



Advanced Higher  
Course Assessment  
Specification



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# Advanced Higher Geography Course Assessment Specification (C733 77)

**Valid from August 2015**

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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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## Course outline

|                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Course title:</b>           | Advanced Higher Geography |
| <b>SCQF level:</b>             | 7 (32 SCQF credit points) |
| <b>Course code:</b>            | C733 77                   |
| <b>Course assessment code:</b> | X733 77                   |

The purpose of the Course Assessment Specification is to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the Course assessment and the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed.

### Course assessment structure

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Component 1 — question paper | 50 marks         |
| Component 2 — project-folio  | 100 marks        |
| <b>Total marks</b>           | <b>150 marks</b> |

This Course includes eight SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course.

### Equality and inclusion

This Course Assessment Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the Assessment Arrangements web page: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html).

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment of this Course is provided in the *Course/Unit Support Notes*.

# Assessment

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of the Units as well as the Course assessment. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

## Course assessment

SQA will produce and give instructions for the production and conduct of Course assessments based on the information provided in this document.

## Added value

The purpose of the Course assessment is to assess added value of the Course as well as confirming attainment in the Course and providing a grade. The added value for the Course will address the key purposes and aims of the Course, as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge, or application.

In this Course assessment, added value will focus on the following:

- ◆ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This added value consists of:

- ◆ Drawing on, extending and applying the skills, knowledge and understanding the learner has acquired during the Course. This will be assessed by a question paper and a project-folio.
- ◆ Demonstrating depth of knowledge and understanding and application of skills in the question paper. This will sample knowledge and understanding from the mandatory content of the Course and will require the application of skills.
- ◆ Demonstrating challenge and application in the project-folio. This will demonstrate independent research and critical evaluation through the submission of a geographical project consisting of Project-folio Section A: Geographical Study and Project-folio Section B: Geographical Issues.

## Grading

Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

The Course assessment is graded A–D. The grade is determined on the basis of the total mark for all Course assessments together.

A learner's overall grade will be determined by their performance across the Course assessment.

### Grade description for C

For the award of Grade C, learners will have demonstrated successful performance in all of the Units of the Course. In the Course assessment, learners will typically have

demonstrated successful performance in relation to the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course.

**Grade description for A**

For the award of Grade A, learners will have demonstrated successful performance in all of the Units of the Course. In the Course assessment, learners will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course.

**Credit**

To take account of the extended range of learning and teaching approaches, remediation, consolidation of learning and integration needed for preparation for external assessment, six SCQF credit points are available in Courses at National 5 and Higher, and eight SCQF credit points in Courses at Advanced Higher. These points will be awarded when a grade D or better is achieved.

## Structure and coverage of the Course assessment

The Course assessment will consist of two Components: a question paper and a project-folio.

### Component 1 — question paper

The purpose of the question paper is to demonstrate application of skills and breadth of knowledge and understanding from across the Course by sampling from the mandatory information on Course coverage.

This question paper will give learners an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills and knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ knowledge of a wide range of geographical methods and techniques and understanding of the contexts in which they ought to be used
- ◆ application of a wide range of geographical methods and techniques including mapping skills, research /fieldwork skills, graphical techniques and statistical techniques for analysing and interpreting geographical data

The question paper will be marked out of 50.

The questions or sub-questions will cover the three skill areas of Map Interpretation, Gathering and Processing Techniques, and Geographical Data Handling using relevant accompanying supplementary items.

The centre must provide an atlas for each learner for use in the examination. It should be suitable for use at SCQF level 7 and be of a general type (ie not devoted to one region or purely thematic).

Questions within the paper may focus on one particular skill area or they may integrate more than one skill area.

Candidates will answer all questions.

#### **Map Interpretation** (20 marks)

Questions will assess mapping skills techniques and the ability to use map evidence to support a response. Candidates will use a 1:25000 scale Ordnance Survey map and other supplementary items.

#### **Gathering and Processing Techniques** (10 marks)

Questions will assess knowledge and understanding of gathering and processing techniques in the context of research/fieldwork, and the analysis/evaluation of data which might be obtained as a result of using those techniques. Questions **may** use the supplementary items supplied with the question paper.

(Candidates will not be asked to carry out calculations or complete tables of data in the question paper. These are assessed at Unit level and in the project.)

#### **Geographical Data Handling** (20 marks)

Questions will assess the interpretation and analysis of a given set of data, including statistical data, to evaluate techniques used and their effectiveness in explaining geographical relationships. Questions will use the supplementary items supplied with the question paper.

Questions will draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding described in the 'Further mandatory information on Course coverage' section.

Questions will require candidates to integrate geographical skills in order to explain, analyse and evaluate information, in order to structure a response.

### **Component 2 — project-folio**

The purpose of this project-folio is to demonstrate challenge and application by demonstrating skills, knowledge and understanding through undertaking independent research into a geographical study and a current complex geographical issue. The project-folio of Coursework in two Sections comprises:

- ◆ Project-folio Section A: Geographical Study — a detailed study based on geographical research
- ◆ Project-folio Section B: Geographical Issue — a critical evaluation of an issue from a geographical perspective

This project will give learners an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ independent research/fieldwork
- ◆ the application of a wide range of geographical methods and techniques
- ◆ the integration of a wide range of geographic skills
- ◆ the critical evaluation of a current complex geographical issue using a wide range of sources and viewpoints

The project-folio will have 100 marks. The total mark will be distributed as follows:

- ◆ project-folio Section A: Geographical Study — 60marks
- ◆ Project-folio Section B: Geographical Issue — 40 marks

**Project-folio Section A: Geographical Study** — the candidate is required to demonstrate the ability to undertake detailed research of a geographical nature which uses primary and/or secondary sources, to gather and process data and which reports findings appropriately.

