**Essay assignment**. Indicative length: 2000 (± 500) words, not including figure captions or references

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| Evaluation area | Excellent (70–75) Outstanding (76–85) Exemplary (86–100) | | Good (60–64) Very good (65–69) | Sound (50–59) | Acceptable (40–49) | Insufficient (30–39) Unacceptable (<30) | |
| Knowledge and Understanding (30%) | A: Discovery, synthesis and understanding of relevant literature  B: Clear understanding of how fossils can be applied to understand Earth history, including (C) limitations of the fossil record |  |  |  |  |  | A: Limited engagement beyond microsite’s key literature |
| Critical analysis (40%) | F: Analysis of the literature underpinning each argument presented on microsite  G: Evaluation of the strength of evidence and quality of underpinning research  H: Implications of controversy placed in broader scientific context |  |  |  |  |  | F: Substantial gaps in understanding content written on microsite  G: Reference to primary literature without evaluation  H: No indication why topic would interest non-specialists |
| Communication (30%) | S: Development of convincing narrative  T: Evidence connected to argument with clear logical flow  U: Mature, engaging and lucid prose; meticulously copyedited |  |  |  |  |  | S: Independent arguments do not build a coherent picture  T: Reader must work hard to understand how evidence relates to argument |
| Overall grade  */ 100* |  | | | | | | |