

NZBOGT - 2006 Examinations Survey Results Summary

NCEA Level 1, 2006

The number of respondents n = 22

Responses were positive overall with 86% of the respondents rating the 2006 Geography Level 1 NCEA externals as either the same (50%) or better (36%) when compared to the 2005 NCEA externals.

Most respondents commented favourably re the overall layout of the papers; the clarity of instructions; level of difficulty, and resources provided. Three hours was also seen as an appropriate length of time for excellence students and the reduction in the number of long paragraph type question was welcomed.

In comparing the four NCEA external papers the level of difficulty of the questions, the skills demanded and the appropriateness of the activities set were considered appropriate. Giving candidates a choice to make reference to a case study (or studies) and allowing them to use combination of notes and sketches to answer questions was perceived positively by some. The wording of questions used in AS90202 '*You may answer in paragraph form or use a combination of diagrams and notes*' however came under criticism as it implied that if you wrote a paragraph you could not incorporate diagrams, a notion contrary to good practice. Such wording needs clarification if used in the externals for 2007. Concern was also expressed that if reference to two case studies were required to gain either achievement with either 'merit' or 'excellence' then this should have been explicitly indicated to the candidates.

Fifty four percent of survey respondents at Level 1, indicated they were not offering 'all' Level 1 achievement standards for credit in their Year 11 teaching programmes. The most achievement standard most frequently dropped were AS90203 (1.2) and AS90294 (1.3). Twenty three percent of the schools surveyed were offering one or more unit standards.

NCEA Level 2, 2006

The number of respondents n = 22

Responses to the 2006 Geography Level 2 NCEA externals papers were mixed. While twenty five percent rated the NCEA Level 2 papers as better than the previous years, a disturbing fifty percent rated them as being worse.

Respondents commented favourably on the overall format of the papers, clarity of instructions, the relevance of individual questions and the geographic skills to the syllabus/standards assessed, a number of concerns were raised, particularly in relation to the nature of the three PCT related achievement standards.

Concerns

- The lack of time provided, especially for candidates attempting to answer all four external papers. This was also perceived as disadvantaging candidates seeking excellence. A reduction in the length of papers, and the provision of choices within the papers were seen as possible solutions.
- Over emphasis on paragraph /essay style questions requiring too much writing.
- The need for more stimulus material and shorter warm up and skills based questions are need to provide variety.
- Some of the questions asked in both AS2.2 and AS2.3 were considered too specific and too narrow in nature.
- Many felt the level of difficulty re the externals is still pitched too high for the Year 12 geography students creating retention problems.
- The external paper for AS 2.3 was marked out as being more challenging than the others, not only for the average student but especially so for those trying to achieve excellence. AS 2.2 was considered to be the next most difficult.

Forty four percent of survey respondents indicated they were offering 'all' of the Level 2 achievement standards for credit in their Year 12 programmes. For those offering reduced credits AS90333 (2.3) was the most frequently dropped followed by AS90332 (2.2). A number indicated they were offering the equivalent unit standards in their place, as a direct strategy to help enable Level 2 students complete the externals.

NCEA Level 3, 2006

The number of respondents n = 22

Overall respondents commented favourably on the overall format of the papers, the clarity of instructions, the appropriateness of the questions and the range of geographic skills assessed.

In addition a number of respondents made the following comments:

- Sixty five percent of respondents felt the 3 hour time allocation was insufficient creating time management difficulties for students particularly the more able students seeking achievement with excellence and those attempting 4 papers.
- Many reported AS3.4 in particular to be time consuming and containing more challenging/difficult skills than previous papers causing students to struggle.
- The external papers for AS3.1 and AS3.2 would benefit from including stimulus material.
- In AS 3.2 applying Manaakitanga to cultural process other than tourism and maybe migration was difficult. Creating issues of fairness.

Other General Comments expressed.

- Questions were raised regarding consistency between Year levels. The jump from Level 1 requirements to Level 2 are currently considered to be too high especially

in terms of content knowledge demanded. Similarly the gap between the skills required in AS2.4 and AS3.4 was also considered to too great

- Questions were raised at the inconsistencies in the results gained
 - 1) between the internal and external achievement standards at each level and
 - 2) between the external PCTs at each grade level
- Concerns expressed at the apparent non-achievement rates at level 2 in particular, and the negative impact they have on the ability to promote our subject.
- Questions were asked regarding the unfair advantage students are gaining from doing one or more unit standards in the place of the external achievement standards, and getting the benefit of additional time (and often credits) in the exams over the students attempting all four papers.

Scholarship Award

The exam survey did not ask questions directly, regarding the Scholarship Award. Those who did comment indicated it was a good topic with interesting resources provided. That the questions set were clear, time allocation appropriate and assessment specifications helpful.

Action

Copies of the Exam Survey results were forwarded to the Assessment Division of NZQA

- highlighting the key issues raised in the survey (and deemed by the Board to be of importance) along with suggestions for future improvements
- requesting that the Exam Survey results be forwarded to the current examiners for reference in setting future geography papers.

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