2019 Geography Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s 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 Applications

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), and teachers have discretion in allocating word/ time limits to individual tasks.

The more successful responses commonly:

* used multimodal responses that allowed for more effective representation and analysis of data, including GIS, animated graphs and maps
* allowed a range of different topics covered with an element of student choice
* addressed three or fewer criteria which allowed students to develop the required depth, particularly in analysis and evaluation to meet the highest grade bands
* included concise writing with a focus on geographical processes and the use of relevant supporting evidence
* used annotations and extra information to enhance achievement outcomes
* used a wide variety of sources to support findings
* used diagrams to show a synthesis of ideas.

The less successful responses commonly:

* had tasks that attempt to address too many criteria
* had tasks that included requirements not directly linked to the performance standards
* lacked structure and clear purpose
* were descriptive and lacked meaningful explanation, analysis and evaluation
* had inappropriate word count allocations across the tasks
* lacked supporting evidence and/ or maps and graphs, and links to them within the text.

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 and may support this with information from secondary sources. They analyse patterns and geographical concepts from the data they have collected and may make recommendations 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.

The more successful responses commonly:

* included a variety of appropriate types of fieldwork techniques with substantial samples (with temporal and/or spatial variation) which allowed students to form meaningful analysis
* utilised effective spatial representations of data (either hand-drawn or using GIS generated maps) that were customised or developed by students rather than just a base map with limited or no extra
* incorporated geographical theory, research or concepts to support their analysis
* integrated data effectively with analysis to support findings
* used secondary data appropriately to support primary findings
* included effective graphs that were chosen appropriately to support their analysis
* used statistical testing to inform effective analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* lacked graphs and showed data only in tables
* were based almost exclusively on secondary data
* were descriptive in analysis and/ or lacked overall findings or conclusions
* did not include location maps or maps showing specific points of data collection
* were over-reliant on surveys or interviews as primary data
* were unclear on the specific methodology of the primary data collection methods
* lacked spatial representations of data.

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:

* had a strong understanding of mapping skills, including direction, interpretation of topographic maps and features. Students showed a high level of achievement in applying this knowledge when providing objections to the location of a shopping centre and examining routes within the map (Question 1 (a) (iii) and Question 1 (d))
* identified features of effective fieldwork data collection and explained further data to support the investigation (Question 2 (i) and (ii)) which was answered well by the majority of the students. Most were also able to identify relationship patterns between data to support hypotheses. A large number of responses also used the base map to identify the negative influence of major roads on liveability (Question 1 (iv))
* were able to provide a detailed understanding of how people could reduce their ecological footprint. While most students were able to provide good examples of this, only a few made direct links to how this influenced the amount of biologically active land used
* identified three outputs from the ecosystem diagram provided, showing an understanding of ecosystem resources. This was answered well by the majority of students
* showed an understanding of how increased ecosystem services could be affected by increased biodiversity. The best responses explained this explicitly with reference to examples from their studies
* were able to identify trends in fertility rates in countries with different levels of economic development from the graph
* had a detailed understanding of social and economic impacts of fertility change. While some students answered this fully, many responses did not appear to understand the distinction between social and economic factors
* were able to identify the difference in population structures and the implications of this on a location. Most students were strong in this area and provided a wide range of potential impacts
* explained two strategies to tackle potential population implications in Tasmania clearly and included a mixture of strategies to both increase birth rates and economically active populations. This was answered well by most students.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled to use command terms in the question to provide comprehensive answers. Relatively few students compared the two routes fully (Question 1 (d)), instead just provided descriptions of the two routes. Similarly, many students failed to evaluate the method of displaying fieldwork data (Question 2 (a) (iii)) and provided only positive features
* failed to show an understanding of scale and how it is calculated. Few students correctly stated the scale of the satellite image as a ratio, despite this being an easy calculation, being ten times larger than the map
* had a limited understanding of how to describe settlement patterns. When responding to Question 1 (c), very few students correctly identified all three aspects. Few students used terms such as dispersed, linear and clustered. A large number of responses explained the pattern which was not required
* failed to identify land area and size of the population as contributing factors towards ecological reserves and deficits (Question 4 (b)). Relatively few students explained this process successfully.