

Australian Geography

School Certificate grading

Schools are responsible for awarding each student studying Australian Geography a grade (A, B, C, D, or E) to summarise the student's achievement in any 100 hour or 200 hour course completed in Stage 5. The grade awarded is reported on the student's School Certificate record of achievement.

From 2006, teachers will use these Stage 5 course performance descriptors to determine School Certificate grades for Australian Geography. The descriptors have been developed from the Board's general performance descriptors, and provide a more complete description of typical performance in this course at each grade level.

Determining School Certificate grades

Teachers should follow their school's procedures for the allocation of School Certificate grades.

During the course teachers collect information on the achievement of each student. To allocate a grade to a student at the end of the course, teachers make a judgement as to which grade descriptor best describes the achievement of that student.

Values and attitudes are an integral part of learning. However, information on students' values and attitudes is not to be used in determining grades.

Assessment activities

In developing and selecting assessment activities for the purpose of determining School Certificate grades, teachers will use a range of different assessment activities or tasks. The assessment activities should reflect the relative emphasis the school's programs place on the various aspects of the course.

Where activities or tasks are scheduled throughout a course, greater weight for grading purposes would generally be given to those activities or tasks undertaken towards the end of the course. There are different ways of organising the teaching/learning program for a course.

The scheduling of assessment activities and the weightings applied should reflect the school's organisation of the course. Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their maximum level of achievement relative to the course performance descriptors.

Applying the course performance descriptors

Teachers should use their professional judgement in applying the course performance descriptors. It is not intended that the course performance descriptors represent a checklist, or provide a comprehensive description of student performance at each grade level. The descriptor that provides the best overall description of the student's achievement will determine the grade awarded.

Teachers should interpret the course performance descriptors in terms of standards that can be achieved by School Certificate students within the bounds of the course.

The samples of student work that are provided on the Assessment Resource Centre website clarify the standards described in the course performance descriptors. They illustrate the quality of work typically produced by students who receive each grade.

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is described in detail in the assessment section of the Geography syllabus. It involves using assessment activities or tasks as a regular part of the teaching and learning process to clarify students' understanding of concepts, to remedy their misconceptions, and to support their further learning and the development of deeper understanding.

All assessment activities can be used to support learning, and to provide feedback to students that enables them to actively monitor and evaluate their own learning.

Stage 5 Course Performance Descriptors – Australian Geography

Areas for Assessment

Communication
Geographical tools and skills
Geographical knowledge

Grade E	Grade D	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays very limited skills to select, gather, organise and communicate geographical information using a limited range of written, oral and graphic forms. exhibits very limited skills to select and apply geographical tools to some spatial and ecological dimensions of Australia. demonstrates some sense of place of Australian environments and identifies some geographical processes that form and transform them. recognises some different perspectives of geographical issues. demonstrates elementary knowledge and understanding of Australian environments and communities, some interactions of people with the environment and some factors that shape communities. identifies some aspects of civics and recognises some links between civics and citizenship. 	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays basic skills to select, gather, organise and communicate geographical information using a range of written, oral and graphic forms. exhibits some skills to select and apply geographical tools appropriate to a range of spatial and ecological dimensions of Australia. demonstrates a basic sense of place of Australian environments and some understanding of the geographical processes that form and transform them. outlines different perspectives of Australian geographical issues. demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding of Australian environments and communities, a range of interactions of people with the environment and a range of factors that shape communities. displays some knowledge of civics and identifies links between civics and citizenship. 	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays sound skills to select, gather, organise and communicate geographical information using a range of written, oral and graphic forms. exhibits sound skills to select and apply geographical tools appropriate to the spatial and ecological dimensions of Australia. demonstrates a sound sense of place of Australian environments and adequate understanding of the geographical processes that form and transform them. describes different perspectives of geographical issues. demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of Australian environments and communities, the interactions of people with the environment and the factors that shape communities. displays broad knowledge of civics and describes links between civics and informed and active citizenship. 	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays high level skills to select, gather, organise and communicate complex geographical information in a broad range of written, oral and graphic forms. exhibits high level skills to select and apply geographical tools appropriate to the spatial and ecological dimensions of Australia. demonstrates a thorough sense of place of Australian environments and a thorough understanding of the geographical processes that form and transform them. explains different perspectives of geographical issues at a range of scales. demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of Australian environments and communities, the interactions of people with the environment and the factors that shape communities. displays thorough knowledge of civics and explains links between civics and informed and active citizenship in relation to geographical issues. 	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays sophisticated skills to select, gather and organise complex geographical information and uses an extensive range of written, oral and graphic forms to communicate it effectively. exhibits extensive skills to select and proficiently apply geographical tools appropriate to the spatial and ecological dimensions of Australia. demonstrates an extensive sense of place of Australian environments and an extensive understanding of the geographical processes that form and transform them. explains and analyses different perspectives of geographical issues at a range of scales. demonstrates extensive knowledge and understanding of Australian environments and communities, the interactions of people with the environment and the factors that shape communities. displays extensive knowledge of civics and analyses links between civics and informed and active citizenship in relation to geographical issues at a range of scales.

