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Summary report of the 2020 ATAR course examination:
Geography

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2020	1531	29
2019	1563	25
2018	1692	30
2017	1839	31

The number of candidates sitting and the number attempting each section of the examination can differ as a result of non-attempts across sections of the examination.

Examination score distribution–Written
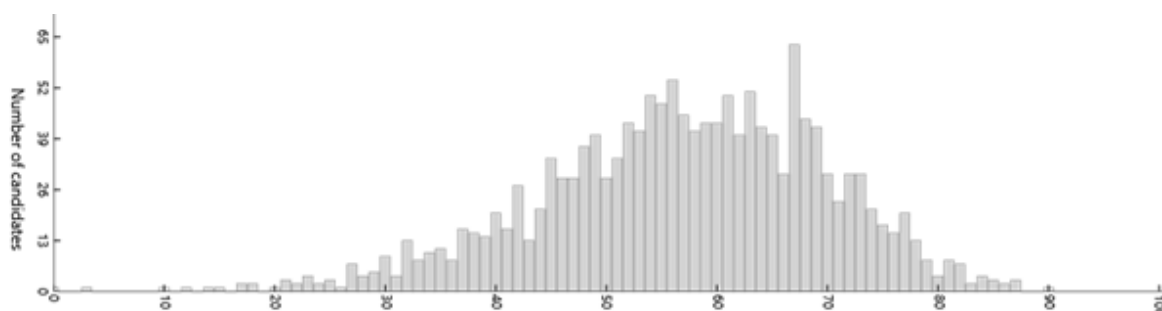
Summary

Attempted by 1531 candidates   Mean 56.60%   Max 90.00%   Min 0.00%

Section means were:
Section One: Multiple-choice   Mean 75.60%
Attempted by 1531 candidates   Mean 15.12(/20)   Max 20.00   Min 0.00
Section Two: Short response   Mean 57.17%
Attempted by 1529 candidates   Mean 22.87(/40)   Max 38.00   Min 0.00
Section Three: Extended response:
Part A: Unit 3   Mean 47.76%
Attempted by 1501 candidates   Mean 9.55(/20)   Max 19.00   Min 0.00
Section Three: Extended response:
Part B: Unit 4   Mean 45.30%
Attempted by 1504 candidates   Mean 9.06(/20)   Max 20.00   Min 0.00

General comments

The examination mean of 56.60% was slightly higher than that of 2019 (56.45%). The topographic map was based on urban and rural areas on the northern central coast of Tasmania and had a scale of 1:25 000. General map interpretation skills were of a pleasing level.

The Broadsheet contained aerial and oblique aerial photographs, flow diagrams, satellite imagery and a scattergram displaying the relationship between two variables. Overall the interpretation of data shown in the sources was of a higher standard than in 2019. The inclusion of a partly drawn cross-section that required completion proved to be difficult for some candidates, as did a number of questions requiring the use of mathematical calculations.
The Extended responses were, overall, of a slightly lower standard than 2019. The questions were clearly worded and required straightforward answers. However, the responses, while

still of some length and structure, were lacking in specific examples and up to date data that could be used to demonstrate points made. A number of responses also appeared to attempt to mould the question to fit a prepared response rather than directly answer the question asked.

Advice for candidates
- Pay careful attention to topographic map skills that require the application of simple mathematical calculations (i.e. area, gradient, scale comparisons/conversions). They are common questions and continue to be problematic for many.
- Maps and aerial photographs on the broadsheet are rarely of the same scale. You need to be confident that you know how to determine which is of the larger and smaller scales and what these two terms actually mean.
- Reading and interpreting heights from contour lines and the slope and landform characteristics that they show, are basic skills required when reading topographic maps and must be mastered.
- Be aware that locations on a map may be referred to by using area references, latitude and longitude, and individual eastings and northings. Grid references are not the only means of locating a feature. Whatever suits a location or area can be used.
- Identifying land uses and changes over time, on both a map and aerial photograph, are skills that are being poorly demonstrated. White space on a map does not mean there is no land use, (it is usually cleared land, typically for some form of agriculture). A photograph of the area, if present, will usually give some further clues.
- You should know the definitions and explanations of key course concepts as these are often found in the multiple-choice and short response sections.
- Clarify in your mind the differences in and requirements for the Unit 3 Depth Study 2 syllabus dot points. One case study or field trip cannot necessarily be applied to all dot points or questions in this section.
- Not all Extended response questions will begin with 'describe' or 'explain'. Familiarise yourself with higher order words including 'assess', 'discuss', 'account' and 'evaluate'. You need to be aware of what these different instructional words require you to do with the information you present.
- Avoid rote learning information from textbooks or practice questions completed in class or at home. The questions asked in the examination will rarely be the exact question you may have practiced.

