

Marking Instantiations for the Three Research-based Coursework Assignments

The three assignments we provided for you to assess have been marked by a panel of 14 expert geography examiners drawn from different university mission groups in order to provide a portfolio of calibrated work. Below, you can find a grade descriptor awarded for each piece of work as determined through the expert process along with a summary explanation of the key reasons the grade was awarded. These mirror the descriptor for a higher education qualification at FHEQ Level 6 (see Annex 1) and the Geography Subject Benchmark Statement Standards and Levels of Achievement (Annex 2).

Student 1: High upper second-class pass

A logical structure and generally strong argument. Useful linking to broad concepts and thinkers in geography and to diverse methods of research. Demonstrates critical awareness of geographical research. Very good range and use of appropriate literature. A strong attempt to think integratively, but lacks depth of critical analysis of each chosen topic to gain a higher grade. Could be more consideration of how and why topics are specifically geographical and personally relevant. Generally well-written/articulate, but there are some weaknesses. Not the most convincing conclusion.

Student 2: Mid third-class pass

A weak essay that lacks clear structure, focus and argument. Poorly presented (in terms of figures and text) and substantially below the word limit, leaving discussions under-developed/superficial. Much of the writing is descriptive/colloquial (and sometimes convoluted) with little synthesis or critical analysis. Wanders off-question, not really focusing on the practice or relevance of geographical research in the twenty-first century. Limited referencing, leading to many unsubstantiated generalisations. But, there is reference to seminars and personal reflection on the topic, including some critique, thereby meeting the learning outcomes.

Student 3: Clear first-class pass

A detailed understanding of current research and literature is shown. Excellent clarity of structure and organisation. Evidence of independent, insightful/original and integrative thought. Careful inter-weaving of broader geographical concepts, methods, debates and complexities. Nuanced and focused argument linked to an impressive range of sources. Excellent level

of depth and sophistication. Generally excellent standards of literacy and presentation. Figures and tables are well presented, but could be referred to more effectively. Including a discussion of the specifically geographical perspective of the research, with broader reflection, would further elevate the grade.

Annex 1: Descriptor for a higher education qualification at FHEQ Level 6: Bachelor's degree with honours

The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any bachelor's degree with honours which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 6 qualifications, including bachelor's degrees, graduate diplomas etc.

Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
 - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
 - an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
 - the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
 - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

Extract taken from:

QAA (2008) *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, pp 18-20. Available at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf>.

Annex 2: Geography Subject Benchmark Statement Standards and Levels of Achievement

	Threshold	Typical	Excellent
Knowledge and understanding	Describe and exemplify the nature of change within human environments	Demonstrate comprehension of the nature of change within human environments	Demonstrate critical insight into the nature and causes of change within human environments
	Describe and exemplify the nature of change within physical environments	Demonstrate comprehension of the nature of change within physical environments	Demonstrate critical insight into the nature and causes of change within physical environments
	Describe and exemplify the reciprocal relationships between physical and human environments	Demonstrate comprehension of the reciprocal relationships between physical and human	Demonstrate critical insight of the complexity of the reciprocal relationships between physical and human
	Describe and exemplify the significance of spatial and temporal relationships as influences upon physical and human environments	Demonstrate comprehension of the significance of spatial and temporal relationships as influences upon physical and human environments	Demonstrate critical insight of the significance of spatial and temporal relationships as influences on physical and human environments
	Describe and exemplify the diversity and interdependence of places	Demonstrate comprehension of the diversity and interdependence of places at various spatial scales	Reflect on and appraise the reasons for the diversity and interdependence of places at various spatial scales

	Describe and exemplify the diversity of approaches to generation of knowledge and understanding deriving from experience of the epistemologies of the natural and social sciences and humanities	Evaluate the diversity of approaches to the generation of knowledge and understanding deriving from experience of the epistemologies of the natural and social sciences and humanities	Critically appraise the diversity of approaches to the generation of knowledge and understanding deriving from experience of the epistemologies of the natural and social sciences and humanities
	Carry out routine investigations as instructed	Apply understanding of geographical concepts in different situations	Apply a reflective understanding of geographical concepts in
	Know the difference between accuracy and precision	Apply a systematic approach to accuracy, precision and uncertainty	Critically reflect on the accuracy, precision and uncertainty of research data

