



Common questions about National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Geography

Modifications

What are the modifications to the National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses for session 2022–23?

The modifications to the courses can be found in the 'Course modifications' section on the Geography subject page on [SQA's website](#).

General

Will the mapwork question always occur in section 4, or might there be two mapwork questions in the Higher Geography question paper?

The skills section of the Higher Geography question paper is the most appropriate place to assess mapwork skills. Two mapwork questions would over-assess this skill therefore it is unlikely that there would be two separate map-based questions in a question paper.

Can homework tasks be used to generate candidate evidence for unit assessment?

Yes, but centres must ensure that evidence generated as part of a homework task is the candidate's own work. Centres should note, however, unit assessment support packs from SQA's secure site must remain secure and must not be sent home with candidates.

Can impacts and consequences be both negative and positive?

Yes, unless specified otherwise in the wording of the question, both are acceptable.

In the Higher Geography question paper, can candidates be asked about the effectiveness of management strategies?

Yes, as part of a candidate's knowledge and understanding about management strategies, they may be assessed on the effectiveness of these.

Do I have to teach candidates about land degradation in both a rainforest and a semi-arid area for the rural topic for the Higher Geography question paper?

No. The course specification states that a rainforest or semi-arid area should be taught. Further detail on topics which may be assessed in the question paper can be found in the Higher Geography Course Specification.

Do I need to teach candidates about land degradation in a rainforest or semi-arid area in both a developed and developing country for the Higher Geography question paper?

No — the Higher Geography Course Specification details that there is no spatial context for this topic; one case study is sufficient.

Will SQA be publishing a list of suggested topics for the added value unit at National 4 or the assignment at National 5 or Higher?

There are no plans to provide a list of suggested topics as there is the risk that centres or candidates may see this as mandatory or a list of preferred themes. There is no restriction on the possible topics for the assignment or added value unit, only that it is 'geographical'. More information can be found in the 'Coursework' section on each of the levels of the Geography subject pages.

Is there a template for the Higher Geography coursework assignment?

There is no template for the Higher Geography coursework assignment. This is to allow candidates to use the structure or headings that best suit their assignment. Candidates can use lined or blank paper for the write-up stage of the assignment — whichever they are most comfortable with. There are marks available for 'communicating information' at Higher, which will be awarded for points such as structure, coherence and the use of geographical terminology or diagrams where appropriate. (Coursework assessment task, page 9).

If a candidate passes the assignment element of the course, but fails overall, can this assignment be carried over for the next exam diet?

Candidates must complete both components of the course assessment in the same session, therefore a candidate repeating the Higher would need to resit both components of the external assessment.

SQA only accepts, marks, and aggregates the course components in the year the course assessment is taken. There is no provision to retain the coursework, or indeed the mark assigned, and to include it in a later year's award.

Does the write-up stage of the National 5 and Higher assignment have to be completed in one sitting?

Yes, the write-up must be completed within one sitting otherwise the conditions of assessment cannot be maintained. The conditions of assessment, during the production of evidence stage, as detailed in the course specification, are that the production of evidence stage will be conducted under a high degree of supervision. This means that:

- ◆ candidates must be in direct sight of the teacher or lecturer, or other responsible person, during the period of the assessment

- ◆ candidates must not communicate with each other
- ◆ candidates have access only to the Processed Information (two single-sided A4 Processed Information sheets or one single-sided A3 Processed Information sheet)
- ◆ candidates must not receive any assistance from the teacher or lecturer

Can candidates type their assignment at National 5 and Higher?

Yes, however teachers and lecturers must ensure that the conditions of assessment are met — candidates must only have access to their Processed Information and no other sources such as files on the computer or internet.

The marking instructions for both National 5 and Higher assignments state that candidates can only be awarded marks for two research methods. Can they gain marks for explaining or analysing data collected from further research methods?

Yes. Although marks are only awarded for describing two research methods in the production of evidence (write-up) stage of the assignment, candidates can use information from additional sources on their Processed Information sheets when describing, explaining and analysing their findings.

Can candidates use the research stage of their assignment to meet the skills outcome in the Human Environments unit assessment?

