

Higher Geography

Subject-specific guidance on gathering key evidence in session 2020–21



Please read this guidance alongside [National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates](#) and the SQA Academy resource, [Quality assurance of estimates for National Courses](#).

Gathering key evidence for Higher Geography

This document and *National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates* will give you additional support and guidance to support your decision making for session 2020–21. Evidence should be gathered later in the course, as a realistic reflection of a candidate's attainment. It is important to note that it is not the **quantity** of evidence, but the **quality** of evidence, in relation to its predictive value, that will support you during this process.

The following types of key evidence are likely to provide a good predictive value and may be helpful to you, although there may be other types of key evidence you would like to use.

Types of key evidence

In line with the modifications that were planned for Higher Geography in session 2020–21, key assessment evidence only needs to come from the question paper component. There is no requirement for candidates to complete an assignment, however, if you have assignment evidence for your candidates, you can take account of this when producing your provisional results.

You have the flexibility to choose how you gather assessment evidence for your candidates. The most robust evidence for the question paper component, in terms of providing breadth, depth and level of challenge, is that which has been generated using an assessment task that replicates, as far as possible, the SQA question paper. The evidence does not need to be generated on a single occasion if this is not practical under restrictions current at the time of the assessment. It should, however, be generated under supervision and control, where possible.

Component 1: question paper 1: Physical and Human Environments

Assessment evidence is required from both sections of the paper:

- ◆ Physical Environments
- ◆ Human Environments

The evidence must include the use of numerical and graphical information, which can be presented in the following ways:

- ◆ statistical
- ◆ graphical
- ◆ tabular

You have the flexibility to gather this evidence from a single assessment task or through a series of smaller assessment tasks. Please note that smaller assessment tasks are likely to be less demanding than a larger, holistic assessment, and therefore you should consider this when producing your provisional results.

Assessment advice

Assessment tasks should reflect the range of question types found in an SQA question paper. The most common question types in the Higher Geography: Physical and Human Environments question paper are:

- ◆ Describe . . .
- ◆ Explain . . .
- ◆ Suggest reasons . . .
- ◆ Discuss . . .
- ◆ Comment on the effectiveness . . .

Questions can be made up of one part or multiple parts (for example (a), (b) and so on). They should allow a mix of restricted-responses (for example a 6-mark question) and extended-responses (for example a 12-mark question). Questions requiring a restricted-response should be accessible to typical C candidates. Questions requiring an extended-response should stretch A candidates by allowing them to demonstrate detailed skills and knowledge, however, some of the marks should still be accessible to C candidates.

At least 50% of the total marks should be accessible to C candidates and at least 70% of the total marks should be accessible to A candidates.

Where possible, assessment task(s) should reflect the duration of the SQA question paper. The suggested duration for a holistic assessment task that replicates the SQA question paper is therefore 1 hour and 50 minutes. If, however, you wish to deliver two separate assessment tasks, the following is suggested:

- ◆ Physical Environments (50 marks); duration: 50–60 minutes
- ◆ Human Environments (50 marks); duration: 50–60 minutes

The planned modification for the Higher Geography 2021 question paper includes the removal of ‘coasts’ from the ‘Physical Environments’ section of the paper. When generating key assessment evidence on which to base provisional results, however, you have the flexibility to choose the landscape types and can include coastal features if you wish.

Component 2: question paper 2: Global Issues and Geographical Skills

Assessment evidence is required from both sections of the paper:

- ◆ Global Issues (including at least one global issue)
- ◆ Application of Geographical Skills

The evidence must include the use of numerical and graphical information, which can be presented in the following ways:

- ◆ statistical
- ◆ graphical
- ◆ tabular

The evidence must also include mapping skills:

- ◆ interpretation and analysis
- ◆ using maps, including Ordnance Survey maps, in association with photographs, field sketches, cross sections/transects

You have the flexibility to gather this evidence from a single assessment task or through a series of smaller assessment tasks. Please note that smaller assessment tasks are likely to be less demanding than a larger, holistic assessment, and therefore you should consider this when producing your provisional results.

Assessment advice

Assessment tasks should reflect the range of question types found in an SQA question paper. The most common question types in the Higher Geography: Global Issues and Geographical Skills question paper are:

- ◆ Describe . . .
- ◆ Explain . . .
- ◆ Suggest reasons . . .
- ◆ Discuss . . .
- ◆ Comment on the effectiveness . . .

