

Our ref: GS/Geog/UL/1102

14 November 2002

To: SQA Co-ordinator  
Secondary Schools and FE Colleges

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None – update/information only

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Dear Colleague

### **National Qualifications Update - 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.

#### **1 Attached materials**

In the appendices to this letter there are some materials which SQA feels will be of use to centres staff responsible for Geography. These are as follows:

**Appendix 1: Geographical Issues – Advice on practice**

This document contains advice supplied by our Principal Assessor for Advanced Higher Geography on both good and bad practice in the preparation and production of these essays.

**Appendix 2: D240 13/NAB 001 Geographical Methods and Techniques – Sample Candidate Response**

A completed extract from this NAB showing an example of a high quality response by a candidate.

**Appendix 3: D242 13/NAB 001 Geographical Issues – Sample Candidate Response A**

A completed extract from the revised NAB showing an example of a high quality response by a candidate (Candidate A).

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**Appendix 4: D242 13/NAB 001 Geographical Issues – Sample Candidate Response B**

A completed extract from the revised NAB showing an example of a poor quality response by a candidate (Candidate B).

**Appendix 5: Senior Moderator's Comments**

Comments provided by SQA's Senior Moderator for Geography on the approaches adopted by Candidates A and B. Also, advice on providing teachers' comments, with examples of good and bad practice.

**2 Terminology**

It has come to SQA's attention that the terms 'ELDC' (Economically Less-Developed Country) and 'EMDC' (Economically More-Developed Country) are being used with increasing frequency amongst both staff and candidates, and are also commonly employed in some textbooks.

For this reason, and because these terms more accurately define these countries than previous terms ('Developing' or 'Developed' countries), SQA will now start to introduce the use of the terms 'ELDC' and 'EMDC'. Candidates at all levels should therefore be made aware of these terms and their meaning.

Please note that this does not mean that these new terms will now completely replace the previous terms in SQA documentation/Question Papers. Rather these two types of reference will both be employed alongside each other until further notification.

**3 Maps**

Paper copies of the latest editions of all course arrangements documents were recently despatched to all centres. Unfortunately, a slight error occurred in the arrangements for Advanced Higher Geography.

On page 8 of the arrangements it states that the maps used will be of the *Pathfinder Series*. This is incorrect. As detailed in the previous edition of the arrangements and in our last Geography Update letter (10<sup>th</sup> January 2002) the maps used from now on will be of the *Explorer Series*.

This has now been corrected centrally and on the SQA website, but the paper copies now in centres still carry this error. We would like to apologise for any inconvenience or distress this may have caused centre staff, and would stress once again that the maps used will be of the *Explorer Series*.

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#### 4 **New NABs**

All centres should now have received copies of the new Higher Geography NABs, which were produced to reflect the changes to internal assessment at this level. Centre staff are advised to read through these new NABs carefully, as several changes have been made to the procedural information as well as to the assessments and marking guidelines.

One particular change that has occurred following the review of these NABs is the reduction of cut-off scores from 60% to 50%. This brings Geography Higher internal assessment into line with that of other social subjects, and also reflects the fact that there is a greater degree of retention of knowledge required by these new holistic assessments than by the previous 'end-of-topic' tests.

All centres should note the instruction that, whilst 50% is the cut-off score to achieve a pass, NAB evidence in which the candidate has scored less than 60% (15/25) should not be submitted in support of an appeal. Candidates scoring between 50% and 60% will certainly have demonstrated enough ability to pass an internal assessment, but such evidence would not be substantial enough to support an appeal against the external exam.

At Advanced Higher, the NAB for Geographical Methods and Techniques has also been reissued, in order to streamline the content and help to reduce the burden of paperwork on centres. Please note that this is the only Advanced Higher NAB which has been revised for the start of Session 2002/2003. The NABs for the Geographical Study and Geographical Issues will not be reissued at this time.

*In all cases, centres must note that new or revised NABs supercede existing NABs. Previous NABs may **not** be used as unit assessments. Please note that at Higher level, **all** previous NABs have been replaced by the new NAB 1 & 2 for each unit (ie. NABs 3, 4 and 5 for these units have all been discontinued as valid unit assessments).*

#### 5 **Appeals**

At the time of writing, all centres should now have received the results of their stage 1 appeals, and for those appeals which were unsuccessful a feedback form will have been provided giving reasons.

