

GEOGRAPHY TIPS 3.4

GEOGRAPHIC SKILLS (AS91429)

Demonstrate understanding of a given environment(s) through selection and application of geographic concepts and skills

**WHAT IS THIS ASSESSMENT ABOUT?**

Students are provided with a resource booklet of unfamiliar material based around a theme. These can be based in one location only or several. For example, it could be the theme of ‘urbanisation” looking at different effects of this process on one city such as Hong Kong. Alternatively it may include resources on one aspect of the theme eg traffic management based in several cities that can then be compared.

Students are then expected to use their general geographic understanding to interpret these resources drawing on different geography skills and applying concepts.

By basing this on one or several environments this fulfills the AO’s at Level 8 namely:

* *understand how interacting processes shape natural and cultural environments, occur at different rates and on different scales, and create spatial variations.*
* *understand how people’s diverse values and perceptions influence the environmental, social, and economic decisions and responses that they make.*

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN LEVELS IN SKILLS?**

There are several ways that the skills are differentiated between Level 1, 2 and 3. These include:

* The term ‘selection and application’ of skills
* The skills that are required
* The depth of understanding relating to concepts
* The complexity of resources
* The literacy level required for resources
* The complexity of questions asked.

The Skills list that is currently available on the NZQA site and the Teaching and Learning Guidelines make it clear that the following step up applies:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **LEVEL 1** | **LEVEL 2** | **LEVEL 3** |
| Skills | Basic only | Basic and Advanced Skills | Selection and application of Basic and Advanced |
| Concepts | Given with simple meaning | Given with more complex meaning | Either provided with complex meaning or student selects appropriate one |
| Resources | Simple resources only – one resource provided per question | Resources more complex – use of more than one resource per question | Complex resources with students utilizing several resources per question |
| Literacy Level | Small amount of written information provided at Level 1 literacy | More written resources provided at Level 2 literacy | Resources more complex so student needs to sift through information provided at Level 3 literacy. |
| Questions | Questions straightforward | Intermediate | Questions need more interpretation |

**WHAT IS INVOLVED**

If you break down the criteria into the different grades you will see there are two main aspects involved:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ACHIEVE-MENT | MERIT | EXCELLENCE |
| Analyse the environment(s) through selection and application of concepts |  |  |  |
| Selecting and Using Geographic Skills and Conventions |  |  |  |

**Understanding of an Environment using concepts**

This section of the standard goes up to excellence. Students are expected to apply general geographic knowledge to the given theme based on the resource material. The concepts to be applied are the Key Concepts identified in the Teaching and Learning guidelines unless signaled otherwise in the assessment specifications. In most cases the students will be provided with a definition of the concept at this level. This is likely to be a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts than ones used at Level 1. Students should read this definition carefully and refer to it in an answer.

Differentiation of grades also is based on using higher level analysis skills such as being able to ‘compare’, ‘justify’ or ‘evaluate’.

The main difference between grades relates to a continuum from being able to apply a concept through to applying it in depth (merit) to being able to apply it using insight or geographic terminology and detail (excellence).

**Selection and Application of Skills**

This section only goes to a Merit level. Students can either select and apply skills and gain Achievement or select and apply the skills with precision to take them to a Merit level. The skills that are to be covered are those identified in the Skills list published on the TKI site and referred to in the Teaching and learning guidelines. This can be found at:

<http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Social-sciences/Geography/Skills-and-concepts>

This list only identifies skills considered basic and those that are more complex. The intention is that the skills are the same as at Level 2 so teachers should not be teaching any new skills from scratch but merely re addressing them from the previous year.

The differentiation from Level 2 to Level 3 lies in the term ‘selection’. This puts more emphasis on the ability to use skills to interpret resources. If you are given a topographic map you can then write about the physical and/or human geography shown from it. If you are given an age-sex pyramid the student should be able to write about characteristics of a population. If you are given a table of statistics the student should be able to select an appropriate graph to show these.