Questions can be made up of one part or multiple parts (for example (a), (b) and so on). They should allow a mix of restricted-responses (for example a 6-mark question) and extended-responses (for example a 14-mark question). Questions requiring a restricted-response should be accessible to typical C candidates. Questions requiring an extended-response should stretch A candidates by allowing them to demonstrate detailed skills and knowledge, however, some of the marks should still be accessible to C candidates.

At least 50% of the total marks should be accessible to C candidates and at least 70% of the total marks should be accessible to A candidates.

Where possible, assessment task(s) should reflect the duration of the SQA question paper. The following is suggested in relation to duration:

- ◆ Global Issues (covering two global issues) and Geographical Skills (60 marks): 1 hour and 10 minutes
- ◆ Global Issues (covering one global issue) and Geographical Skills (40 marks): 50 minutes
- ◆ Global Issues only (covering two global issues) (40 marks): 40–50 minutes
- ◆ Global Issues only (covering one global issue) (20 marks): 20–25 minutes
- ◆ Geographical Skills only (20 marks): 20–25 minutes

The planned modification for the Higher Geography 2021 question paper requires the assessment of only one global issue, however, when generating key assessment evidence on which to base provisional results, you have the flexibility to include two global issues if you wish.

Component 3: assignment

The assignment has been removed for session 2020–21, therefore, you do not need to consider this component when producing provisional results for each candidate. We recognise, however, that some candidates may have already completed or partially completed an assignment. Where this is the case, you can use this as supporting evidence, alongside all other evidence, when carrying out a holistic review of a candidate's performance. Candidates tend to perform better in the assignment than the question paper, and you should take this into consideration when producing your provisional results.

Assessment resources

Assessment resources that you can use to generate candidate evidence include:

- ◆ questions from SQA past papers
- ◆ adapted questions from SQA past papers
- ◆ centre-devised assessment tasks
- ◆ commercial papers

SQA past papers are in the public domain and can be readily accessed by candidates and therefore, in their entirety, do not form suitable assessment tasks. You can, however, extract and adapt questions from these papers for use in centre-devised assessment tasks.

Commercial papers have not been through the same quality assurance processes as SQA question papers and should therefore be reviewed in relation to the course specification to ensure that they are valid.

Using additional assessment resources for session 2020–21: key information

It is important that you use valid and reliable assessment when gathering evidence in session 2020–21.

In Higher Geography, SQA will provide question papers for session 2020–21. Please note that the marking instructions have not been standardised based on candidate responses.

You may therefore need to agree within your centre how to consistently mark an item if a candidate response is not covered by the marking instructions.

The Higher Geography question papers will only be available on SQA's secure website — you must treat these confidentially, in the same way as other live assessment materials. You have the option to use the question papers as internal assessments for gathering candidate evidence. Question papers can be split to support assessments you carry out during class time.

If you use a question paper in part or in its entirety, you should remind candidates that they must not discuss the content of the paper with anyone, including friends, family or on social media.

Understanding the national standard

You can find eight examples of candidate responses from the 2019 Higher Geography question papers (four per paper), along with associated commentaries, on SQA's [Understanding Standards website](#).

In addition, the [specimen question paper](#) details how marks are allocated for each question type.

Assignment candidate exemplars and associated commentaries are also available on SQA's Understanding Standards website.

Other resources to support understanding of the standard include:

- ◆ course specification
- ◆ course reports
- ◆ coursework assessment task

Summary

Provisional results for Higher Geography should be a holistic judgement based on a candidate's demonstrated attainment in each of the following:

- ◆ Physical Environments
- ◆ Human Environments
- ◆ Global Issues
- ◆ Geographical Skills

This can be generated as two holistic pieces of assessment evidence, for example:

- ◆ Physical Environments and Human Environments (100 marks)
- ◆ Global Issues and Geographical Skills (40 marks)

Alternatively, it can be generated as three or four separate pieces of assessment evidence, for example:

- ◆ Physical Environments (50 marks)
- ◆ Human Environments (50 marks)
- ◆ Global Issues and Geographical Skills (40 marks)

OR:

- ◆ Physical Environments (50 marks)
- ◆ Human Environments (50 marks)
- ◆ Global Issues (20 marks)
- ◆ Geographical Skills (20 marks)