



Course Report 2014

Subject	Geography
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

The National 5 Geography question paper is marked out of 60 and consists of three sections, worth 20 marks each: Physical Environments, Human Environments and Global Issues.

In Section A (Physical Environments) candidates had to opt for either Question 1 (glaciation) or Question 2 (rivers). There were significantly more answers about glaciation (67% of candidates) than about rivers (33% of candidates). It was pleasing to note that almost no candidates attempted both questions.

In Section C (Global Issues), where candidates are required to choose two of six possible questions, a small number attempted more than two, with a handful of candidates attempting all of them. In cases where candidates had attempted more than two questions in Section C, markers were instructed to mark all responses but to credit only the two highest scoring answers.

The most popular topics in Section C were Question 11 (Environmental Hazards), (69% of candidates) and Question 14 (Health) (45% of candidates), while Question 12 (Trade & Globalisation) (11% of candidates) and Question 13 (Tourism) (13% of candidates) were answered by fewest candidates.

The National 5 paper is set at a level that is intended to match Intermediate 2 and the previous Standard Grade Credit Level question papers. Post-examination analysis suggests that this year's National 5 and Intermediate 2 papers were of a similar level of difficulty.

Component 2: Assignment

The National 5 Geography Coursework Assignment is marked out of 20 and consists of a report written up under exam conditions and then externally marked. Candidates are able to have two A4 sheets of processed information to assist them in their write-up. The processed information sheets are not marked but **must** be submitted along with the coursework report.

In Section A candidates are expected to describe two research methods used in collecting information for their assignment. This section is marked out of six, according to the level of detail and the appropriateness of the research methods used. Up to four marks can be gained by describing any one research method.

In Section B candidates must describe and explain their findings with reference to their processed information, whilst in Section C they are required to reach a well supported conclusion about their topic or issue. In practice, these two sections were marked together, as many candidates included concluding remarks in Section B or explanations of their findings in Section C.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Overall, the performance of candidates was pleasing, with many scoring consistently well in all three sections. However, there was a significant minority of candidates who achieved lower marks. These may have been candidates who would previously have achieved awards at Standard Grade General level.

Generally the standard of written response was good, and many answers showed sound geographical knowledge backed up by reference to case studies where relevant. This reflects good teaching in subject departments.

Most candidates appeared to manage their time well and finished the question paper, while a small minority appeared to struggle for time, although this was usually because they had answered more questions than necessary. Legibility of answers was mostly good, with the vast majority of candidates adhering to instructions about keeping their answers within the boundaries marked on the answer booklet. This was very helpful for scanning scripts for electronic marking.

Component 2: Assignment

There were many very good coursework reports that reflected carefully planned and detailed research undertaken by pupils.

The quality of processed information which candidates took into the write-up with them clearly affected their ability to complete a good coursework report. A4 sheets containing graphs, tables, annotated maps, photos or field sketches, or mind maps compiled from research results were a great help to pupils in writing up their coursework report. Some candidates with less detailed processed information sheets often found it harder to achieve good marks in the assignment.

A significant minority of pupils scored poorly on the coursework assignment. This was the result of a combination of factors such as vaguely stated aims, little evidence of genuine research or overly descriptive responses in sections B and C leading to a lack of explanation and concluding remarks in the write-up.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates performed particularly well on the physical landscape questions (Q1 glaciation and Q2 rivers). Most candidates scored well on the matching exercise in part (a) and showed very good geographical knowledge in answering part (b), about either corrie or waterfall formation. This was an area in which candidates have been very well prepared by centres. Many candidate responses included labelled diagrams which showed how the

formation of the feature progressed. Where labels were sufficiently detailed it was possible for candidates to gain full marks from their diagrams alone.

There were also good answers to Question 3 (land use advantages), with many candidates accurately referencing the map and showing good map interpretation skills in their responses.

In the Human Environments section, Question 6(a) (population change) was well answered, with most candidates heeding the instruction to describe in detail and therefore gaining high marks. Candidates also showed good knowledge of methods used to control population growth in Question 6(b), with many making detailed reference to China's one child policy but also describing other techniques such as education and family planning.

Question 8 (recent farming change in the developing world) elicited many excellent answers, with candidates showing good knowledge of how these changes have helped farmers. This is another area where good teaching is reflected in candidates' responses.

In Section C (Global Environments) there were especially good answers on physical and human causes of climate change in Question 9(b). In Question 11(b) candidates also performed well describing the impact of earthquakes on people and the environment, reflecting thorough knowledge gained through case studies learned in class.

Component 2: Assignment

Many candidates had undertaken original fieldwork, either on their own or as part of a class field trip. This enabled them to collect plenty of original data which they were then able to process onto the two sheets of A4 to be taken into the write-up. As a result they had lots of processed information which they could refer to, explain and draw conclusions from.

Examples of high scoring coursework assignments containing this type of data included urban land use studies, traffic flow surveys, sphere of influence studies, river studies, farm studies and tourism surveys. Some candidates who had undertaken research based on reports in books, journals and on the internet compiled good summaries in the form of mind maps or tables for example, whilst also referencing the sources of their information on their processed information sheets. Similarly, many of these candidates were able to score well in the coursework report. Examples of assignments which achieved good marks using this type of data included studies of the impact of different natural disasters such as tropical storms, population studies, and comparative studies of National Parks.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

In Question 4(a) (air masses) many candidates described the weather conditions associated with a tropical continental air mass, without going on to say how these would affect people and the environment as the question required. Consequently many responses received low marks on this question.

