National Moderator Report 2025
Geography

The following report gives feedback to assist assessors with general issues and trends that have been identified during external moderation of the Level 1 internally assessed standards in 2024. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Geography.

Insights

91932: Demonstrate understanding of the spatial distribution of a phenomenon and its impacts on place

Performance overview:

This standard requires students to describe the spatial distribution of a phenomenon, factors or processes that contribute to its distribution, and the impacts of the phenomenon on place.

The standard was able to be met when students recognised the spatial distribution of the phenomenon by providing a clear and accurate description and showed understanding of how the selected factors or processes influenced this distribution. Examples of geographic terminology used to describe the spatial dimensions of the phenomenon included cluster, linear, peripheral, and discontinuous. The evidence provided explicit links between characteristics of the distribution and the factors or processes.

The emphasis needs to be on the causal relationship with the distribution. Describing how the phenomenon is created is not required by the standard.

Evidence for the impacts of the phenomenon tended to show understanding of how changes to features of a particular geographic area were due to the phenomenon. The focus needs to be on the impacts, with relevant case study evidence used to add detail reflecting the chosen place.

Practices that need strengthening:

Further consideration could be given to:

- the selection of the phenomenon and the size of place or geographic area
- the geographic knowledge required
- the use of relevant case study evidence.

The geographic phenomenon and place need to be carefully selected. Consideration should be given to whether the phenomenon exhibits a clear spatial distribution. The size of the geographic area needs to be sufficient to enable a distribution pattern to be clearly identified, reflect actions of several factors or processes contributing to the pattern, and provide evidence of impacts of the phenomenon.

To ensure quality of the evidence, students need to understand the geography of the phenomenon, its contributing factors or processes, and the selected environment. For example, evidence submitted for earthquakes, tropical cyclones, and population distribution generally demonstrated the required geographic understanding. However, this was occasionally hindered when the ‘place’ was poorly selected.

Understanding of these phenomena was stronger when a national or regional scale was used, specifically earthquakes in New Zealand or the Pacific region, tropical cyclones in the Southwest Pacific, and population distribution in New Zealand or Australia. Reducing the size of the geographic area provided a better opportunity than using a global scale. The spatial distribution of a phenomenon at a global scale can be too complex, which results in evidence that lacks depth or fails to reflect the global environment. An exception to this was with global piracy and rainforests, but with less consistent results partly due to limited geographic understanding of the relevant factors or processes or key places.

Knowledge of the chosen 'place' should be demonstrated through selection and use of relevant case study evidence. Use of this evidence needs to clearly reflect the chosen geographic area and exemplify ideas. For example, impacts of the phenomenon should be the focus, with case studies used to provide depth to the description/explanation and support making judgements. Case studies also help show relationships between changes to features of a particular geographic area, such as landslides and damage to infrastructure or intensive settlement and pollution.

91933: Explore an environment using data

Performance overview:

The focus of this standard is on the student's ability to process, present, and interpret data to explore a chosen environment. Consideration also needs to be given to how the data strengthened and/or limited understanding of the environment, and how additional data can improve understanding. While this standard can incorporate research strategies, it is not assessing a student's ability to undertake geographic research.

Evidence that successfully achieved this standard was characterised by presentation of a range of relevant data that enabled the environment to be explored. The presented data included a map that clearly defined the dimensions of the chosen environment, and the findings demonstrated skills of data interpretation to describe understandings about the environment.

An Achieved response will use the presented data to describe findings about an environment. The findings are understandings about the environment that are found and drawn from the data, rather than a description of the displayed data.

Achievement at the higher grades is dependent on the use of data to support an explanation of the findings. Some of the evidence seen effectively presented the data by combining datasets in a way that showed both 'what' and 'why or how'. This naturally led to the findings being both described and explained. Examples included annotating a map with photographs and displaying graphs with a map.

Evidence which met the standard included a focus on how data can strengthen/limit understanding of the environment, rather than an evaluation of the collection of data.

Practices that need strengthening:

Further consideration could be given to:

- the selection of an environment
- the range and quality of data available to students
- the interpretation of the data to provide findings
- evaluating the data in relation to how it influenced understanding of the environment.

Selection of one environment is sufficient to meet the requirements of this standard. Comparison between two or more environments can detract from the exploration of an environment, resulting in an excessive volume of descriptive evidence. The environment needs to be clearly defined, and knowledge of key geographic processes and elements of the environment understood. For example, exploring a section of a river or coast needs to include more than simply a focus on characteristics of one element or process, in order to enable the environment to be interpreted and analysed.

The range and quality of the data available is critical to achieving this standard. Where students relied solely on primary data, they often struggled to explain the findings and draw valid conclusions. Whereas students who were familiar with their environment and gathered some data, but also had access to quality secondary data, tended to explore their environment in more depth. When using secondary data, it is important that it is processed in some way so that the final presented image is generated by the student. For example, photographs could be annotated by the student to show description of features, location of processes, and sites of data collection.

The findings evidence needs to demonstrate skills of data interpretation to formulate understandings about the environment. Simply describing the presented data is insufficient. The data available needs to enable explanation of the findings. While secondary data (such as models or theory) can inform an explanation, they need to be supported with specific evidence relevant to the environment. For example, explanations of a mapped and photographed sand dune would draw on presented data such as graphed wind speed or saltation data, photographed transects, and a drawn beach profile.

How the data strengthened and/or limited understanding of the environment must be considered. This would include explicit linking of data and understanding. For example, how a small dataset could limit understanding of the environment, or how an interview with a long-term resident could increase understanding of the environment. Evidence for how the data was collected, and an evaluation of the data collection, is not a requirement of this standard.

Assessor Support

NZQA offers online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards*
- National Moderator Reports*
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific)**
- Clarifications for some standards*
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards**
- Webcasts*

*hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

**hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. Accessed via Education Sector Login.

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact workshops@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.

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