

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

CODE DF49 13

COURSE Geography (Advanced Higher)

SUMMARY

By studying a geographical issue, this Unit develops the skill of critical thinking through the evaluation of viewpoints taken from different sources. In developing the skills of evaluating viewpoints candidates will, through in depth reading and discussion, increase their knowledge and understanding of the key geographical issues related to the study/studies they undertake. This knowledge and understanding will concentrate on one or more topics as listed in Appendix 1 to this Unit. Candidates who have previously studied geography at Higher level might extend their geographical knowledge by continuing with the study of any topics covered at that level. However, their knowledge could be extended in other areas if this is considered appropriate.

The aims of this Unit are to develop an ability to:

- ◆ objectively describe and summarise viewpoints about a key geographical issue
- ◆ produce an evaluation, from a geographical perspective, which shows an understanding of differing viewpoints
- ◆ produce a reasoned and critical evaluation which balances sources with each other taking account of credibility and objectivity
- ◆ produce a reasoned conclusion which expresses the candidate's view about a key geographical issue

The issue studied for this Unit should relate to one or more of the topics listed in Appendix 1.

Administrative Information

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

OUTCOMES

- a) Identify and summarise viewpoints which deal with a key geographical issue.
- b) Critically evaluate viewpoints taken from different sources which deal with a key geographical issue.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates will normally be expected to have attained one of the following or equivalent:

- ◆ the Course at Higher Geography
- ◆ one or more of the Units at Higher Geography
- ◆ the Course or Units in other social subjects at Higher or Advanced Higher level

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Advanced Higher (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.

CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components within this Unit.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Identify and summarise viewpoints which deal with a key geographical issue.

Performance Criteria

- a) Objectively describe each viewpoint.
- b) Summarise each of the viewpoints with reference to all forms of information used in the presentation of the viewpoint.

OUTCOME 2

Critically evaluate viewpoints taken from different sources which deal with a key geographical issue.

Performance Criteria

- a) Make use of geographical terms, concepts and ideas appropriate to the issue being studied to show an understanding of the viewpoints.
- b) Describe the degree of objectivity of the sources in relation to the environmental issue by assessing the credibility and balance of the viewpoints.
- c) Reach a reasoned conclusion about which of the viewpoints considered to be the most compelling.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNIT

Candidates are required to produce a critical evaluation about a geographical issue. This should be produced under controlled and supervised conditions without the assistance of additional resources in a maximum of one hour. The critical evaluation will be based on sources containing differing viewpoints about a particular geographical issue. The issue will be related to topics in Appendix 1 of this Unit, namely:

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ◆ Atmosphere | ◆ Population Geography | ◆ Rural land resources |
| ◆ Hydrosphere | ◆ Rural Geography | ◆ Rural land degradation |
| ◆ Lithosphere | ◆ Industrial Geography | ◆ River basin management |
| ◆ Biosphere | ◆ Urban Geography | ◆ Urban change and its management |
| | | ◆ European regional inequalities |
| | | ◆ Development and health |

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

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The viewpoints do not need to be radically different from each other or even necessarily opposed, but they should provide sufficient variation for candidates to write a critical evaluation.

The critical evaluation of viewpoints should contain:

- ◆ an objective description and summary of each viewpoint
- ◆ an evaluation, from a geographical perspective, which shows an understanding of each viewpoint
- ◆ a reasoned evaluation which balances the sources with each other taking account of credibility and objectivity
- ◆ a reasoned conclusion which expresses the candidate's view about which if any is considered to be the most compelling viewpoint

The standard to be applied is illustrated in the National Assessment Bank item available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessment for this Unit, it should be of a comfortable standard.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

This Unit is one of three mandatory Units which together make up the Course in Advanced Higher Geography. The other Units are the *Geographical Methods and Techniques* Unit and the *Geographical Study* Unit.

The issue studied in this Unit should relate to one or more of the topics listed in Appendix 1.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates are likely to be taking this Unit in a variety of circumstances:

- ◆ the critical evaluation essay will be completed as part of the Course
- ◆ the initial intention is to complete the critical evaluation essay but the final product is not produced
- ◆ the Unit is seen as an end point and the development of the skill of critical evaluation is restricted to sources and viewpoints provided

Learning experiences

Teaching order

Both Unit and Course assessment focus on the topics as listed in Appendix 1. The topics centres may choose to focus on in this Unit are, therefore both content and context free. Centres should base their teaching around one or more of these topics. The opportunity to use this content and context free, to the teaching of the skills required to produce a critical evaluation, may be taken by teachers/lecturers to extend the knowledge base of candidates in the selected areas of study. This extended knowledge should assist candidates to prepare for both the Unit and Course assessment of this Unit.

