



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Scholarship, 2005

Geography **93401**

National Statistics

Assessment Report

Geography, Scholarship, 2005 93401

National Statistics

No. Scholarship Results	Results			
	Outstanding Scholarship		Scholarship	
	No. Awards	% of L3 Cohort	No. Awards	% of L3 Cohort
163	25	0.4%	138	2.3%

Commentary

The majority of candidates provided an answer to at least one of the two questions that was correct in some way. Few, however, wrote two complete answers that could be classed as comprehensive and that focused on the questions.

The examination is resource-based and the style and context of the resource material provided, and the actual questions, make the examination accessible to all candidates.

Achieving Scholarship required:

- good understanding of Geography as a subject ie ability to select and extract information from the resource materials provided and to bring in relevant geography knowledge and ideas from beyond the resources
- ability to understand and correctly interpret the question asked, especially the instruction words in the questions (analyse, discuss, critically evaluate)
- ability to write a focused and well-reasoned geography answer in a structured and lucid manner.

Strengths in candidate responses

Careful preparation was evident in many answers, and was almost always underlying the best answers. Answers showed an awareness of the nature of the standard for Geography Scholarship and of the Assessment Specifications. Many candidates were able to incorporate recent floods in the East Coast area into their answers, while others were able to discuss aspects of flooding associated with Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans in a relevant manner.

Candidates were aware of geographic ideas (location, systems, change), of perspectives (environmentalist, capitalist and local people were the most common) and of Māori concepts (most commonly kaitiakitanga and taonga) but did not always include them in relevant and appropriate ways in their answers. For many the ideas, concepts and perspectives were included in a ‘drop down menu’ fashion ie they were written into answers whether they were relevant or not to the analysis and discussion taking place. Candidates who included ‘original diagrams’ based on the processing of resource material provided, often displayed excellent analytical skills. Answers with such diagrams also usually had high quality writing.

Weakness in candidate responses

Candidates wrote at length but missed the point of the question by outlining and describing why rivers flood. In Question 1, analysis and critical evaluation were required. In Question 2, candidates described, often in great detail, different ways of dealing with the hazard of river flooding but did not discuss why people vary in their view and support for the different ways.

Candidates copied large sections of the resource material directly without any summaries, analysis or attempt to establish links between the material and the question.

Candidates copied diagrams from the resource material but then did not refer to them, even when diagrams were 'original'. Also, the value of such diagrams was significantly reduced when they were treated as 'add-ons'.

Candidates wrote a lengthy introduction and conclusion that were not related to the question. Question 1 generated many long introductions about the damage and costs associated with river floods that took up more than a page before the cause of such floods was tackled. In Question 2 many conclusions were about what candidates thought was the best way of tackling floods, rather than about why people have different views about the best way(s) of responding.

In many instances candidates made use of geographic knowledge and ideas from beyond those provided in the resource booklet in ways that were not appropriate to the question. River hazard ideas were often included in answers to Question 1. Such ideas were not appropriate when analysing the causes of river floods. Hazard ideas would have been appropriate if the question had been on the theme of floods as a disaster. Such hazard discussion was much more appropriate in the Question 2 answer, but was rarely included. Similarly, candidates who had studied rivers as geomorphological agents (in Levels 2 or 3 geography courses) often brought detailed knowledge of fluvial processes into answers to both Questions 1 and 2, where it was largely irrelevant to the question.

Best-performing candidates

These candidates showed:

- good understanding of the nature of geography as a discipline in an holistic manner. They wrote answers that displayed a feel for geography
- understanding of, and familiarity with, specific geographic ideas and concepts
- ability to apply a geographic mind to both the 'river flooding resources' provided and to the question
- ability to select and process information from the resources provided that was relevant, and to use this information and other knowledge of geography and flooding to answer each question in a focused and structured manner.

The best answers were from candidates who were able to write an answer in a sophisticated and elegant manner with a focus on analysis and critical evaluation of the causes of river flooding in Question 1, and a focus on explaining the different views of people with reference to perspectives in Question 2.

Other candidates

These candidates commonly showed limited ability to analyse the causes of flooding, and to carry out a critical evaluation and make a judgement about the validity of the statement that “the actions of people rather than natural events and natural processes are the main causes of river flooding”.

They wrote answers that were confined to an outline – rather than an analysis and critical evaluation – of the causes of river flooding and made a judgement about the validity of the statement without providing any evidence to back up the judgement made in Question 1.

