as carbon storage, nutrient cycling and watershed protection
* were able to explain a human or physical factor that would affect ecosystem resources
* applied knowledge of human activities such as agriculture, urbanisation or deforestation to its impact on organic matter
* had knowledge of specific strategies to reduce ecological footprints and a clear understanding of how they may affect a particular aspect of the footprint
* used the physical map provided to identify and explain features that influence population distribution including relief, rivers and coastal areas with clear links to both maps
* identified changes to India’s projected population structure including an increase in total population, aged dependents, economically active populations and a reduction in the percentage of young, and a reduced birth rate
* had a clear understanding of the economic benefits of a demographic dividend and increased working population
* understood the implications of an aging population or declining young population
* were able to effectively evaluate a named policy to change birth rates with specific case study information and positive and negative features of the policy
* demonstrated detailed knowledge of specific migration case studies and provided both named destination countries/regions and statistics specific to their chosen case study.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were not accurate in measuring grid references
* did not provide enough detail/specific points to reach the allocated marks for longer response questions in the longer mapping questions
* did not read the information in relation to what a wind rose shows, so inaccurately described particulate matter movements
* were vague or less specific in the type of fieldwork techniques, referring to air or water quality rather than specific data measure such as pH, particulates or turbidity
* seemed unclear about what data visualisations would show
* did not fully read question instructions such as referring to understanding of ecosystem services and resources
* did not refer to features shown on the physical map to explain population distribution
* misunderstood the command term evaluate, providing description of a policy
* lacked case study detail, most specifically in the migration question (8), and provided generalised information about the benefits for destination countries/regions which were applicable to any country. Many students also referred to both source and destination region.