Methodology

The methodology used by teachers/lecturers will be built on existing good practice. Teacher/lecturer exposition and note-taking from textbooks, information sheets and a wide variety of other resources may form the basis of class work in this Unit. Individual and group discussion may reinforce this. This work might focus on one or more of the topics in the course arrangements at Higher. Beyond this, opportunities for extension work, gaining access to a variety of sources of information, fieldwork, independent reading and resource based learning should be made available, as appropriate, to individuals and groups. Independent learning may, instead of direct teacher/lecturer input, form the basis of a considerable part of the candidate's study time at Advanced Higher. Formal and informal group work could be used as an approach to learning where dialogue and interactions between candidates and between candidates and teachers/lecturers would be possible.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

Further advice on approaches to the teaching of this Unit is available in ‘*Geography: Flexible Learning Resource Pack (Advanced Higher)*’, ‘*Geographical Issues; Annotated Bibliographies: Advanced Higher*’ and ‘*Geographical Methods and Techniques: Statistical Awareness – Staff Briefing and Student Notes*’ produced by Learning and Teaching Scotland. These and other useful support materials are available on the website www.LTScotland.org.uk/nq.

Skills and learning experiences

The development of skills of researching and producing critical evaluations of these viewpoints is a key aspect of this Unit. While the Unit Outcomes do not require candidates to carry out a full critical evaluation in which an essay is researched and produced, centres would be advised to ensure that candidates receive training as part of their learning experiences in all of the skills necessary for the production of such an essay. Teaching, therefore, should provide opportunities for candidates to receive advice on the sourcing of viewpoints, and the skills required to summarise and synthesize viewpoints. In addition to the skills of sourcing and summarising, advice should be given to candidates about structuring of critical evaluation essays and writing conclusions. It is recommended, therefore, that centres consider basing their teaching in this Unit around more than one issue or environmental interaction.

In planning the teaching of this Unit centres should ensure that the key skills and experiences referred to in the Unit summary and evidence requirements are built in to the work programme. Candidates should be:

- ◆ engaging in wide ranging independent reading relevant to their geographical issue
- ◆ making use of relevant terminology, and advanced skills, concepts and ideas
- ◆ collecting, extracting, interpreting, analysing and presenting geographical evidence
- ◆ gathering and systematically recording information derived from a variety of appropriate sources, such as maps, books, notes, graphs, statistics and audio visual materials
- ◆ aware of the type of information it is necessary to retain to write comprehensive bibliographies
- ◆ developing the skills of extended communication in the form of critical evaluations/essays; opportunities should be provided for revising and redrafting of extended writing following critical review
- ◆ taking part in formal and informal discussion and debate based on, and informed by, geographical evidence and knowledge, in order to develop the ability to think independently and make informed judgements
- ◆ developing individual and independent learning skills, especially those relating to the preparation and writing of a critical evaluation

Opportunities for extension, remediation and consolidation should be built into the Unit; how this is organised will depend on the teaching approach. Time should be allowed for remediation and revisiting of Unit assessments where Outcomes have not been achieved.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

In order to achieve certification in this Unit, candidates are required to produce a critical evaluation which provides evidence of achievement of both Outcomes and related Performance Criteria. This critical evaluation will be completed under controlled conditions lasting a maximum of one hour. Centres may choose to use an instrument of assessment for this purpose provided in the NAB or may, if they wish, devise their own instruments of assessment. Where this happens centres are advised to seek prior moderation from SQA of the instrument of assessment they plan to use.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

In the assessment of the Unit candidates are provided (in the NAB) with sources containing viewpoints about an issue linked to topics listed in the Higher Geography Course Arrangements. The Outcomes of the Unit focus clearly on the ability of candidates to describe and critically evaluate these viewpoints. This, more than the candidates' own opinions about the issue, is the key element of the critical evaluation. As candidates work toward the point at which they should be able to demonstrate these skills, they should be developing some of the skills required to produce the critical evaluation essay required for the Course assessment. The additional skills of independently sourcing viewpoints, analysing these and writing more extended evaluations is likely to be developed at the same time.

