

GEOGRAPHY TIPS

Explain aspects of a contemporary New Zealand geographic issue (AS 91245)

**WHAT IS THIS STANDARD ABOUT?**

In this standard students have to investigate a geographic issue that is affecting our country now or in the near future. They need to explain the nature of the issue, explain different viewpoints relating to the issue and explain how these viewpoints can change over time. In addition they must explain the strength(s) and weakness(es) of different course of action related to the issue and then recommend the most suitable solution to the issue with reasons why.

This standard provides students with the opportunity to apply geographic thinking to a real world situation. The issue must be based in New Zealand giving students some understanding of the geography of their own country. It scaffolds from a similar assessment at Level 1.

**UNPACKING THE TERMS**

* **Geographic Issue**: refers to a context that involves a concern, problem, debate or controversy related to a natural or cultural environment. It must have a spatial dimension or be able to be put on a map.
* **Contemporary**: means an issue of relevance now or will be in the near future (a proposal for a future action).
* **New Zealand Issue**: this can be of a local, regional or national scale.
* **Explain:** This means to provide reasons for, to account for, to provide a clear answer, to clarify. Logical reasons are provided.
* **Justification:** An assessment that weighs up the pros and cons and shows an action to be reasonable
* **Viewpoints:** A way of looking at or thinking about something.
* **Geographic Terminology:** using subject specific words that show an understanding of geography
* **Insight:** This means linking causes with effects - reading into and beyond the subject matter/evidence. Consideration of perspectives can help in showing insight

**DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN LEVELS**

There are several ways that the Level 2 standard is differentiated from Level 1. These include:

* The key instruction word here is to ‘explain’ whereas at Level 1 it is ‘describe’. As a result answers need to show not just what occurs but give reasons for it.
* The topic chosen - at Level 2 an explanation is required so the topic must have enough information and depth to allow for this.
* The depth of evidence provided must reflect Level 7 of the curriculum. As a result, what you expect for Level 2 for ‘describing the nature of the contemporary issue’ is not the same as what you would expect at Level 1 despite the fact the question is the same.
* The assistance that is given by the teacher. It is vital to read the Conditions of Assessment <http://ncea.tki.org.nz/Resources-for-Internally-Assessed-Achievement-Standards/Social-sciences/Geography/Level-2-Geography>. At Level 2 this states that the issue should be provided by the teacher or a selection of issues provided for students to choose from. The teacher should name the groups or individuals whose viewpoints are to be explained and state three courses of action that the student works from. If students are choosing their own contemporary issue the teacher should give guidance about suitability of the issue.
* The resources provided. At this level only some of the resources should be provided by the teacher. These should be of the appropriate reading level for this year group and be of sufficient quantity to enable the students to achieve at Excellence. It is important to check that the resources relate to the aspects required and that they are up to date. Students should provide additional resources themselves. If the topic is one that the students choose themselves then the teacher should provide guidance about where to access information.

**CHOICE OF TOPIC**

When deciding on a suitable topic you should consider the following:

* Ensure the issue is ‘geographic’. Many issues are more social and while these may be of interest to students they will struggle to extract the geography from them. A good geography topic is one that can be mapped.
* Ensure that the issue is ‘current’. That is it has not been built or developed but for which solutions can still be proposed and the possible courses of action are still valid.
* Ensure it is an issue over which there is some debate otherwise students will struggle to get contrasting viewpoints about it.
* Ensure you do not confuse the issue with the solution or outcome. There should be a possibility of at least 3 different possible courses of action for the issue.
* Ensure it is an issue where data is readily available. This especially applies to the viewpoints that may be hard to find.
* Can you combine this with another geography standard to cut down on background information? It is often useful to combine this with the 2.2 on Urban patterns by investigating an urban problem or the 2.1 Natural Landscapes topic such as exploring issues around land use controversies. It would also work well with the 2.5 research collecting data based on viewpoints or the 2.8 by using GIS to map the problem with the issue used.
* Choose a topic in the news or of interest to students. This can be done by basing this on something local for which the student will have some prior knowledge.

**EXAMPLES OF TOPICS**

* Controversy around the location of a facility such as a marina, hotel complex, museum or sports ground.
* Issues to do with conservation – mining in national parks, tourists visiting a national park, deforestation of a tract of local forest, pollution of a lake or river, possum or pest control, public access to beaches.
* Issues to do with promoting sustainability - traffic control, bicycle lanes, siting of a wind farm or tide turbine, rubbish reduction
* Issues to do with land use – converting farm land to housing development, siting of a dam, new industrial complex.
* Issues to do with urban development – traffic issues, attitudes to city crime, effect of closure of a service or industry.

**WRITING ASSESSMENT TASKS**

Writing your own assessment tasks is not difficult but can be daunting if you are new to geography teaching. Many resources are available via subject associations or cluster groups as teachers are willing to share ideas that have been proved to work well. There are several organisations that you can buy assessment tasks from such as Geostuff <http://www.geostuff.co.nz/home.html> and Classroom Solutions <http://www.classroomsolutions.co.nz/geography.html> that are often ideal to use in the first instance until you gain confidence.

If you are writing your own assessment tasks then use the exemplars provided on the TKI site as a guide. 2 exemplars are provided for each standard at <http://ncea.tki.org.nz/Resources-for-Internally-Assessed-Achievement-Standards/Social-sciences/Geography/Level-2-Geography>. You can download these and use them as a base to add your own context to. When doing this it is important that you use the language of the standard so have this available.

If you have constructed your own assessment task it is important that you get a fresh pair of eyes to moderate this before it is used.

