

Planned changes to Higher Geography from session 2018-19

Units and unit assessments will be removed from the Higher Geography course from session 2018-19 onwards. We are strengthening the course assessment to ensure that it continues to assess candidates on the full content of the course, and to maintain the current course value of 24 SCQF credit points.

In deciding the appropriate changes for the Higher course assessment, we have carried out two extensive consultation exercises. This has included a wide range of teachers, and our National Qualification Support Team (NQST) – whose members include teachers and lecturers, members of the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers (SAGT) and members of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS).

Overview of changes to the Higher course assessment

Current course assessment	Revised course assessment
Question paper: 60 marks (67%) Assignment: 30 marks (33%)	2 x question papers: 160 marks* (73%) Assignment: 30 marks (27%)

**The question papers will be scaled down from 160 marks to 80 marks to achieve a weighting of 73%*

Changes to the question paper

Current question paper	Revised question papers from 2018-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours 15 minutes • Worth 60 marks • Contains 4 sections (Section 1: Physical Environments – 15 marks; Section 2: Human Environments – 15 marks; Section 3: Global Issues; 20 marks; Section 4: Application of Geographical Skills – 20 marks) 	<p>Question paper 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour 50 minutes • Worth 100 marks • Contains 2 sections (Section 1: Physical Environments – 50 marks; Section 2: Human Environments – 50 marks) <p>Question paper 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour 10 minutes • Worth 60 marks • Contains 2 sections (Section 1: Global Issues – 40 marks; Section 2: Application of Geographical Skills – 20 marks)

In relation to content, the current question paper will be extended by 20 marks (from 60 marks to 80 marks) to allow more skills, knowledge and understanding to be sampled, following the removal of units from the course.

To make the marking of the question paper more straightforward, this 80 marks will be scaled up to 160 marks. Once marking is complete the 160 marks will be scaled back down to 80 marks to achieve a weighting of 73%.

The assessment will be split into two question papers, with a break in-between, to ensure the timing is manageable for candidates.

Question paper 1

Through our consultation, a significant number of teachers expressed the desire for rivers to be included in Higher Geography. River features will therefore be introduced to Section 1 – Physical Environments. To accommodate this, land conflicts will move from section 1 to section 2 – Human Environments, and the number of case studies required for land use conflicts will be reduced from two to one.

Question paper 2

One optional topic, 'Trade, Aid and Geopolitics' will be removed from the Global Issues section. Candidates will now have a choice of any two from the four optional topics.

Assignment

Following the extension of the question paper, the assignment will now contribute 27% of the total assessment mark. There will be no change to the assessment task, however minor changes will be made to the marking instructions.

Documents and assessment support materials

More detail on the requirements for the Higher course will be provided in the revised Higher course specification, which will be published at the end of April 2018. Course support notes will be added to the revised course specification as an appendix by the end of September 2018, to provide additional clarity and guidance.

We will publish a specimen question paper for each of the new question papers. We will also update the marking instructions of the coursework assessment task with minor changes. These materials will be published between the end of May and the end of September 2018.

More information

For more information on changes to assessment in National Qualifications, please visit www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges

If you have any queries regarding the above changes, please e-mail mycentre@sqa.org.uk