Advice for teachers
- As noted above, the use and interpretation of contour lines continues to be poor and is an area requiring further attention.
- The actual calculation of gradient in the examination, even if the correct formula was used, was very poor and requires increased proficiency.
- Many candidates referred to places being on top of, below, next to, left of and right of other places. None of these are absolute location and none are geographical terms. Absolute location, relevant to other named locations, should be described by using cardinal compass points.
- Students need to be exposed to a variety of map scales including 1:25 000, 1:50 000 and 1:100 000. While these are the most common topographic map scales, any scale could be used in future examinations. In addition, the age and location of the maps and photographs used may also vary.
- Highlight to students that maps and aerial photographs on an examination broadsheet are rarely presented at the same scale. Teach students methods to determine and compare scales.
- The interpretation of specific land uses from the topographic map and photographs was poor. Students should be able to refer to a land use within a settlement on a map or photograph as more than 'urban area', when more specific evidence is presented.

- A stand-alone dot point in the syllabus refers to the use of, 'systems and flow diagrams to organise thinking about relationships'. Some students appeared to lack the skills in interpreting such diagrams. Any syllabus dot points can potentially be assessed in any given examination.
- Students need to be able to clearly differentiate between the process of urbanisation, the level of urbanisation, urban – rural drift, urban growth and urban expansion.
- The question referred to above stated 'define' and many candidates went on to give long explanations. When candidates were asked to 'explain' the concept of biodiversity loss and 'explain' the process of agglomeration, many only provided definitions. Students need to be aware of key directional words in the Short Response section as well as the Extended Response section.
- Evaluations of programs and approaches were quite poor with a lack of depth and references to up to date facts, figures and data. Higher order analysis of these strategies is needed.
- It was noted that some students chose challenges that are not listed in the syllabus. This trend has not been evident in previous years and is of some concern. Candidates possibly 'borrowed' challenges from the long list in the Overview section of Unit 4 and incorrectly applied them to the Unit 4 Depth Studies.
- Responses concerning the nature and causes of urban challenges for specific locations often could have applied to 'anywhere' and did not contain location specific information.
- The identification of major stakeholder groups was poor with students referring to; individuals, 'the residents', 'families', 'workers', or misnamed government agencies. This area requires closer attention by teachers and students.
- A number of candidates appeared to roll out prepared answers addressing the three aspects of sustainability, which was not asked for and looked like an answer to questions in the 2019 paper. Only two aspects of sustainability were asked for in the Unit 3 Extended response Part (b) questions and it was not referred to at all in the Unit 4 Extended response Part (b) questions. A number of study/revision groups providing advice to students in schools are strongly pushing the 'do last years' paper' message and this was evident in responses across the Extended response questions.
- Teachers are advised to keep up to date with relevant strategies that are being applied to the various issues found across the course.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Multiple-choice (20 Marks)

The mean for Section One was 75.60%, almost four per cent higher than the 2019 mean of 71.58%. The last time a mean of over 75% was attained in Section One was in 2017 (77.60%). Questions 1 to13 were based on the topographic map and/or the interpretation of aerial and ground photographs. Questions 14 to 16 were based on Unit 3, with one of these being source based, while Questions 17 to 20 were based on Unit 4, with two being source based. Questions relying on site and situation, were included in the multiple-choice rather than the Short response section where they have traditionally been placed. This was well received. Most basic mapping skills were well managed by candidates. Questions based on bearings, calculations of time travelled based on speed and distance and those requiring interpretation of the sources, all showed a marked improvement on previous examination papers. Those requiring interpretation of contour lines, calculation of area, comparisons of scale and determination of land use from photographs still require improvement, as they did in 2019.

Section Two: Short response (40 Marks)
In this section, Questions 21 to 24 were based on mapping skills and photographic interpretation, while Questions 25 to 28 were based on Unit 3, with two being source based. Questions 29 to 32 were based on Unit 4, with two being source based. The mean for this section was 57.17% (22.87/40), which was slightly lower than 2019 at 57.76% (23.11/40). Question 21 (a), requiring the completion of a cross-section, Question 24 requiring candidates to locate an area pointed out on the aerial photograph on the topographic map, Question 26 requiring candidates to interpret information on a source related to the loss of ecosystem services and Question 29 requiring a definition of the process of urbanisation proved to be the most challenging questions for candidates. Questions 25, 28 and 30 requiring the explanation of the concept of biodiversity loss, summarising the impact on land cover of land management practices and requiring the interpretation of a scattergram respectively were answered well by all candidates.

Section Three: Extended response: Part A: Unit 3 (20 Marks)
The mean for Part A: Unit 3 Extended Response increased in 2020 (47.76%, 9.55/20) compared to 2019 (46.80%, 9.36/20). The questions were seen as being a little more straightforward in their structure, particularly the Part (a) questions, than those in 2019.

Section Three: Extended response: Part B: Unit 4 (20 Marks)
The mean for Part B: Unit 4 Extended Response was lower in 2020 (45.30%, 9.03/20) compared to (50.30%, 10.03/20) in 2019, despite feedback stating that the Part 4 questions were straightforward and accessible. Candidates did not appear to run out of time, nor were responses any briefer than previous years. Answers lacked depth, direct responses to the question and up to date data to demonstrate or support statements.