Yes. Evidence for outcome 1 in the Human Environments unit can also be used by candidates for National 5 and Higher assignment purposes, however, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that the candidate has met the evidence requirements. The candidate evidence (or a copy) should also be retained and annotated as evidence for verification purposes.

Why is there a word count for the Advanced Higher project–folio?

A word limit for the project–folio was reintroduced as a replacement for the page count in response to a search for consistency and parity across subjects offered at Advanced Higher level that demand project–folio pieces. The intention was also to offer candidates the opportunity of producing a piece of work that developed relevant skills that would be of value to higher education or academic study, as well as the workplace. As such the folio involves in-depth study, research and discussion, to be delivered in a concise and succinct way. The key is to cover the requirements of the project–folio but the skill is to be selective, concise and relevant: a transferrable life skill that is envisaged will advantage candidates beyond school or college.

Can mind maps be used on Processed Information sheets for the assignment for National 5 and Higher?

Yes, candidates can use a range of evidence on their Processed Information sheets (further information is given in the Higher coursework assessment task, page 2, and National 5

coursework assessment task, page 2). Candidates should refer to the information in the Processed Information but should not copy or paraphrase large sections from this; they must add value to this in some way to be awarded credit.

Do I have to use the recording documentation supplied in unit assessment support packs?

Centres are encouraged to adopt any method of recording that suits their approach to assessment. SQA has produced examples of mock candidate evidence and sample recording documents within the unit assessment support packs to show some ways in which centres could record assessment judgements.

How can I easily locate documents on the subject web page?

SQA is always keen to help practitioners find the most relevant information on the subject web pages. Geography has its own [subject homepage](#) where practitioners can access full and comprehensive guidance covering course content, specifications, assessment, coursework and use of past papers.

Why do the prior-verified materials vary so much in standard?

Prior-verified assessments meet the minimum standard required. The assessments are not produced or edited by SQA. The assessments have been deliberately left in the original format and font used by the centre.

Can SQA publish more prior-verified materials to support each topic in the Global Issues units?

Prior-verified materials are produced by centres. SQA can only publish assessments that centres have produced and agreed to share. As more centres agree to share their prior-verified assessments, the bank of assessments will increase and hopefully encourage other centres to develop and share assessment items.

Does SQA intend to provide exemplars of the ‘standard’ accepted at verification?

To support centres, SQA publishes summary reports after each round of verification. The summary report for Geography can be found on the Geography subject pages.

In addition, Understanding Standards materials, which includes exemplification of candidate responses to unit assessment is available for N4–Higher on SQA’s secure website; your SQA Co-ordinator will be able to access this site.

How much support are candidates allowed to have in relation to generating evidence for the added value unit at National 4 and the assignment at National 5?

Pages 14 and 15 of the course specification for National 5 Geography provide information on reasonable assistance for candidates undertaking the National 5 assignment. This document can be found on the Geography subject page.

Similar advice in relation to the National 4 added value unit can be found on page 4 in the unit assessment support pack in the 'Assessment conditions' section. This pack can be accessed via SQA's secure website; your SQA Co-ordinator will be able to access this site.

Can all the candidates sitting the course produce an assignment with the same title?

The course assignment is designed to allow personalisation and choice for candidates — to provide an opportunity for candidates to gain recognition and credit for investigating a topic that has captured their interest. That said, it is possible for all candidates within a class group to investigate the same topic. In this situation, care would have to be taken that each candidate has the opportunity to generate their own evidence.

Can the candidate do the same topic for the National 5 assignment and the National 4 added value unit?

Yes, it is acceptable for a candidate to do the same topic for the National 5 assignment and the National 4 added value unit.

For National 5 Geography, the unit specification only asks for one landscape type — do I have to teach candidates two landscape types?

For the purposes of unit assessment for the Physical Environments unit at National 4 and National 5, candidates only need to be assessed in the context of one landscape type chosen from the four stated in the unit specifications (glaciated uplands, upland limestone, coastal landscapes, rivers and valleys). Please note, however, in relation to the external course assessment for National 5, candidates are required to study two landscape types. These should be either glaciated uplands and coastal landscapes or upland limestone and rivers and valleys.

More details can be found in the course specifications for Higher Geography and National 5 Geography.

You can find National Qualification [frequently asked questions](#) on SQA's website.