*Please note that, whilst we hope to refine these forms and the feedback given in years to come, SQA staff are **not** in a position to give further information on any of the comments provided on this year's appeals.*

Centre-specific feedback aside, however, we would like to take this opportunity to offer some additional general advice on appeals specifically at Advanced Higher level.

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The Advanced Higher is by its nature a difficult course to generate appeals evidence for. As per SQA's published guidance on appeals, we require that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate candidates' performance in all aspects of the course. The fact that 80% of the external assessment at Advanced Higher is generated through coursework and fieldwork means that it is difficult to supply sufficient alternative evidence for these areas, since candidates will have spent most of their time throughout the year working on the original submission.

There are, however, some pieces of candidate work which are very useful to our examiners in considering appeals at this level:

- ◆ the candidate's field notebook (please note that this should *not* be sent in with the original submission, and should therefore be available in centres as appeals evidence)
- ◆ any individual field exercises the candidate has carried out (as opposed to group/class exercises, although work carried out as part of a larger group exercise may still be valid if the candidate's own contribution has been carried out separately from the group and represents the candidate's own individual efforts)
- ◆ earlier drafts of the Geographical Study or Issues that might include, for example, materials edited out for length, plans for work that was never actually carried out for whatever reason, or any indication of the candidate's thought processes in planning and organising their work
- ◆ any additional material completed after the deadline for submission or otherwise not included in the final submission.

## 6 Core Skills

Centres are advised that, following the changes made so far through NQ Review, our courses in Geography were re-evaluated for Core Skills. However, there has been no change to the embedded Core Skills at any level as a result of this re-evaluation.

I hope that the notes above and the materials attached are of help to you. If you have any queries about these or any other Geography-related issues please contact Greg Storey, the Qualifications Officer in this area, at the details given above.

Yours faithfully



Qualifications Manager

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Appendix 1

**Appendix 1**

## **Geographical Issues – Advice on practice**

The requirements of the Geographical Issues part of the Advanced Higher programme are demanding. Candidates must write 2 essays, which give critical evaluations of topics taken from themes selected from the applications areas in the Higher programme. This involves high level skills, which are the foundation of all work in higher education. These notes are intended to give guidance towards good practice, but should not be regarded as prescriptive.

### **1 Sources and viewpoints**

There is a list of sources in D242 13/NAB 001 (*Advanced Higher Geography: Geographical Issues – “Instruments of assessment”*) with which students and teachers will be familiar. Sources should be sufficiently substantial to allow the critical evaluation to be carried out. By substantial it is meant that the source include arguments, data, analysis and content which will allow candidates to assess the quality of the viewpoint and its geographical perspective (if any).

There must be three sources, but these do not have to occupy totally different perspectives on the issue. For example in considering the merits of a shopping development, one viewpoint (say that of the developer) may put forward arguments in favour of the development. Different arguments against the development might be put forward by traders elsewhere in the area and by local residents. It is unlikely that using 2 or even 3 sources that have very similar viewpoints and content will provide a good critical evaluation.

If further sources are used and these add to the critical evaluation these should be included in the text and bibliography. A bibliography specifying the sources in the standard manner is essential.

### **2 Choosing themes**

Selection of research theme is very important. Very broad themes, such as global destruction of rain forest, make evaluation difficult. Such broad themes generally lead the candidate to write a superficial and descriptive essay with little critical evaluation. The use of a particular example or case study, for which sources exist, will make a big difference to the potential for sound critical evaluation.

Good themes will readily lend themselves to critical evaluation by throwing up clearly different viewpoints on the issue, and data/arguments to support these viewpoints. Viewpoints should be related to geographical perspectives on the research theme, or be given a geographical context by the candidate.

If a centre identifies a range of good themes and sources, it is quite proper for these to be used by more than one candidate and in successive years, providing that the critical evaluation submitted is that of the individual candidate. Teachers should be prepared to give support and advice on choosing themes, which lead to good sources, but ultimately at this level the final choice must be that of the candidate.

