Results of survey about Higher Geography Paper

- 10.8% thought the paper was fair/OK or better
- 54% thought it was poor/shocking/terrible/worst ever and nothing like specimen or previous paper
- 31% specifically said it was narrow, limiting and did not reflect the breadth of the course
- 74.8% said that there was too much human or not enough physical
- 21% specifically mentioned the ‘samey’ questions, testing the same skills, on conflict management and effectiveness of...and a further 13.7% that this disadvantaged pupils and one poor question means disaster
- 30% specifically questioned the mark allocation. Mark allocation was questioned both in individual questions where there was no headroom and also overall balance of mark allocation
- The overall marks for the paper are inadequate to allow a fair paper for a wide range of candidates. If pupils can’t do a 6 mark question, they lose 10% in a stroke
- Exam paper did not reflect the demands of the course – maybe it served the needs of other social subjects - just NOT Geography!
- Pupils didn’t feel they were tested on a wide enough range of topics to show their knowledge – particularly their physical KU. Pupils disappointed, disheartened, frustrated that their hard work was wasted and could not be demonstrated. 4 months’ work not assessed...one invigilator was asked if part of the paper was missing...
- Mark allocation and contrived wording of questions seriously disadvantaged pupils particularly in C range
- Does this reliably assess candidates’ KU? Candidates struggle to know how much to write for one mark
- Was this a valid paper? How did it pass QA? Questions were luck or ‘unluck’ of the draw

Question 2 re marking of QUESTION PAPER :

- 31% concerns about inconsistent markers, competence of markers, probationers marking
6% loss of experienced markers – because of electronic marking/time to mark/quality of scanned images

40% how difficult to gain a mark/tough marking/expectations too high/variations in detail required to get marks/ negatively marked/too harsh, stringent/nit picking and inconsistent MIs

22% surprise results and disappointing results; strange results; erratic; differences between packets of 10

14% re small grade boundaries and comparisons with History and Modern Studies

Difficult, harsh, inconsistent marking making an impact on numbers choosing Geography

Ambiguity re what constitutes a developed point; need clarification for teachers and pupils; confusion over carats/descriptive points being awarded marks

More clarification re marking/more examples needed on SQA site/not all teachers can attend CPD

Average mark indicates paper too hard. Things accepted last year and not this year!

Question 3 marking of the assignment

Of the 334 who answered this question 83% thought the marking of the assignment was either harsh, very inconsistent, all over the place, a bit of a lottery, confusing, unpredictable, extremely disappointing, subjective, worrying, unclear how they’re marked, erratic, very concerned, clear discrepancies, at odds with with guidance from SQA, uneven, bizarre, horrific, random...

13% were fairly happy or more pleased than that. A large proportion felt that pupils were disadvantaged

Could not understand why an obviously good candidate scored 12/30 and a much weaker 25/30

Good candidates appear to have been penalised more. Is SQA confusing the standard of AH for Higher?

No idea why one gets 12 and another 30 on very similar assignments

MIs, guidelines and reports unclear and don’t help teachers

Need PROPER feedback...return marked scripts??. Very obvious discrepancies between packets of ten

Have to accept the marks as schools can’t afford to pay for remarks even when the variations are so clear

Exactly how are terms like analysis and synthesis actually being interpreted
Departments which thought they’d ‘cracked it’ got poorer results than last year

More exemplars on SQA website with CLEAR mark allocation

Why are there so many marks for the assignment in any case?????

Q4 anything else?

70% of 312 commented on obvious inconsistency; poor (if any?) standardisation; marking instructions and their interpretation; harshness; experience of markers, setters, item checkers, vetters...

+ Geography’s GRADE BOUNDARIES???

Why are History and Modern Studies patently allowed to be easier?

How all this undermines teacher confidence

25% (in addition to those mentioned earlier in Q1) asked for more marks to allow more content to be examined

Loss of choice in QP. Late changes from SQA and shifting goalposts

Is SQA actively discouraging Geography? Worst ‘A’ pass record even with shockingly low grade boundaries...worst higher subject??

Pupils were very disappointed, discouraged, felt it was unfair

Request for a vote of no confidence in SQA...Why does SQA STILL not listen to teachers?

...and all that’s before we start on The ASSIGNMENT!!

30% said “ditch it” or “scrap it” completely as it is unfair...for a whole variety of reasons

It’s a lottery; not fit for purpose; very worrying; it’s a ‘jumping through hoops’ exercise

Widely inconsistent interpretation of amount of teacher support (and tutor input)

Staff who ‘stick to the guidelines’ feel they disadvantage their pupils

£ for fieldwork/going to field centres/parental input

HUGE workload Marking is very variable...obvious between different packets of 10 scripts

Is the marking checked?

MIs are wishy washy; open to wide (mis)interpretation

What is a good assignment? Not the same this year as last, anyway...

Too many marks for assignment v exam paper...Undermining the credibility of the subject

Info at markers’ meetings doesn’t agree with US events
○ Pupils are being tested on their literacy skills (again) rather than their Geography
○ Undermining teacher confidence and insulting their professionalism
○ Geography teachers know how to assess Geography, why won’t SQA listen?
○ Is the aim of the assignment to widen the attainment gap? **