In Question 2 many candidates focused on describing different ways of responding to flood hazard without any discussion of why people have varied views about what is the ‘best’ way of responding.

Candidates made little attempt to introduce perspectives into the discussion in Question 2.

Many candidates did not fully answer the question set.

Specific answers

Question 1:

This question was answered at length by most candidates. Most answers contained at least some relevant material with the causes of river flooding outlined and discussed in some detail, and with an attempt at analysis of these causes.

The best answers were those with a brief introduction to the topic of river flooding – often including its nature, causes and consequences – and then going on to an analysis of the causes of flooding covering natural and human causes, and including general geographic ideas and using case studies to illustrate and support the discussion.

In the analysis section the best answers were those that weighed up the relative importance of the different natural factors in terms of their contribution to river flooding, and referred to ideas like temporal and spatial variation in river flooding and its predictability. The best answers were those that recognised the local nature of the Malton and Norton case study, and that it was from a British Isles setting as opposed to the range of recent regional and local flood case studies from New Zealand and the national (and probably most well known and famous) case study of flooding across Bangladesh. Interestingly, the Mississippi material from the resource booklet was not frequently referred to, even by candidates who introduced discussion of Hurricane Katrina into their answers.

It was good to see candidates bringing local area knowledge of flooding into their answers: Wairau Creek (North Shore of Auckland), the Hutt River and Hutt Valley, and Invercargill were all frequently quoted as case studies.

The view in the examination marking guide was that natural processes and natural events were the underlying causes of river flooding, with human action playing a more localised role that related to the acceleration and/or amplification of nature (ie disagreeing with the assertion in the question). Candidates could gain full marks for whatever conclusion they came to about the causes of flooding. A few candidates sat

on the fence and attributed equal weighting to natural and human causes. The majority of candidates who made a judgement were split equally between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement about the causes (human or natural) of river flooding that they were asked to critically evaluate.

The best answers were those from candidates who, having thoroughly analysed why rivers flood in the body of the answer, came to a conclusion with a critical evaluation and judgement that was based on the analysis presented.

Quotes from successful answers to Question 1:

“Flooding occurs when the river level exceeds bankfull stage, or when overland flow occurs due to water exceeding infiltration capacity of the ground. Influences on water level in the river and overland flow are rainfall, vegetation cover, landforms, soil and in many places and instances human actions and interference with natural systems”

“The systems and processes involved in river flooding are complex, and are at times unpredictable in that it is difficult to know when and where flooding will occur”

“Human activities accelerate and intensify flooding but it is the natural events and the natural processes that are the underlying cause”

“The assertion that ‘river flooding is caused more by the actions of people than it is by natural events and natural processes’ is probably not justified. This is because human activity is not generally the cause of floods, the above discussed natural processes are, but human activity can increase the chance of flooding and make the effects of flooding much worse. This is backed up by engineering geologists who after studying flooding in the Bay of Plenty in May 2005 concluded: ‘although human activities had contributed to the disaster, they were of secondary importance to the natural processes at work’ “

“Although human actions may be a significant cause of flooding in some places and at some times, they are not the outright cause of flooding on a global scale. Natural events and natural processes are behind most flood events.”

“River flooding is often described as mother nature having a field day. It is true that human actions can increase the chances of flooding or make the effects worse, however natural events and natural processes are the underlying cause. Because of this and the examples I highlighted through case studies, the assertion that ‘river flooding is caused more by the actions of people than it is by natural events’ is an invalid and inaccurate assertion”

“Human actions have played an increasing role as the cause of flooding over the last century. Today flooding is more likely to occur than it used to. Although nature plays a significant part in any flood, human activities are now the main reason rivers flood”

Question 2:

This question proved the more challenging. A number of candidates, after writing successful answers to Question 1, either failed to answer Question 2 at all or made a start but stopped after writing just one or two pages. Time did not seem a constraint.

Understanding what kind of answer the question required and being able to tackle perspectives with any confidence seemed to be the problem.

Many candidates never got around to discussing **why** people hold different views about the best way(s) of tackling river flood hazard. A pattern frequent in weak answers was to provide an outline (sometimes very lengthy) of a range of ways river flooding could be tackled. A significant number of candidates who answered this way concluded by stating and explaining their choice of ‘best solution’.