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## Appendix 1

### 3 Using the sources

Acquiring good sources is an important part of the whole exercise. Teachers should be prepared to give guidance, support and feedback on the nature and quality of the sources. However, an important part of this whole exercise is that the candidate should select and develop sources and viewpoints for her/himself. Critical evaluation revolves around analysis of the argument advanced in the source. To do this, for each source, the candidate should:

- ◆ Examine the quality of data presented in the argument
- ◆ Examine the quality of analysis of data
- ◆ Examine the conclusions drawn and whether these are supported & justified
- ◆ Examine whether the source has a theoretical basis
- ◆ Assess how well expressed and argued is the source
- ◆ Make an assessment of the extent to which the source objective or is expressed from a particular viewpoint
- ◆ Refer to previous knowledge of Higher and Advanced Higher

### 4 Content & Structure

This is expected to be of a high standard. The text should read well, and be error free. Word processed essays are easier to read and nearly all candidates submit in this form. However, there will be no penalty for a hand-written submission that is produced to a high standard of legibility. Remember that it is not sufficient to run a spell check over the final submitted essay – it must be proof-read carefully too. The essay needs to be properly structured, and there must be a conclusion that draws together the critical arguments.

Use the following checklist, which, however, is not a prescription:

- ◆ The essay should have carefully written, organised and clearly expressed text
- ◆ The essay should use diagrams where appropriate. Credit will be given for relevant and effective use of diagrams. The source(s) of diagrams must be acknowledged.
- ◆ The essay must cite all sources properly (this includes all sources consulted, all work cited or referred to in the text and web sites as well as text sources)
- ◆ The essay should develop explicitly the critical assessment, citing theory & evidence (based on examination of the sources)
- ◆ The essay should evaluate the quality & perspective of the sources. This is important and relatively few candidates do this explicitly. Is the source partial? (taking sides/polemic); how well are the arguments made in the source?; how do the arguments made in the source relate to geographical perspectives and theories? (the candidate should base this on her/his own experience and expertise)

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## Appendix 1

### 5 **Assessment**

Listed below are the criteria used by markers (equally weighted). This may be helpful to candidates and teachers in giving guidance as to what examiners assess in arriving at the mark for each essay.

- ◆ Presentation
- ◆ Content and Research
- ◆ Geographical Approach and Relevance
- ◆ Critical evaluation

### 6 **Penalties**

Candidates should be aware that there is a standard penalty of 10% of the marks available, which will be applied to submissions that are over the prescribed length. The over-length penalty will be applied to the mark for that one essay.

There will be a broad interpretation of the requirement that the two critical evaluations should be based on themes from the human and physical areas respectively in the Higher Geography Applications topics. However, blatant breaches of this will result in low or even zero marks in the 'Geographical Approach and Relevance' element of the marking scheme.

### 7 **Examples of good themes for critical evaluations**

The following should not be regarded as prescriptive and have been deliberately framed generally. These topics should be used as indicators of themes, which could provide good bases for critical evaluation.

- ◆ The siting of a housing or shopping development in a controversial location (sub-urban/rural setting)
- ◆ A development or issue (eg quarry, wind-farm, transport development) in a National Park or other area of conservation or scenic importance
- ◆ Management of coastal erosion or river flooding (eg engineered v. non-engineered solutions, or do nothing)
- ◆ Case study of different types of development programmes in a Less Economically-Developed Country (LEDC), or region within a large country
- ◆ Conflicts between different types of land use (eg farming, forestry, conservation, recreation etc) in a particular rural area.
- ◆ Causes of desertification in a particular part of the Sahel

Construction of a new or improved road (which may include arguments for not building the road and investing in public transport alternatives as well as consideration of environmental impacts and economic or environmental benefits).

# SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

## Candidate record sheet

## Appendix 2

### Geographical methods and techniques

**Candidate's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

As you work your way through the methods and techniques you have selected, you should complete this record sheet by ticking the appropriate boxes below.