In Question 4(b) (synoptic chart), whilst many candidates showed good knowledge of weather systems, their responses gave insufficient detail about reasons for the differences between the two weather stations, meaning that marks were lost here.

In the Human Environments section, Question 5 (urban change) asked for explanations about changes in the CBD. However, a large number of candidates lost marks here by describing the changes without giving reasons for them.

In the Global Issues section there was a tendency by a significant number of candidates to write lists in questions where they were asked to **describe in detail**. To score full marks in this type of question, more detail than a simple list is required. The best answers to questions where candidates were asked to describe distributions, such as in Question 11(a) (distribution of volcanoes), showed good geographical knowledge by giving names of countries or relevant locations from evidence shown in the resource for that question.

In Question 14(b) (Health), although there were some good answers about methods used to limit the spread of AIDS, it was clear that many candidates couldn't give sufficient detail to be able to achieve full marks. It should be noted that AIDS is a mandatory topic, as stated in the Course Assessment Specification.

Component 2: Assignment

A significant number of candidates scored poorly on the coursework assignment. Many of these candidates had submitted limited (or even no) evidence of processed information with their coursework report. It is important to note that candidates who don't make reference to information contained in their processed information sheets will not be able to gain full marks.

Some candidates simply described their main findings whilst making little attempt to explain or evaluate them. This meant they were not able to access the marks awarded for explanation and conclusions in sections B and C.

A number of candidates lost marks because they copied significant chunks of information directly from their processed information sheets. There was also evidence that some candidates had pre-prepared answers which they copied out from the processed information sheets during the write-up. As in the question paper, where no marks are awarded for direct lifts from resources in the questions, so in the coursework assignment no marks are awarded for direct copying from the processed information sheets. This is clearly stated in the General Marking Instructions available on the SQA website. It is expected that candidates will be able to give an element of added value to the information which they take into the write-up with them. Often this will be in the form of explanations, summaries and concluding remarks where candidates are making use of their geographical knowledge to interpret their findings.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

The Course Assessment Specification (CAS) indicates topics on which questions are likely to be based. In each year's question paper it is not possible to ask questions on every aspect of every topic, but it is important that centres cover everything indicated in the CAS to ensure candidates are able to fully access the question paper. In 2014, questions on map skills were limited to only the Physical Environments section, but this will not be the case in all future National 5 question papers.

It is essential that candidates read the questions carefully and that they cover all parts of the question in their answers. For example in Question 14(b) (Health) it was necessary to explain the methods used to limit the spread of AIDS in both developed **and** developing countries in order to be able to gain full marks.

Many candidates still have difficulty in differentiating command words such as **describe** and **explain**. In questions where candidates are asked to **describe in detail**, responses are expected to contain specific numeric or geographical information which shows that they have carefully studied and correctly interpreted the resource for that question. Answers that are generic or vague will not gain full marks. In many answers to 'explain' questions, candidates showed good geographical knowledge by giving detailed descriptions, but didn't go on to give an explanation, therefore losing out on available marks.

Generally, candidates should avoid writing lists or just lifting information from labelled diagrams on the questions paper. At this level candidates should be able to use their geographical knowledge to add some value to information they have gained from resources on the question paper. For example, in Question 5 (urban change) candidates would gain marks for giving reasons for the changes shown in the photographs, whereas if they just listed the changes they would not gain any marks.

In Question 10(a) (tundra climate) candidates could calculate the range of temperature and would be expected to give detailed figures for both temperature and precipitation to gain full marks, as the question asks for a detailed description of the climate. The detailed marking instructions published on the SQA website are a useful guide to the level of detail which candidates are expected to give in their answers and centres should make full use of these.

Component 2: Assignment

As the assignment is a new feature in the external assessment at this level, it is perhaps not surprising that this was the area which many candidates found most challenging. It is helpful to candidates in carrying out their research if they have a clearly stated aim that provides a real focus for their enquiries and therefore helps to clarify what information they need to gather.

It is vital, too, that candidates state their aim clearly at the start of the coursework report, otherwise they may be unable to gain marks they are due because their aim is unclear to markers. In a number of responses this section was missed out altogether.

Studies that involve the collection of original field data allow candidates to create good tabular or graphical information which they can have with them and refer to during the writing of their coursework report. Topics that are based on secondary sources such as books, journals or the internet can form the basis of good assignments, providing that there is a clear aim and that candidates prepare two A4 sheets for their write-up which show some evidence of processing. This can be in the form of mind maps, annotated maps or tables.

Candidates who take in A4 sheets containing information they intend to copy out will not be credited for direct copying and therefore will not be able to access the full range of marks. Also, candidates should be clear that only two A4 sized sheets (or the equivalent) are permitted as processed information.

The marking instructions for the N5 Geography coursework assignment published on the SQA website are a useful guide as to how marks are allocated in this part of the assessment. Centres should make full use of these in helping to prepare their candidates.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
Number of resulted entries in 2014	9647

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 80				
A	33.2%	33.2%	3199	56
B	23.2%	56.3%	2236	48
C	20.7%	77.0%	1997	40
D	7.8%	84.9%	755	36
No award	15.1%	-	1460	-