

Reports

Advice for teachers

Geography

July 2014

Technique: Report

Geography

Compiled by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

July 2014

About this advice

This advice is intended to help teachers implement the syllabus in their school setting. It provides information about the following:

- reports
- their purpose and structure.

Technique: Report

What is a report?

A report is an individual written response to an investigation based on primary sources such as maps, statistics (such as ABS statistics) and information gathered in the field. In a report, secondary sources should be less important than primary sources.

A report requires students to show their ability to design and implement a research plan, gather data and demonstrate analytical and decision making processes.

A report uses subsections, headings and observes formal language and geographic conventions.

Like essays reports are written in third person. Support materials (maps, diagrams, images and tables) and a correctly referenced bibliography are essential components. Reports may also incorporate ICTs.

It is mandatory to include a report based on primary data when developing an exit assessment plan. (Geography Senior Syllabus pp. 69–71)

Conditions

- The syllabus mandates no conditions except the word length of 800–1000 words
- In order to meet syllabus word lengths the scope of the investigation needs to be at a manageable scale
- Care should be taken to authenticate student responses. A report should include accurate referencing of all source material

Criteria

A report gathers evidence of criteria 2, 3 and 4.

Criterion 2: Analytical processes

- identification and explanation of geographical patterns and processes — breaking information into parts, identifying and explaining the elements of a pattern or the steps in a process
- transformation, interpretation and extrapolation of geographical information — *understanding the meaning of information and explaining trends*
- identification and thorough explanation of simple and complex relationships, including anomalies — *identifying and suggesting causes of relationships*

Analytical processes relate to the following key questions of geographical inquiry:

- What and where are the issues or patterns being studied?
- How and why do these issues and patterns develop?
- What are the impacts of these issues and patterns?

Criterion 3: Decision-making processes

- evaluation of alternative proposals/strategies/solutions/plans
- application of a range of appropriate criteria to the alternatives

Fine grained statements or questions such as '*retention of riparian vegetation*' or '*Will the strategy improve services for elderly residents?*' rather than the broad categories of environmental, economic and social will assist students' decision-making skills.

- making a judgment/decision about the alternatives
- recognising the need to balance or prioritise the decision-making criteria
- justifying the decision

Decision-making processes relate to the following key question of geographic inquiry

- What is being done or what could be done to sustainably manage these impacts?

Criterion 4: Research and communication

- gathering and recording information from sources and settings
- organising information prior to analysis and decision making
- referencing and acknowledging sources
- establishing currency, validity and reliability of information
- using geographic and language conventions
- integrating maps, diagrams, statistics and referencing, adhering to geographic conventions.

Designing a report

Scale

Reports should be manageable in scale to facilitate data gathering and decision making processes. Think local and small scale when designing report instruments. For example a city or suburban block or a particular site within a block is an appropriate scale. A region or city is not an appropriate scale, given word limit constraints.

Field studies should also focus on an area of manageable size. Students should gather data in a range of forms such as sketches, photos, measurements and records of interviews.

Format

Reports can vary in their structure. The following is a suggested format.

Title Page
Table of Contents
1. Introduction
• Background
– What was investigated?

- Why is it an important question?
- Purpose
 - Outlines the aim and purpose of the report
 - The given context of assessment piece — site and situation of the investigation
 - Possibly define the key terms for the purpose of the investigation
e.g. *The purpose of this study was to ...*
Three possible strategies were investigated to manage the ...
- Methodology
 - What data collection techniques were used?
e.g. traffic survey, water quality testing for pH levels, questionnaire distributed to local residents
 - Where and when was data collected?
 - How effective were the data collection methods?
 - Were there limitations in the design and implementation of the research plan?

2. Statement/Discussion of findings

In this section, primary data (usually raw data collected in the field) will need to be transformed into a format that allows analytical processes to take place. It is not enough to simply describe the phenomena observed or measured. Analysis shows evidence of:

- identifying patterns in the area under study
e.g. patterns of weed infestation along a walking track in a national park
- identifying the processes that cause variations to patterns — physical, economic, social and political
- explaining trends
e.g. changes over time, maximum and minimum, fluctuations, rates of increase and decrease
- identifying relationships
e.g. distance from work and preferred mode of travel to work
- explaining relationships
e.g. strong or weak, positive or negative
- explaining cause and effect
- identifying data that does not fit dominant patterns and relationships — anomalies
- explaining impacts — physical, economic, social and political
- explaining the significance of the data to the issue in general.

Students will need to determine the most effective format for presenting data to assist analytical processes.

For example:

- Identifying patterns and processes: maps, flow charts, diagrams, graphic organisers
- Trends over time: line graphs
- Making comparisons: bar graphs, choropleth maps
- Groups in relation to a whole: pie graphs
- Relationships between variables: scatter graphs
- Distributions histograms, tables, maps
- Direct evidence: photographs, field sketches
- Summarising numerical (quantitative) data: tables.

These are integrated into the Statement/Discussion of Findings, are directly referred to in the written analysis and should adhere to geographic conventions.

(www.qcaa.qld.edu.au > [Learning P–12](#) > [Years 11 and 12](#) > [Social and Environmental Studies](#) >

[Geography \(2007\)](#) > Advice for teachers > Geographic Conventions).

Students should not reiterate each value from a table or figure. Only key results or trends relevant to the analysis should be discussed.

Subsections may be used, for example:

Section 2:	Statement of Findings
2.1	Patterns and Processes within the Catchment
2.1.1	Built Environment

Care should be taken not to overuse subsections as this may detract from the flow of analysis.

3. Conclusion

In this section students will need to evaluate the relative effectiveness of alternative proposals in addressing the issues raised in the analysis in Section 2.

- Proposals, plans, solutions and/or strategies should be provided or discussed with the teacher.
- Alternative proposals should be equally valid and feasible.
- There should be a minimum of two and a maximum of three proposals.
- Criteria for evaluation should be provided — three are preferred.
- Criteria should be specific and may be worded as a statement or question.

The evaluation of alternative proposals needs to be more than just an inclusion of a decision-making matrix. Students should outline the main conclusions that can be drawn from the matrix and provide a logical argument that shows an understanding of balancing or prioritising decision-making criteria.

4. Recommendations

These are drawn from the conclusions. They outline the specific actions that are required. When detailing the recommendations students may also need to consider:

- Who will take action on the recommendations?
- How they will be measured and what are the timeframes for the recommendations?

The priority that is placed on each recommendation may also be required.

Students will need to justify their decisions, explaining the reasons for and against their recommendations.

Recommendations need to flow logically from the data that is presented in the report.

5. References/Bibliography

Use an accepted referencing system in accordance with school policy
e.g. *Harvard*

6. Appendices

The appendices include related materials, if appropriate. These are not included in the word count. These are optional for the reader, that is, the reader can choose whether they refer to them or not. This would include copies of surveys, interview questions, raw data, extra photographs, diagrams of specialised measuring apparatus.

References

The following may offer assistance in the design of fieldwork and nature of geographical research.

Australian Geography Teachers' Association 2008, *Keys to Fieldwork: Essential skills and tools*, Macmillan, Melbourne.

Allaway, R *Geography all the way dot com — Online Geography Resources*
www.geographyalltheway.com

Barcelona Field Studies Centre S.L. 2009 <http://geographyfieldwork.com>