



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

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, ie these should not be sent home with candidates.

Is Singapore still acceptable as an example of a developing country within the *Global Issues: Development and Health* Unit in Higher Geography?

Centres should take care to ensure that case studies are up-to-date and relevant. While it is accepted that data may become out of date quickly, care should be taken not to use examples which have become obsolete. As of January 2015, Singapore was ranked 9th in the UN Human Development Index and 4th in GNI per capita (PPP) by the World Bank; therefore it would not be appropriate to use this as an example of a developing world country.

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 my 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 Assessment 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 Assessment Specification](#).

Do I need to teach my 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 Assessment Specification](#), page 9, details that there is no spatial context for this topic; one case study is sufficient.

For [Unit](#) assessment purposes, candidates need to provide evidence of their knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within human environments by giving detailed explanations of a process/interaction at work within rural environments in a developed or a developing country. This may be, but does not have to be, within the context of land degradation in a rainforest or semi-arid area.

Will SQA be publishing a list of suggested topics for the assignment/AVU 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 Information 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/headings which 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/diagrams where appropriate. (Course assignment assessment task, page 9).

If a pupil in my class 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 re-sit 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 N5 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 assignment assessment task, are:

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 assessor (or other responsible person) during the period of the assessment
- ◆ candidates must not communicate with each other
- ◆ candidates should only have access to the specified resources (Processed Information)

Can candidates type their assignment at N5 and Higher?

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

The Marking Instructions for both N5 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, they 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 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.

Can I use the Advanced Higher folio to gather evidence for the *Geographical Skills* Unit assessment?

Yes — but take care. In this regard the issue of 'Reasonable Assistance' comes into play. In the Units there is a high level of learning and teaching anticipated but the folio is largely candidate driven. While the outcomes could be delivered through work for the folio, centres need to watch they don't give too much assistance to the folio if they decide to tackle them that way given that the folio is independent learning heavy.

It may be more appropriate to gather Unit evidence when teaching the skills, and then allow candidates free reign when it comes to the folio.

If centres do decide to assess the Unit through the folio, they must ensure that all candidate evidence is retained, demonstrating that the Assessment Standards have been met, and annotated accordingly.

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

A word limit for the project-folio was re-introduced 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/academic study, as well as the workplace.

As such the folio involves in-depth study, research and discussion, now 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 N5 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 4, and N5 Coursework assessment task, page 3, on SQA's secure website). 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, use of past papers, etc.

There is a web page (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/59034.html>) designed specifically to assist practitioners to get the most out of the subject web pages.

What has been done to ensure that the standards of the new Higher are the same as its predecessor?

A robust quality assurance process involving experienced appointees and other subject specialists was put in place to ensure that the standard has been maintained.

Information on this process can be found via the following link:

http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/QualityAssurance_Validation_June10.pdf

SQA has published [guidance on the use of past papers](#) for the Higher Geography Course. The purpose of this support document is to help centres and departments to identify suitable past paper questions/items that could be used, or possibly amended, to support learners in their preparation for sitting question papers (exams) as part of the new Higher Course assessment.

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 which 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 Key Messages after each round of verification. The key messages for Geography can be found under the heading ‘Verification’ on the [Geography subject pages](#).

In addition, Understanding Standards materials which includes exemplification of candidate responses to Unit assessment is now 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 4 and 5 of the *General assessment information* 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 under ‘Coursework information’ heading.

Similar advice in relation to the National 4 Added Value Unit can be found in the Unit assessment support pack in the section entitled ‘Assessment conditions’. 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, ie to provide an opportunity for candidates to gain recognition and credit for investigating a topic which 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 controlled assessment 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.

In the *Global Issues* Unit, for Health must you cover/assess all four aspects to meet the requirements — malaria, AIDS, heart disease, obesity?

For Unit assessment at National 5, if centres choose to assess this in the context of health and they wish to include disease, then they are free to choose whichever disease is most suitable. In relation to the question paper component of the external assessment, candidates choosing to answer questions on health are expected to have studied AIDS plus one disease from a developing country (malaria, cholera, kwashiorkor or pneumonia) and one disease from a developed country (heart disease, cancer or asthma).

For National 5 Geography, the *Unit Specification* only asks for one landscape type — do I have to teach my 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). However, in relation to the external assessment for National 5, candidates are required to study two landscapes types. These should be either glaciated uplands and coastal landscapes or upland limestone and rivers and valleys.

More details can be found in the [Geography assignment: General assessment information for Higher Geography](#) and [Geography assignment: General assessment information for National 5 Geography](#) documents.

General Curriculum for Excellence questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.