Candidates are not required to show the full range of skills in Unit assessment that are required for Course assessment. A grid showing the differences between Unit and Course assessment demands is provided as part of the support notes in the Course Specification.

The Unit assessment for this Unit will take place within a period of 1 hour 15 minutes. It is expected, though not mandatory, that candidates will take up to 15 minutes of this time to absorb and reflect on the viewpoints with which they are presented. Within the remaining time candidates should be able to produce an evaluation which adequately shows their ability to meet all of the Performance Criteria of the Unit. Evaluations which are very brief are unlikely to meet these criteria but the brevity of an essay will not be considered as grounds for failing a candidate.

Where the candidate fails to provide evidence of satisfactory completion of an Outcome or Performance Criteria, he/she should, after discussion and remediation, have a further opportunity for reassessment. This can either take the form of a completely different assessment or a reworking of the failed Outcome/Performance Criteria.

For those centres studying this Unit as part of the Course, candidates should be selecting, with teacher/lecturer guidance, their own topic on which to carry out a critical evaluation of viewpoints contained in different sources. The candidate should then use the skills developed in preparation for the Unit assessment to write an extended essay maximum 12 A4 pages or equivalent which will be used for the Course Assessment to critically evaluate these sources and their viewpoints.

CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for this Course. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

APPENDIX 1

Geographical Issues

The geographical issue(s) which are studied within this Unit should be related to the list of topics below. Any areal context is acceptable and the issue(s) chosen can exhibit elements of more than one of the specified environmental interactions. Opportunities should be taken throughout to emphasize the linkages between physical and human geography and the holistic nature of the subject. Through the study of a geographical issue(s) this Unit requires candidates to identify, summarise, synthesise and evaluate viewpoints from different sources.

An expanded list of these topics is provided below.

Atmosphere

The characteristics of the atmosphere vary spatially and provide climate and weather conditions which interlink with other systems.

Hydrosphere

The water cycle, which constitutes a major physical system, operates on a variety of scales. On the Earth's surface, the movement of water is a major agent in the formation of landforms and landscapes.

Lithosphere

The lithosphere displays a range of landforms and patterns which can be explained by reference to a variety of processes on different scales.

Biosphere

Soils and vegetation can be viewed as ecosystems, which are a set of interacting components.

Population geography

Population change and structure vary spatially and over time. The reasons for change are complex and involve human and environmental factors.

Rural geography

Rural populations are involved in a variety of agricultural systems. These systems and associated landscapes are subject to change.

Industrial geography

Areas of industrial concentration contain a range of manufacturing and other economic activities. These concentrations develop and change spatially over time. This section should be studied with reference to one or more industrial concentrations within the European Union.

Urban geography

Urban settlements provide a range of employment, services and residential opportunities which may be located in different parts of the settlement. This section should be studied with reference to one large urban concentration from an EMDC.

Rural land resources

Rural land resources are the product of the interaction of a wide range of physical factors modified by human activity. The resultant rural landscapes offer a variety of physical, economic and social opportunities.

APPENDIX 1(cont)

Rural land degradation

Rural land resources are subject to degradation, which may be the result of natural processes, human activity, or a combination of both. The decline in land productivity and other consequences of land degradation have direct social and economic consequences and have led to the development of soil conservation and land management strategies.

River basin management

Within river basins, water control projects are undertaken for a variety of reasons and on a range of scales. These projects are examples of human interference with systems, especially hydrological systems. The changes often have both beneficial and adverse consequences.

Urban change and its management

Large urban concentrations are characteristic of many countries. The urban environment of these concentrations changes in response to a wide range of environmental, social, economic, technological and political factors.

European regional inequalities

Regional inequalities on a variety of scales are a feature of the contemporary world. There is a variety of physical, social, and economic reasons for these spatial disparities. Within the European Union, policies are developed at national and international levels to reduce inequalities.

Development and health

Inequality of social and economic development is a major feature of the contemporary world. It exists on various scales and is measurable in several ways. Levels of health and the incidence of disease are major indicators of levels of development. Such indicators may be explained geographically by reference to a variety of interacting processes.