In order to complete Geographical Study, candidates will:

- ◆ justify the choice of a complex geographical topic to research
- ◆ plan and carry out detailed research, which could include fieldwork
- ◆ evaluate the research techniques and the reliability of data gathered
- ◆ demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied from wider reading
- ◆ use a wide range of appropriate techniques to process the gathered information
- ◆ analyse all the information that has been gathered and processed to identify and explain relationships
- ◆ reach reasoned conclusions supported by a wide range of evidence

The word count for the completed geographical study should not be more than 3,000 words in length (excluding any text used on front covers, list of contents, annotations to

any illustrations, references, bibliography, appendices). The word count must be submitted by the candidate with the completed project-folio (study).

**Project-folio Section B: Geographical Issue** — the candidate is required to demonstrate the ability to carry out a critical evaluation of a current complex geographical issue by identifying viewpoints, from a wide range of sources, about the issue and evaluating these viewpoints in a way that allows valid conclusions to be drawn.

In order to complete a Geographical Issue, candidates will:

- ◆ justify the choice of a current complex geographical issue to critically evaluate
- ◆ undertake wider background reading from a wide range of sources relating to the geographical issue
- ◆ summarise a wide range of viewpoints on the complex geographical issue
- ◆ critically evaluate each of the viewpoints
- ◆ reach reasoned conclusions supported by a wide range of evidence

The word count for the completed geographical issue should not be between more than 1,800 words in length (excluding any text used on front covers, list of contents, annotations to any illustrations, references, bibliography, appendices). The word count must be submitted by the candidate with the completed project-folio (issue).

## **Setting, conducting and marking of assessment**

### **Question paper**

This question paper will be set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Learners will complete this in 2 hours and 30 minutes.

All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

### **Controlled assessment — project-folio**

The project-folio will be managed by centres within SQA guidelines and will be conducted under some supervision and control. The evidence for assessment will be produced independently by the learner in time to meet a submission date set by SQA.

All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

## Further mandatory information on Course coverage

The following gives details of mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Advanced Higher Geography Course. The question paper will sample skills, knowledge and understanding.

Candidates will study three skill areas:

- ◆ map interpretation
- ◆ gathering and processing techniques
- ◆ geographical data handling

**Map interpretation:** the candidate will be expected to demonstrate mapping skills techniques through their ability to use evidence from maps and other supplementary items to support a response. 1:25000 scale Ordnance Survey (OS) *Explorer Series* topographical sheets of England and Wales will be used. Although assessing the skills of map interpretation, it is anticipated that candidates will apply prior knowledge of map reading and interpretation to these questions, eg use of scale, drawing to scale, interpretation of relief and surface features, etc. This will also include grid references and reference to features symbolised on the map.

In addition to the OS map, supplementary items will be provided in the form of one or more of the following: maps or map-based diagrams, photographs, sketches, graphical information or outline drawings or drawings based on photographs, data tables and written text about the area.

**Gathering and processing techniques:** the candidate will be expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of gathering and processing techniques in the context of research/fieldwork, and the analysis/evaluation of data which might be obtained as a result of using those techniques. Questions **may** use the supplementary items supplied with the question paper.

(Candidates will not be asked to carry out calculations or complete tables of data in the question paper. These are assessed at Unit level and in the project-folio.)

The question paper will sample from the following skills and techniques:

### a) Physical

- ◆ beach profile analysis
- ◆ micro-climate analysis
- ◆ pebble analysis
- ◆ slope analysis
- ◆ soil analysis
- ◆ stream analysis
- ◆ vegetation analysis

### b) Human

- ◆ environmental quality survey
- ◆ interview design and implementation
- ◆ pedestrian survey
- ◆ perception studies
- ◆ questionnaire design and implementation
- ◆ rural land use mapping

- ◆ traffic survey
- ◆ urban land use mapping

**Geographical data handling:** candidates will be expected to interpret and analyse a given set of data, including statistical data, to evaluate any techniques used and their effectiveness in order to explain geographical relationships. Questions will use the supplementary items supplied with the question paper.

The question paper will sample from the following skills and techniques:

- ◆ Handling different data types — nominal, ordinal, interval
- ◆ Sampling methods — random, regular, stratified
- ◆ Graphical presentation of data — bipolar analysis, dispersion diagram, kite diagram, logarithmic graph, polar graph, systems diagrams, scattergraph, triangular graph
- ◆ Map or map-based diagram — annotated overlay, choropleth map, cross-section, dot map, flow line map, isoline map, proportional symbols, sphere of influence map, transect
- ◆ Descriptive statistics
  - measures of central tendency — mean, median, mode
  - measures of dispersion — range, interquartile range, standard deviation, standard error of the mean, coefficient of variation
- ◆ Inferential statistics: chi squared analysis, linear regression analysis, nearest neighbour analysis, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

### **Use of an atlas**

The centre must provide an atlas for each learner for use in the examination. It should be suitable for use at SCQF level 7 and be of a general type (ie not devoted to one region or purely thematic). An atlas is a very valuable resource and will help candidates locate the OS map extract in its broader setting and provide thematic information for questions. Centres are responsible for ensuring that atlases used are clean copies and contain no additional material.

# Administrative information

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## History of changes to Course Assessment Specification

| Course details | Version | Description of change   | Authorised by                      | Date       |
|----------------|---------|---|------------------------------------|------------|
|                | 1.1     | Changes to wording in bullet points in 'Added value' section to improve accuracy and clarity.<br>Information added on Question Paper structure, coverage and mark allocations.<br>Information added on project-folio requirements.<br>Changes/additions made to 'Further mandatory information on Course coverage' to provide detail for centres. | Qualifications Development Manager | April 2015 |
|                |         |   |                                    |            |
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Note: You are advised to check SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of the Course Specification.

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