

Skills Questions in HSC Exams

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One important theme that emerged from recent surveys on HSC exams is gradation.

In any exam a range of ability questions are provided. This means that Band 2/3 students can access the easier questions effectively whilst also providing challenging questions to differentiate the Band 6 students.

NESA explains that the examination paper as a whole should:

- “provide the range of candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and are able to do”
- “and will allow for appropriate differentiation of student performance at each band on the performance scale, including demonstration of higher order skills.”

The 2021 HSC Geo Exam – challenging skills

One review of the 2021 exam is that it demonstrated that whilst some skills can be asked in easy, straightforward ways, those same skills can be tested in more challenging ways.

Challenging question #1

Reading synoptic charts can be easy – e.g., What is the air pressure at a point. But in the 2021 HSC Geo exam interpreting synoptic charts was one of the most difficult questions. It was a question requiring the reading of isobars to get the wind direction.

This is not the only HSC Exam to feature that type of question, but certainly in the survey of teachers many saw it as a challenging question.

Solution: The key to this skill is to know that wind in the Southern Hemisphere travels clockwise around lows (almost parallel to the isobars). And wind is named after where it comes from. So, the answer is WNW, or C.

Professional learning opportunities

To see more **tips related to the HSC exam**, including its skills, and more explanations of 2021 difficult questions, you can register for the ‘anytime’ PD (cost \$90) at: <https://www.openlearning.com/ptc-nsw/courses/geo-hsc/homepage/?cl=1>

Advice for students on skills are provided in two presentations in the HSC Exam Preparation package at <https://ptcnsw.eventsair.com/gta.../register/Site/Register>

