Please read in conjunction with the information provided in the introductory section above.

GEOGRAPHY TEST SPECIFICATION

1. AIMS

The Advanced Extension Award in geography should require student to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding than required in A levels and apply their understanding creatively in critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
The award should encourage students to:

- acquire and apply knowledge and understanding of physical and human processes, their interactions and outcomes over space and time, through the study of places and environments;
- acquire and apply skills necessary for the pursuit of the discipline;
- develop an understanding of the interrelationships between people and their environments, and of the opportunities, challenges and constraints that face people in different places and environments;
- appreciate the dynamic nature of geography; how places, environments and issues change, and how people respond to these changes;
- understand how decisions are made about the use and management of resources and environments, and understand the significance and effects of people's values and attitudes in geographical issues;
- clarify and develop their own values and attitudes in relation to geographical issues and questions;
- acquire understanding of the connections between different aspects of geography;
- be aware of recent ideas, methods and approaches in geography; and
- understand geography's contribution to, and links with, other curriculum areas and subject disciplines.

2 CONTENT

The AEA in geography will require candidates to demonstrate their abilities to apply and communicate effectively their understanding of geography, using the skills of critical analysis, synthesis of information and ideas, and evaluation, in the context of any aspect of the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the Advanced GCE subject criteria. In particular, candidates will be required to demonstrate an awareness:

- that geographical studies may involve explanations which are partial, tentative and incomplete;
- that changes in geographical ideas and methods may give rise to different interpretations
- of geography's contribution to broader curriculum areas; and
- of recent ideas, methods and approaches in geography;

  an understanding of:
- the nature of, and interactions between, different physical and human processes;
- the distinctiveness and interdependence of places;
- the significance of both spatial and temporal scales;
- how physical and human processes bring about changes in spatial systems, distributions, places and environments;
- the role of values, attitudes and decision making processes in geographical issues and in decision-making about the use and management of resources and environments;
- the potential and limitations of evidence, approaches, concepts, principles and theories used; and
- the connections between different aspects of geography represented in the specification;

  and the ability to:
- identify geographical questions and issues;
- describe, analyse, evaluate and interpret such evidence and draw conclusions;
- evaluate methods and approaches to enquiry, the limitations of the evidence and the conclusions drawn; and
- synthesise geographical information in various forms and from various sources.

3 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE

The Advanced Extension Award in geography will assess candidates' abilities to apply and communicate effectively their knowledge and understanding of geography using the skills of critical analysis, evaluation, creativity and synthesis.

4 SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Supervision and duration of assessment
External assessment is a timed two and a half hour written examination, preceded by 30 minutes reading time, under controlled conditions.
The examination comprises two elements:

- one resource-based question (using, for example, newspaper articles, extracts from academic papers, maps, photographs, satellite images, statistical data), which will involve some extended writing and the possibility of some graphical responses (1 hour 30 minutes). Depending on the context, which will vary from year to year, this question may involve assessment of candidates' understanding of (some combination of) physical processes, human processes and interactions between people and environments. It may involve decision-making or issues evaluation and will require candidates to demonstrate skills of geographical enquiry, which may include fieldwork skills.
- one essay question (from a choice of three) (1 hour), assessing candidates' understanding of aspects of the subject not assessed in the resource-based question.

Use of resources
The use of resources, other than those in the resource booklet provided for the examination, is not permitted.

5 PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Distinction [differences from Merit level shown in bold type]
Candidates:

- show **comprehensive, in-depth** knowledge of concepts, principles and theories, including recent ideas, methods and approaches, relevant to the understanding and analysis of processes, places and environments;
- apply their understanding to unfamiliar geographical contexts, **showing a high level of insight**. They analyse, critically **and systematically**, evidence, issues, arguments, interrelationships and interconnections **of a more complex nature**. They **critically** evaluate the potential and limitations of **complex** concepts and theories and their relevance to particular contexts. They are **more** aware of the tentative nature of explanations and **understand how** changes in ideas and methods may give rise to different interpretations. They show a **more critical** understanding of the connections between the different aspects of geography;
- display a high degree of skill in interpreting complex sources of geographical information. They formulate and adopt effective approaches to enquiry. They show **a high level of** creativity in investigating geographical problems, and in selecting and using a variety of appropriate techniques to present and analyse evidence. They draw selectively **and confidently** on their geographical knowledge and understanding to synthesise information and ideas and to **construct and justify** well reasoned **and perceptive** conclusions. They evaluate critically the effectiveness of research methodology and the validity of outcomes, recognising the limitations of both;
- communicate findings **more** effectively **and precisely** in different formats, synthesising geographical ideas and information, and presenting them within **tightly** structured and coherent arguments. They use standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar with a high level of accuracy and use geographical terminology with confidence **and fluency**.

Merit [differences from A level grade A are shown in bold type]
Candidates:

- show **detailed** knowledge of concepts, principles and theories, **including recent ideas, methods and approaches**, relevant to the understanding and analysis of processes, places and environments;
- apply their understanding to unfamiliar geographical contexts. They analyse critically evidence, issues, arguments, interrelationships and interconnections. They evaluate the potential and limitations of concepts and theories and their relevance to particular contexts. **They are aware of the tentative nature of explanations and that changes in ideas and methods may give rise to different interpretations.** They show a **detailed** understanding of the connections between the different aspects of geography;

- display a **high degree** of skill in interpreting **complex** sources of geographical information. They formulate and adopt effective approaches to enquiry. **They show creativity in investigating geographical problems, and in selecting and using a variety of appropriate techniques to present and analyse evidence**. They draw selectively on their geographical knowledge and understanding to **synthesise information and ideas** and to reach well reasoned conclusions. They evaluate **critically** the effectiveness of **research** methodology and the validity of outcomes, recognising the limitations of both;
- communicate findings **effectively** in different formats, synthesising geographical **ideas** and information, and presenting them **within structured and coherent arguments**. They use standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar with a high level of accuracy and use geographical terminology with confidence.