General performance descriptors

The general performance descriptors describe performance at each of five grade levels:

- A The student has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the content and can readily apply this knowledge. In addition, the student has achieved a very high level of competence in the processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.
- B The student has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the content and a high level of competence in the processes and skills. In addition, the student is able to apply this knowledge and these skills to most situations.
- C The student has a sound knowledge and understanding of the main areas of content and has achieved an adequate level of competence in the processes and skills.
- D The student has a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.
- E The student has an elementary knowledge and understanding in few areas of the content and has achieved very limited competence in some of the processes and skills.

Areas for assessment

The areas for assessment for Australian Geography provide a framework for structuring an assessment program, and may be used for reporting student achievement. They are derived from the course objectives, and are linked to the course outcomes. They can be used as organisers for assessment of student achievement.

Good assessment practice involves designing quality assessment activities that enable students to demonstrate their achievements. Teachers can use the areas for assessment when designing an assessment

activity, to ensure it is assessing performance in relation to a grouping of outcomes.

In designing the assessment schedule for a course, teachers may find it useful to map each planned assessment activity to one or more of the areas for assessment. This allows teachers to ensure that assessment can occur across the year in a manageable way. The table below gives an example of how this planning could be done.

Sample Areas for Assessment	Sample Assessment Activities (with weightings)			
	Document Study*	Oral Report*	Common Test*	Research Project*
	10%	20%	35%	35%
Knowledge and understanding*	✓	✓	✓	
Investigating and researching*	✓			✓
Communicating*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interpreting data*		✓	✓	✓
Problem solving*		✓	✓	

* These sample areas for assessment and activities are provided for illustrative purposes only.

Resources and further information

The *Assessment Resource Centre* is a section of the Board of Studies' website that contains resources that have been developed by the Board to support teachers in the awarding of grades for the School Certificate from 2006. For most Stage 5 courses, there are assessment activities, and work samples that illustrate the standard of work associated with each grade.

The *Geography Years 7–10 Syllabus* (2003) contains information on assessment (page 81) – including the principles of assessment for learning – and provides a detailed list of assessment strategies (page 84) that are suitable for Australian Geography. It is available on the Board's website at www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_sc/index.html

The *Assessment for Learning in a Standards-referenced Framework – Geography*

CD-ROM contains a variety of material, including assessment activities for Australian Geography with annotated work samples. Copies of this CD-ROM were provided to all schools, and are available from Shop Online (<http://shop.bos.nsw.edu.au>).

Inquiries about the use of these course performance descriptors should be directed to the Assessment and Reporting branch at the Office of the Board of Studies on (02) 9367 8371, or by email to CustomerLiaison@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au