

1 September 2009

To: Head of centres

Cc : SQA Co-ordinator
Secondary schools and colleges
Education Authorities
HMIE

Action by Recipient
Response required
✓ Note and pass on
Note — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

NQ Geography

This briefing note is intended to offer practical advice and support on the issues being raised by centre staff with SQA and should be distributed to those staff responsible for Geography. It contains information about the following:

- 1. Advanced Higher Geography: Removal of word count in folio**
- 2. Advanced Higher and Higher Geography: Understanding Standards**
- 3. Access 3 Geography NAB (DF44 09/NAB001) Environmental Interactions**
- 4. Terminology used in exams**
- 5. Geography: Conditions and Arrangements**

1. Advanced Higher Geography: Removal of word count in folio

The removal of the word count in both the Geographical Study and the Geographical Issue essay is still being interpreted by some centres and candidates as implying that longer pieces of work than in previous years are now required. **This is not the case.** It remains perfectly likely that a candidate who writes between 1,500 and 2,000 words for the essay and 3,000 words for the study could obtain a very high mark. The removal of the word count was introduced to deal with difficulties Markers had encountered in its application. **There was no intention to suggest longer pieces of work are now necessary.** Candidates who significantly exceed the maximum limit of previous years will not be penalised but centres should reinforce to them that very lengthy studies and essays are not expected or required. Markers are looking for well presented, analytical pieces of work which have a sound geographical basis. The marking instructions make no reference to the word count and candidates are not required to write any more than around 1,500 – 2,000 words for the essay or 3,000 words for the study.

Should you require further clarification please contact either myself as detailed above or the Qualifications Officer responsible for Geography, Tahir Mohammed (tel: 0845 213 5499).

2. Advanced Higher and Higher Geography: Understanding Standards

Centres are reminded about the Understanding Standards website which can be accessed directly at www.understandingstandards.org.uk or through SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). This is an excellent resource for any candidate or teacher who wishes to understand more fully the standards required at these levels. Some teachers have found it a very useful tool for professional development.

3. Access 3 NAB (DF44 09/NAB001) Environmental Interactions

A minor change has been made to the marking instructions in the above NAB. This can be found in Question 1 (a) of the Environmental Hazards section on page 47, which now reads:

"1 mark for identifying Area B (1)."

The font for this NAB has been changed to Arial 12.

4. Terminology used in exams

As indicated in a previous update letter, Geography exams will re-introduce the 'developed' and 'developing' when distinguishing between the differing levels of the economic and social development of countries. The use of the word 'reference' in the titles of diagrams will be discontinued. These changes will be introduced in the 2010 exams.

5. Geography: Conditions and Arrangements

Minor changes have been made to the Geography Conditions and Arrangements documents. The updated versions are available SQA's website.

I trust that this information is of use to you. Should you wish any further advice about the content of this letter please contact me as indicated above.

Yours faithfully



Angela Baird
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Humanities and Social Sciences