Subject-specific skills	Illustrate the issues involved in applying research design and execution skills within the specific context of field-based research	Evaluate the issues involved in applying research design and execution skills within the specific context of field-based research	Formulate a sophisticated and comprehensive analysis of the issues involved in applying research design and execution skills within the specific context of field-based research, including alternative options
	Illustrate diversity of techniques and approaches involved in collecting geographical information (for example instrumentation, remote sensing, cartographic surveying, social survey, observation and the use of	Evaluate the diversity of techniques and approaches involved in collecting geographical information (for example instrumentation, remote sensing, cartographic surveying, social survey, observation and the use of	Critically appraise and reflect on use of the diversity of techniques and approaches involved in collecting geographical information (for example instrumentation, remote sensing, cartographic surveying, social survey, observation and the use of textual and archival
	Illustrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches for analysis of geographical information and data and perform basic applications	Evaluate both quantitative and qualitative approaches for analysis of geographical information and data, including competence in the application of a range of these approaches	Critically appraise and reflect on the application of quantitative and qualitative approaches for analysis of geographical data, including excellent and sophisticated application of a range of these approaches

	<p>Illustrate diversity of specialised techniques and approaches involved in analysing geographical information (for example special techniques for the analysis of spatial information, GIS, laboratory techniques, qualitative and quantitative techniques)</p>	<p>Evaluate the diversity of specialised techniques and approaches involved in analysing geographical information (for example special techniques for the analysis of spatial information, GIS, laboratory techniques, qualitative and quantitative techniques)</p>	<p>Demonstrate a mastery of techniques and approaches involved in analysing geographical information (for example special techniques for the analysis of spatial information, GIS, laboratory techniques, qualitative and quantitative techniques) and very good judgement of their</p>
	<p>Illustrate diversity of specialised techniques and approaches involved in presenting geographical knowledge and information (for example GIS, cartography and different textual strategies)</p>	<p>Evaluate the diversity of specialised techniques and approaches involved in presenting geographical information (for example GIS, cartography and different textual strategies)</p>	<p>Critically evaluate and reflect on the appropriate application of the diversity of specialised geographical techniques and approaches</p>
	<p>Communicate personal views about geographical issues</p>	<p>Communicate and compare different views about geographical issues</p>	<p>Critically reflect on a range of views about geographical issues and come to a reasoned evaluation</p>

Generic skills	Communicate geographical ideas, principles and theories by written, oral and visual means	Communicate geographical ideas, principles and theories effectively and fluently by written, oral and	Communicate geographical ideas, principles and theories with flair, accuracy and sophistication by written, oral
	Present material to support a reasoned argument	Relate material appropriately to the intended audience	Ability to excellently communicate complex arguments to a variety of
	Use communications and ICT to select, analyse, present and communicate geographical information	Use communications and ICT effectively and appropriately to select, analyse, present and communicate geographical	Use communications and ICT with a high level of competence to select, analyse, present and communicate geographical information
	Interpret and use numerical and statistical information	Interpret and use numerical and statistical information effectively and appropriately	Interpret and use numerical and statistical information in a sophisticated manner
	Apply basic numerical skills to geographical information	Apply more advanced numerical and statistical skills effectively and appropriately to	Apply sophisticated numerical and statistical skills and techniques effectively and appropriately to geographical

	Undertake independent/self-directed study/learning (including time management) within a supportive framework	Undertake independent/self-directed study/learning (including time management) to achieve consistent, proficient and	Undertake highly autonomous and well organised study/learning and time management to achieve consistent, proficient and
	Perform assigned tasks within a group setting and take part in group discussions	Work as a participant or leader of a group and contribute effectively to the achievement of objectives	Demonstrate group leadership and supportive participation of others within a group setting to achieve objectives
		Analyse the process of learning and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses	Critically reflect on the process of learning, evaluating personal strengths and weaknesses and alternative strategies

Extract taken from:

QAA (2014) *Geography Subject Benchmark Statement*, pp 16–19. Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2873#.WqPkGWrFKM8>

