

## Geography

### Overall grade boundaries

|                    |       |        |         |         |         |
|--------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Grade:</b>      | E     | D      | C       | B       | A       |
| <b>Mark range:</b> | 0 - 7 | 8 - 15 | 16 - 22 | 23 - 28 | 29 - 36 |

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The quality of the essays submitted was varied. The weaker essays showed limited insight into the topics chosen and tended to be descriptive and based almost entirely on secondary sources.

Very few essays this session had little or no relevance to geography. Many essays had positive supervisor comments, and there are still some supervisors unwilling to write anything at all on the inside cover. Supervisors should bear in mind that the supervisor comment should be realistic and representative of the research process. Examiners use this report to help award marks against the holistic judgement criterion (K).

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A: research question

One trend this session was to see a great many research questions beginning with "To what extent...". Such questions are usually very difficult to answer well unless a wide range of pertinent factors is evaluated. A number of essays attempted to evaluate the sustainability of development projects that had not yet been completed, making the task extremely difficult for the researcher. Some essays were thinly disguised fieldwork (IA) reports, despite the style recommended for IA being inappropriate for extended essays.

#### Criterion B: introduction

The quality of maps used to locate the study is still a major source of concern. Unaltered downloaded maps are rarely ideal since their selection process does not include any decision about what elements to highlight, how best to depict them nor display any graphical skill. Attempts to set the topic into its locational and theoretical context were often absent and some essays continue to omit the research question from the introduction - a requisite easily checked by the supervisor. Hypotheses introduced at this stage should be designed to be testable using the data collected. There is no need to state how the essay relates to the IB geography syllabus (a convention that applies only to IA).

**Criterion C: investigation**

Investigative techniques were generally good, though some essays lacked sufficient data of reliable quality for candidates to draw valid conclusions. An increasing trend is for candidates to devise their own composite indices (for things such as “urbanization”) in order to provide a quantitative basis for comparing two or more locations. The principle is excellent, but the mathematics of the formulae suggested must be accurate and justifiable in order not to invalidate the subsequent development of the essay.

**Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied**

The major weakness in knowledge and understanding was in relating results to existing geographic theory and in explaining anomalies using reasons other than poor methods of data collection. The academic context of the essay stated in the introduction, was often ignored instead of being used as the framework for the investigation.

**Criterion E: reasoned argument**

Most essays attempted to present ideas in a logical sequence. The weakest essays were overly descriptive, did not develop an argument and were mere compilations of information that did not necessarily have any direct relevance to the research question.

**Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject**

Marks for this criterion were hampered in some cases by a reluctance to show the results of the investigation on maps. Using maps to show results is an ideal starting point for spatial analysis and discussion of any pattern(s) that can then be identified. Many maps lacked a legible scale, and many candidates ignored standard cartographic conventions (scale, direction, legend). In too many cases line graphs were used where the data did not relate to changes over time.

**Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject**

Most candidates used some appropriate geographic terminology, but candidates should be cautioned to base their definitions of key concepts on the ones used in the subject guide. They are welcome to “challenge” the definitions in the guide but, if doing so, should support their ideas with academic sources.

**Criterion H: conclusion**

Most candidates attempted a conclusion, with the weaker ones tending to introduce new material and elements of analysis that should have been incorporated earlier in their essay or simply not referring back to the research question/hypotheses.

**Criterion I: formal presentation**

Formal presentation was usually satisfactory and often excellent, and almost all maps and illustrations were clearly attributed to original sources. Candidates should be reminded that abstracts should appear first, and should not be placed after the contents page. References and bibliographies were generally complete. One disturbing trend is for the quoting of ultra-long “google.com” search URLs (often 4 or 5 lines long), rather than giving the URL of the precise page used on its original site.

### **Criterion J: abstract**

Some candidates still fail to achieve full marks for the abstract. The commonest single error is to omit the exact research question or the conclusion, while the scope and methodology of the essay are often far too briefly covered.

### **Criterion K: holistic judgement**

Many students had clearly gained considerable personal satisfaction in the process of writing and researching their essay, even if this was not directly correlated with their level of achievement. The importance of supervisor comments are essential in order to properly assess this criterion for the benefit of the candidate.

## **Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.**

Supervisors with doubts about whether a particular topic is geographical or not, should consult a subject specialist and make use of the EE forum on the OCC.

Candidates should be advised to focus on a single, clearly worded research question. Weaknesses in the formulation of the research question, or reliance on using too many separate hypotheses, inevitably make it difficult for the candidate’s essay to remain focused.

Candidates and supervisors should be reminded that having clear elements of spatial analysis in their essay is absolutely essential. Too often the only spatial element present is a map location in the introduction.

Essays should avoid topics that require speculative assumptions about future geographical developments.

Candidates should be made aware that the findings of surveys simply reflect opinion and cannot be considered as established fact.

Candidates should be encouraged to draw their own maps, either by hand or by using information technology.

The best essays showed considerable insight into contemporary geographic issues and this approach should be encouraged.