The TKI resources are provided as exemplars of what is possible and should not be downloaded and used in their original format as they are readily accessible to students. However, you can adapt them.

**PRE-TEACHING**

This standard is likely to take several weeks to be completed. Before assessing this it is important students are familiar with the following:

* Background to the standard - what is required for each criterion?
* What is meant by viewpoints, beliefs, values and perception; and how to categorise viewpoints into those that are based on social, economic, political or environmental grounds.
* How to make judgements based on fact
* What the term specific information’ means and how to incorporate these into answers.
* How to write geographic answers
* Background to the geographic issue – what it is about, significance of location and the spatial dimension.
* Understanding the resources provided. What do they mean?
* A chance to add to the resources provided

**THE GEOGRAPHIC NATURE OF THE ISSUE**

This acts as an introduction to the assessment to ‘set the scene’ or what is the issue and why is it geographic? The reason it is geographic can be explored by:

* Including a map where the location of the issue can be identified and described in terms of why the location is important. The map can be annotated to provide evidence of the natural and/or cultural features relevant to the issue and show the scale of the impact. An annotation is more than just a label; it must describe how the feature is relevant to the issue.
* Asking for a description of how the issue involves an interaction between people and the environment – how it affects people and the environment.

It is important to recognize that the requirements of this aspect are likely to be met within answers to the aspects that follow. This is the reason why holistic marking is vital rather than being treated as separate questions.

**EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS RELATING TO THE ISSUE**

At Level 2 it is expected that the names of the individuals or groups to be investigated are provided by the teacher. As it states ‘viewpoints’ (plural) in the standard 2 or 3 viewpoints must be covered. Therefore a list from which a student chooses several is ideal. Ensure these are ‘different’ viewpoints so they cover different ends of a spectrum.

This aspect is differentiated from Achieved to Merit to Excellence.

For Achievement 2 or more viewpoints must be explained. This means not just a description of what the individual/group thinks about the issue (for, against or neutral) but gives a reason for this. These should be in the student’s own words and not a direct copy from the resources provided.

For Merit 2 or more viewpoints need to be explained as per achievement. The difference here relates to the quality and depth of the answer by incorporating specific information such as names or statistics relating to the issue.

For Excellence the step up relates to the depth of reasoning provided for the viewpoints. Here it is expected to give reasoning behind the viewpoints that explores perspectives (social, economic, political or environmental) values and/or beliefs. The answer should also show insight and use geographic terminology and concepts.

**HOW VIEWPOINTS CHANGE OVER TIME**

The intention here is to show that viewpoints can and do change over time for a variety of reasons.Change is taken as a move on a continuum **–** for example a viewpoint can change from being ‘for’ to being ‘against’ the issue but equally can change from being slightly in favour to strongly in favour of it.The approach to this will depend on the issue selected**.** If the issue is in the early stages it may be difficult to find any ‘change’. Instead it is possible to examine factors that **could** change a viewpoint – in other words to suggest a hypothetical answer.

This aspect is differentiated from Achieved to Merit to Excellence. For Achievement it is necessary to only describe how a viewpoint may change – it started like this and developed to this. For Merit an explanation for the change needs to be supplied as well as some case study evidence. For Excellence both the explanation and the evidence needs to be in detail along with the use of geographic terminology.

**EXPLAINING THE STRENGTH(S) AND WEAKNESS(ES) OF DIFFERENT COURSES OF ACTION**

It is expected that the teacher provide students at Level 2 with the courses of action they are to investigate. 3 courses of action should be supplied of which one can be doing nothing or a compromise of the other 2. .

For each course of action students need to provide strength(s) and weakness(es). At least one strength and weakness (both are asked for in the standard) are required for 2 options as a baseline for achievement. The step up from Achievement to Merit is in the requirement to ‘explain in detail’. To explain in detail requires the use of specific case study evidence. For Excellence the response should also focus on the main strength and weakness and should demonstrate understanding of the option that is more than just comprehension from resource material.

**THE PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION**

This aspect is based on how well students argue why they have selected the option they believe is best to solve this issue. The recommendation needs to go beyond the ideas in the evaluation before.

For Achievement a course of action must be recommended with a reason. This can be one of the options provided or a combination or compromise of them. For Merit a course of action must be recommended with detailed reasons (a justification). For Excellence the step up is to not only give comprehensive reasons for the recommendation but also to demonstrate why it is better than the other options. This last point needs to be well explored rather than as a last minute ‘add on’. The teacher can point out the need to compare this to each of the other options in the student instructions.

**MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT**

The standard can be lengthy and take several weeks to complete. A useful approach to this standard is to collect assessment evidence during the course of the learning. You teach the first aspect, set a task and collect that evidence and then move onto the next. Such an approach means that the assessment does not interfere with the learning. If this is done it is important it is not marked between each stage since a holistic judgment must be applied at the end.

The majority of schools assess this standard using a written booklet. However, it can be assessed in other ways such as producing a poster or power point or movie although it must be ensured that enough depth is given. It is also possible to do as an oral presentation if feasible with class numbers. You can also assess the different aspects in different ways.

If doing in a written format it often helps to provide a booklet for this standard as it assists the student in seeing how much you are expecting at each stage. However, do ensure if you do this that space is provided for the excellence student to be creative.

**MARKING OF THE ASSESSMENT**

It is important to note the aspects of the issue that step up through the grades and how the quality is determined. The chart on the next page unpacks the Achievement Criteria. The final judgment is based on a holistic examination of the evidence.

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| **Achievement** | **Achievement with Merit** | **Achievement with Excellence** |
| DescribeExplain | Explain in detail | Fully explainFully justify |
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