#### Fieldwork methods and techniques:

##### 1 *Physical methods and techniques*

- |                       |                          |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Morphological mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> | Meteorology in a local setting    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Vegetation sampling   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Soil profiles and characteristics | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Slope analysis        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pebble analysis                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|                       |                          | Stream analysis                   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

##### 2 *Human methods and techniques*

- |   |                                     |                            |                          |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rural land use mapping                                | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Use of secondary sources   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Urban land use mapping                                | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Reilly's gravity law       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Traffic, pedestrian and environmental quality surveys | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Huff's probability model   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Questionnaire design and implementation               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Nearest neighbour analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> |

##### 3 *Statistical awareness*

**Set of data:**

(Briefly indicate the source of the data.)

Pebble Analysis: class fieldwork on beach at.....

Transect used to gather pebbles. Carried out in small group but individual records made.

OR

Questionnaire: questionnaire compiled to establish sphere of influence/visitor satisfaction of tourists visiting the beach. Individual study for unit 2.

**Statistical technique(s):**

**Sampling**

e.g. pebble analysis above acceptable

- |        |                          |            |                                     |            |                          |
|--------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Random | <input type="checkbox"/> | Systematic | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Stratified | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|

**Handling different data types**

- |         |                          |         |                          |          |                          |
|---------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Nominal | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ordinal | <input type="checkbox"/> | Interval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|

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Appendix 2

# SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

## Graphical presentation of data

- |                        |                          |                     |                          |              |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Systems diagrams       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Triangular graphs   | <input type="checkbox"/> |              |                          |
| Logarithmic            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dispersion diagrams | <input type="checkbox"/> |              |                          |
| Kite and scattergraphs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bipolar analysis    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Polar graphs | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Descriptive statistics

- |                    |                          |                            |                          |          |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Standard deviation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Standard error of the mean | <input type="checkbox"/> | Variance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|

## Introductory statistical testing

- |                   |                          |  |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Nearest neighbour | <input type="checkbox"/> | Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient or       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student's t-test  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Chi-square        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Linear regression                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## 4 *Production and interpretation of maps and diagrams*

### (a) Production of maps and diagrams

- |                 |                          |                              |                          |              |                                     |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Dot maps        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Proportional symbols         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Isoline maps | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Choropleth maps | <input type="checkbox"/> | Divided proportional symbols | <input type="checkbox"/> | Flow maps    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### (b) Interpretation of maps and diagrams      eg visitor origins to beach above

State techniques used:

1:25000 O.S. map of .....used to investigate different valley shapes along river course. Annotated cross sections drawn at intervals to establish if valley shape conforms to that expected along typical river profile. Description + analysis of findings written up.

**Candidate's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Teacher's/lecturer's comment

Candidate benefitted from group work in parts 1 to 3 although individual records kept very systematically. Questionnaire became part of Unit 2 and was designed by pupil. 60 questionnaires asked on holiday weekend. Part 4b class exercise carried out under controlled conditions after general discussion about techniques which would be appropriate.

Unit achieved/~~not achieved~~:

Teacher's/lecturer's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

## Candidate planning and analysis record

## Appendix 3

### Critical evaluation 1

As you work your way through your investigation, you should complete this planning and analysis record sheet which will be assessed using a teacher/lecturer checklist.

Name of candidate: Candidate A

(a) Choice of issue:

River Basin Management in the Colorado catchment area

(b) Specific research question (Title of critical evaluation):

How sustainable are the current rates of water extraction from the Colorado and its catchment area?

(c) Different viewpoints identified:

- 1 Extraction rates are already having a serious impact on the hydrology and ecology of the Lower Colorado Basin
- 2 Water transfer schemes from other river basins can compensate for water use.
- 3 Current rates of extraction may be sustainable if more recycling of water is undertaken.

Comment (for example, on range or diversity of viewpoints, amount of support for different views, difficulty in identifying points of view):

Viewpoint 2 tended to be supported by commercial interests and their views suggested that problems existed but that they could only be solved by further investment.  
Viewpoints 1 and 3 were easier to find examples of and these came mostly from academics and conservation groups

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Appendix 3

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

(d) List of sources used in investigation

(i) Please tick if appropriate and identify specific references.

**Sources used**

**Identify specific references such as which journals, textbooks, newspapers (title, date, volume, number etc.)**

Textbooks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	[details of 2 key texts provided]
Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Journals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	[title and source of key article]
Interviewees/Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Maps, photographs, sketches	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CD-ROM	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Video	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Oases in the Desert – Geography program
Internet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	[two key website addresses given]
Others (please specify and attach a copy to this record)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion with university lecturer ----- who specialises in hydrology issues.