Candidates should be able to apply and incorporate perspectives into responses. There are no easy guidelines or exemplars to follow. Sound knowledge of, and familiarity with, perspectives is required and candidates should incorporate them into answers in a discriminatory way, and in a way that means they blend in with what is being written and supports the discussion and analysis being undertaken. Some candidates examined the idea of perspectives in terms of what the word meant when used in academic studies and where perspectives come from. Distinguishing them from, but relating them to, the idea of perception is important. Many candidates showed they regarded perception and perspective as the same thing.

Here are two starting points for teaching and learning about perspectives:

- the section on the TKI website about perspectives: <http://www.tki.org.nz/ncea> (not the most easy content to understand and use for teaching and learning)
- the pink syllabus for schools *Geography forms 5-7* booklet page 25 where, under the heading Culture and Perception, two sets of ideas would be worth exploring:
 - 6.1: People living in groups develop a common way of life (Culture) which influences the way they view and interpret their environment (Perception)
 - 6.2: Each society perceives and interprets its own and other environments through the perspective of its own culture

This could be an easier place to begin a study of the concept of perspective, by examining what culture individuals belong and relate to, and how this could help shape their perspective – and to then compare and contrast this perspective with the perspective of different groups of people in relation to a local or global issue.

Successful answers to Question 2 often took the following approach

- outlining a range of responses available to river flooding before, during and after the event
- providing some discussion of the relative merits or otherwise of each approach
- discussing why different people favour one approach over another, and why people do not all agree about a single best approach
- discussing what lies behind the views people have, including reference to the perspective they come from as a major part of the WHY answer.

Quotes from successful answers to Question 2:

“There are a wide range of views and perspectives that different groups and individuals have on flooding. Firstly local people affected by floods may have different opinions about floods and what should be done about them. In England the Derwent River does not flood often, so the people of Malton and Norton react differently to floods than the people of Bangladesh where flooding is a regular occurrence. In Malton flooding is regarded by the local people as a disaster, in Bangladesh some flooding is seen as a good thing by many rural people. In Malton

people favour a proactive approach to deal with flooding, this is because people do not want to see homes and businesses ruined. Also there is a lot of money and engineering advice available to implement flood control measures in a rich country like England. In Bangladesh where flooding is seen more as a natural event that cannot be stopped, and an event that can benefit farmers, more sustainable both proactive and reactive low cost approaches are favoured. Examples of these are monitoring of rainfall and rivers and the issuing of weather forecasts and flood warnings and the building of multi-purpose flood shelters as shown in diagram 2

“What is not agreed is the best way to deal with flooding. From the perspective of the local council who are both required to help and protect local residents but also work to a budget, land use regulations are one option favoured. This means not allowing building to take place in areas that are likely to flood. The problem is what to do with people already living in areas that flood regularly. The Waitakere City Council have approached this problem by buying houses in a flood prone area and removing them

“Greg O’Hare comes from the perspective of a geographer who is not personally affected by floods. Because he studies floods as a scientist he is fully aware of their causes. However he has no emotional attachment to a place that has been flooded and so he approaches the question of ‘how to deal with flooding’ as a dispassionate outside expert”

“When river flooding occurs many different people are affected and they each view the hazard and the best ways in which to respond differently. This is because of their own personal perspective and the way in which their livelihood is affected by the occurrence of the flood”

“Some come from a humanitarian perspective, others from a government or an environmental perspective and this results in a clash of opinion about the most appropriate way to approach and deal with river flood hazard”

“Perspectives are the ways in which different people view the world. People have different perspectives on issues and our perspective is influenced by our upbringing, values and experiences. The way people view river flooding and respond to it, is influenced particularly by how flooding affects them and their view on the world”

Scholarship examination preparation

Practise in answering past scholarship exams would be a good starting point. Resource materials in these papers can be adapted to the original questions or new questions can be set that make use of these resources. Practice would be useful in writing answers that show intellect, writing skills and, crucially, that incorporate and show geographic knowledge, ideas and understanding. Blending these things together results in the successful scholarship response. Scholarship is more than a ‘good level 2 or level 3’ answer.

The standard for Geography Scholarship and the standard’s Assessment Specification provide the kind of command words (critically analyse, evaluate, etc) and language of geography (geographic ideas, geographic perspectives, etc) that could be incorporated into practice questions to help candidates prepare.