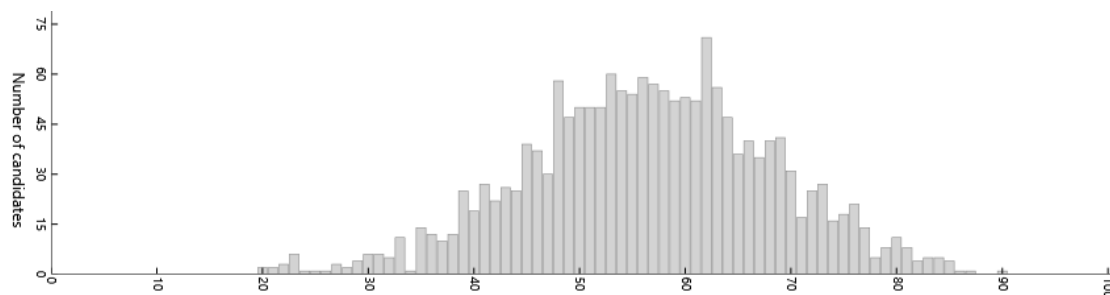




Summary report of the 2018 ATAR course examination report: Geography

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2018	1692	30
2017	1839	31
2016	1913	52

Examination score distribution–Written



Summary

Attempted by 1692 candidates

Mean 56.28% Max 90.00% Min 20.00%

Section means were:

Section One: Multiple-choice

Mean 69.28%

Attempted by 1692 candidates

Mean 13.86(/20) Max 20.00 Min 4.00

Section Two: Short response

Mean 59.20%

Attempted by 1692 candidates

Mean 23.68(/40) Max 36.50 Min 3.00

Section Three: Extended response: Part A: Unit 3

Mean 51.63%

Attempted by 1683 candidates

Mean 10.33(/20) Max 19.50 Min 0.00

Section Three: Extended response: Part B: Unit 4

Mean 42.94%

Attempted by 1669 candidates

Mean 8.59(/20) Max 19.50 Min 0.00

General comments

The mean score of 56.28% was slightly lower than that of 58.73% in 2017, with the main variation being in the result for Section Three: Extended Response: Part B. Here the mean mark fell from 9.86/20 (49.30%) in 2017 to 8.59/20 (42.94%) in 2018. There was no obvious increase in the proportion of candidates apparently running out of time on this, the last section of the paper. This would indicate that, overall, candidates were able to provide answers to all the required questions in the time allowed and that the customary fall off in mean marks between Part A and Part B in Section Three can, at least in part, be explained by normal candidate fatigue at the end of a long examination. However, a further possible, and chronologically idiosyncratic, explanation for this decline relates to the fact that this was the third examination on a new syllabus. In fairness to both candidates and teachers, the first ATAR examination, in 2016, sought to test the candidates' knowledge on syllabus dot points that were readily examinable and, in many cases, were on topics that were common to both the old and the new syllabi. Some of the 2018 questions, and quite possibly those in Section Three Part B in particular, were based on more challenging syllabus material. Nevertheless, now that the ATAR syllabus is relatively well established, this should not be a recurring problem in future years.

The variation between 2017 and 2018 in the mean scores for the other sections of the examination were all relatively small. Comments on these areas will be presented under the section and question headings below.

In 2016 and 2017 the maps used on the broadsheets were of parts of metropolitan Perth, as had been the case for a number of years under the previous syllabus. The ATAR syllabus, however, gives examiners the potential to use maps from elsewhere. The 2018 broadsheet used a map and associated aerial photographs of a Western Australian regional centre (Busselton) for the first time. It is encouraging to note that this appeared to cause no problem for the candidates and their teachers are to be commended for adequately preparing candidates for this added element of flexibility offered by the new syllabus. As expected, the 2018 shift from hard copy to online marking of the papers appeared to have had no obvious effect on the performance of the candidates.

Advice for candidates

- The map and aerial photographs on the broadsheet may now depict areas beyond metropolitan Perth.
- The whole of the broadsheet is a valuable resource. It contains data which is relevant to the syllabus and it provides you with the potential to improve your answers to questions other than those in which you are directed to a specific source.
- In the short answer section, the number of lines allocated for the answer to each question, or part thereof, provides you with an indication of the length of response that is considered to be adequate for the awarding of full marks. You can write more but, in doing so, you may be spending more time on a given question than is merited in terms of the number of potential marks that can be gained by answering it.

Advice for teachers

- While it is, in many ways, desirable to select case studies and site visits that provide your students with positive and successful illustrations of land cover (e.g. Alcoa's mine site rehabilitation) and urban and regional (e.g. the New York Bike Plan) management, it is also desirable that students be made aware of any shortcomings of these initiatives and of ways in which they might be improved. This is particularly important given that the syllabus, and therefore the examination questions, can require candidates to evaluate and/or to compare different strategies.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Multiple-choice (20 Marks)

The 2017 report indicates that a mean score of 13 to 14 is anticipated for this section. In 2018 this has been achieved with a score of 13.86. It is also pleasing to note that some candidates scored full marks and that no candidate scored less than 4. It is also notable that the two questions that produced the lowest scores (Question 7 on area calculation and Question 20 on the interpretation of a statistical map) required the candidates to analyse quantitative data.

Section Two: Short response (40 Marks)

This section received a mean score of 59.21%, almost identical to that of 2017 (59.50%). The mean for Questions 24 and 26 was marginally less than half of the available marks and specific comments on these and on some of the other questions in this section are made below.

Section Three: Extended response: Part A: Unit 3 (20 Marks)

This section was largely answered satisfactorily and the mean score of 51.63% was a marginal increase on 50.27% in 2017. While the majority of candidates opted for the climate change alternative, a growing proportion are now focusing on loss of biodiversity. While the provision of these alternatives is both pedagogically and academically desirable, it does require a greater level of complexity to be included in the extended answer questions.

Section Three: Extended response: Part B: Unit 4 (20 Marks)

As discussed in the general comments above, the mean scores for this section exhibited a significant fall from those recorded in 2017. Interestingly, the differences in performance levels between the candidates' answers to Part A and Part B of Section Three can be largely attributed to the poor standard of the responses to Question 34(a) and, even more so, Question 33(a). When the marks for the part (b)'s of the Part A Questions 31 and 32 are directly compared with those of the Part B Questions 33 and 34, the difference in mean scores is relatively small, 5.90/12 for Part A and 5.67/12 for Part B. This would indicate that the fall in the mean mark for Section Three Part B is largely attributable to the quality of the answers provided in the smaller part (a) questions in this section and even that this may have played a not insignificant part in the overall decline in the mean overall mark for this examination between 2017 and 2018.

Since, for reasons of comparability across the pair of questions in this section, both Question 33(a) and Question 34(a) required a description of demographic patterns – of a megacity in Question 33(a) and of metropolitan Perth or a regional urban centre in Western Australia in 34(a), candidates had no alternative but to address what the syllabus dot points for both depth studies term as 'the demographics'. The generally weak responses of the candidates to these questions indicate that these components of the syllabus were not well understood.

Another issue relates to the use of case study information on regional urban centres in Western Australia in Questions 33(b) and 34(a). There were very few answers to these questions that did not focus on metropolitan Perth. However, the quality of the responses was comparable between the Perth and the regional centre answers. Most regional centre responses related to larger regional centres with populations over 10 000. Teachers (and candidates) may find it challenging to cover some of the syllabus dot points for Depth Study One if their case study is of a regional urban centre of significantly lesser magnitude.