(ii) Careful record of sources is kept:

Yes                       No

Record of all sources kept on database. Those will be listed in bibliography.

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Appendix 3

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

(e) Summary of each source's viewpoints on the issue:

*Be brief – only a few sentences outlining the specific stance(s) or point(s) of view taken by each source are required here.*

Source 1

Extraction rates are growing at an almost uncontrolled pace and the water table is now so deep that desert flora is dying. Despite increasing diversion schemes annual rate of discharge of the Colorado is decreasing.

Source 2

Construction of further aqueducts within the states through which Colorado flows will easily meet the demands for water. It may be necessary to increase water charges to fund this and make a return on the investment.

(If you have more than 3 sources, this page can be photocopied to provide additional pages)

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Appendix 3

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

Source 3

A lot of water is wasted. Research suggests that water loss from aqueducts due to evaporation could be greatly reduced. If this was done extraction rates could be reduced. It will be expensive. Better management is required.

(f) Which position on this issue do you support? Briefly give your reason(s).

The evidence shows that there is a problem but better management of current water scheme might allow further extraction to be at sustainable rates. The consumers are going to have to pay for this or sustainability will be in question.



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Appendix 4

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

(d) List of sources used in investigation

(i) Please tick if appropriate and identify specific references.

**Sources used**

**Identify specific references such as  
which journals, textbooks, newspapers  
(title, date, volume, number etc.)**

Textbooks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Journals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interviewees/Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maps, photographs, sketches	<input type="checkbox"/>
CD-ROM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Video	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify and attach a copy to this record)	<input type="checkbox"/>

(ii) Careful record of sources is kept:

Yes  No

See bibliography.

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Appendix 4

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

(e) Summary of each source's viewpoints on the issue:

*Be brief – only a few sentences outlining the specific stance(s) or point(s) of view taken by each source are required here.*

Source 1

The river is silting up and HEP schemes are producing less.

Source 2

Water is needed to maintain standards of living in places like Phoenix.

(If you have more than 3 sources, this page can be photocopied to provide additional pages)

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Appendix 4

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE RESPONSE

Source 3

Transfer schemes to bring water from others areas are being constructed.

- (f) Which position on this issue do you support? Briefly give your reason(s).

I think that more water should be brought in to make sure that living standards continue to improve.

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Appendix 5

**Appendix 5**

### **Senior Moderator's Comments**

#### **Candidates A and B**

Candidate A has approached the topic from the point of view that there is an issue involved whereas Candidate B merely seems to be researching a set of facts. He/she does not appear to have an idea what he/she is going to discover.

The ongoing commentary provided by A is doing more than simply summarising his/her reading and appears to be making judgements as research progresses. The conclusion reached clearly shows some personal reflection on the issue rather than being a series of unsupported statements.

Candidate A's record is certainly a Pass.

Candidate B's account is insufficient and would be considered a Fail unless supported by convincing evidence either from the teacher and/or in the form of notes that have been gathered during research.

#### **Teacher Comments**

The comments must contain a *brief* history of the process and some justification for the judgement being made. The example of an unhelpful comment below would not support a weak Candidate Record but in itself would not be grounds for failing a candidate.

Teachers/lecturers are referred to paragraph 3 of the "Introduction to the NAB" in which examples of supporting evidence which could be submitted along with the NAB are provided. At most, these would consist of photocopies of a sample of candidate work.

#### **Examples:**

##### *Helpful Overall Comment:*

After lengthy discussion a suitable research topic was agreed upon. A lot of help was required at first to assist the candidate to identify viewpoints. Research was undertaken diligently and I was able to monitor this progress during tutorial periods. The candidate had difficulty sourcing different viewpoints and has produced draft notes and summaries of his/her reading so far. The critical evaluation is proceeding successfully and although the use of source 3 is limited I am satisfied that he/she will be able to produce a well balanced evaluation in which an understanding of the issues is obvious.

##### *Insufficient/Unhelpful Comment:*

Candidate was very enthusiastic about this evaluation and was able to work independently on it.