This does mean that questions asking for a particular skill such as “What is the grid reference of ….” will not be there. However, if evidence is asked for based on a topographic map the student would be rewarded for using appropriate skills to locate features like grid references, latitude and longitude or distance and direction. A student may be given information about a setting in a written newspaper article and asked to present this in a visual format. In this case knowing how to draw annotated précis maps would be very useful.

The term ‘precision’ suggests more use of established conventions (such as in graphing and maps) or being more accurate in measurement. Often one skill will be broken down into both basic and complex according to how accurately the skill has been completed. For example a graph that fails to provide a title or labeled axes but fulfills other requirements may only be awarded an Achieved while a student with most conventions will be awarded a Merit for this skill.

**WHAT THE ASSESSMENT IS LIKE**

The paper is marked using the grade score marking principle. Since this works best in papers that use either one question or three or more the reality is that the assessment is likely to have three questions. This then ensures that a range of different resources, concepts and skills are utilized.

Each question will be broken down into parts which each contribute to a mark out of 8. The whole paper is then marked out of 8 x 3 = 24 possible marks.

**SUGGESTED APPROACH**

Most schools begin their level 3 geography programme addressing some of the skills and concepts that students will require for this standard. A brief recall of the skills done in Level 2 will ensure that these are not forgotten and a link made to the present programme. In the same way revisit the main concepts through a power point and card matching activity.

It is important that students are use to using a good range of skills throughout the year. It is good practice to introduce new settings by using different skills. If you are doing your 3.2 based on tourism in Rotorua start the topic by seeing what information about Rotorua they can gain from a selection of maps, photographs and statistics.

In the same way introduce skills through current geographic issues. When a disaster strikes look at different aerial photographs or maps and see what information can be gained from them. Capture student interest by putting up photos of different places in the world and get students to apply questions to it. Best of all is to introduce regular quizzes to your classes (fabulous if you hit the last period on a Friday!) that include interpreting maps and models like age-sex pyramids and wind roses.

It is often common to have students doing Level 3 Geography that have never studied the subject before. While geography welcomes this, the lack of pre-requisites does make this challenging. One way around this is to give the students a level 1 skills book (most skills are explained in these) to complete before beginning the course. Alternatively if you have several of these students provide a catch up session for them while others practice these skills or pair them up with an expert who can explain these to them. Since the skills now only count towards a merit grade such students are now less disadvantaged in this standard.

In terms of the concepts refer to these throughout your course to get students use to the language. If you have time then use a film at the start of the year and ask students to apply different concepts to it (like the old work of fiction unit standard). Apply concepts to any current geographic issue.

In the same way ensure students understand the instruction words. When an issue arises that has different viewpoints get students to justify their position on a continuum or evaluate the pros and cons of different courses of action. You could consider doing a debate on such an issue.

It is also essential to teach students the necessary writing skills. While geography does not demand an introduction, body and conclusion a student that plans an answer is more likely to answer the set question well. Such answers should also include geographic terminology to reach excellence grades.

**COMMON ERRORS IN ASSESSMENT OF THIS STANDARD**

* Students copied huge chunks of information from the resource book in the belief this is providing ‘detail’ in answers whereas this does not ‘demonstrate understanding’. Students need to understand how to use resource specifics appropriately.
* Students used the name of a concept many times but did not demonstrate its understanding by using it appropriately in context. The ability to apply this and show understanding is vital.
* Some students struggled to extract information using several resources. They require guidance here.
* Students were unable to use command words appropriately such as ‘critically evaluate’ meaning they had to make a decision based on the evidence provided.
* Many were unable to apply basic graphing techniques such as appropriate scales, having a title and labelled axes.
* Several students did not know how to use basic skills to describe location such as distance and direction.
* Many did not attempt all parts of each question. With 8 marks per question it means a student who leaves gaps stands a lower chance of gaining a ‘pass’ mark. Even if incorrect a mark of 1 or 2 can help to gain achievement overall.

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