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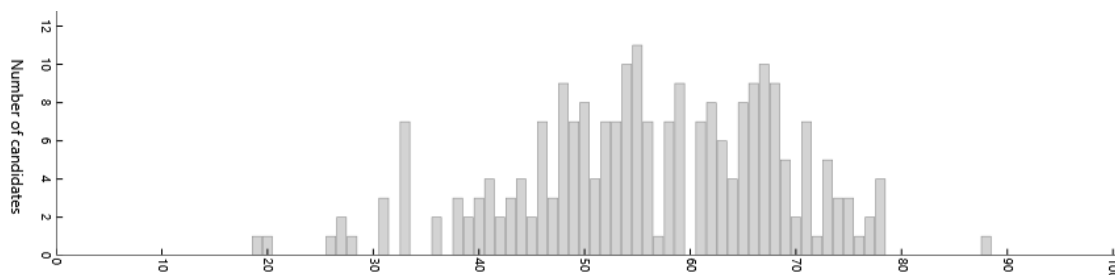
Summary report of the 2018 ATAR course examination:
Earth and Environmental Science

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2018	233	4
2017	184	6
2016	272	11

Examination score distribution–Written

Summary

Candidate performance was largely in line with expectations. The mean mark of 55.91% was down slightly from the 58.42% achieved in 2017. While not concerning in terms of overall performance, this change is derived almost entirely from a substantial drop in the marks achieved in Section Three relative to the rest of the examination.

Attempted by 233 candidates   Mean 55.91%   Max 88.00%   Min 18.75%

Section means were:
Section One: Multiple-choice   Mean 77.42%
Attempted by 233 candidates   Mean 11.61(/15)   Max 15.00   Min 6.00
Section Two: Short answer   Mean 57.10%
Attempted by 233 candidates   Mean 31.40(/55)   Max 48.50   Min 10.50
Section Three: Extended answer   Mean 43.71%
Attempted by 229 candidates   Mean 13.11(/30)   Max 25.50   Min 1.00

General comments

The overall quality of candidate response was satisfactory. The number of 'No attempts' remained low, with most candidates attempting a very high proportion of the examination. Candidate responses were usually coherent and effective. As in previous years, the cohort was challenged by isolated elements of the examination, with mean marks below 50% on individual parts of some questions. In Section Two these poorly-responded-to elements were broadly scattered. Multi-part questions were consciously set with elements ranging from straightforward to challenging in order to provide a means to differentiate candidates of varying ability. Performance in Section Three was more problematic in the context of the examination as a whole, with mean marks below 50% on all three questions. Questions in this section may have been difficult for this cohort and the 2019 examining panel should take this into consideration.

Advice for candidates
- Demonstrate your insight and understanding of the curriculum, rather than the recall of specific facts.
- Answers are expected to be well-structured, logical and supported by examples where appropriate.
- Annotated illustrations, bullet points and tables can provide an effective approach to presenting an answer in some circumstances, even when not explicitly asked for in a question. Consider such alternatives if you are challenged by formal writing or if you prefer to process and present information visually.
- Use examples to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding, particularly where you can clearly establish their relevance to the question.

Advice for teachers
- The curriculum for this course is largely geared towards practical insight and understanding of processes as they affect the real world, rather than in-depth knowledge of formal scientific theories.
- Case studies and examples studied are not expected to be drawn from a specific geographic region. The examiners welcome diverse examples where these illuminate the curriculum content in an informative fashion.

Comments on specific sections and questions
Section One: Multiple-choice (15 Marks)
Candidate performance was satisfactory and in line with previous years across this section.

Section Two: Short answer (110 Marks)
Candidate performance was largely in line with expectations in this section. Notably, some candidates struggled with the fundamentals of illustrative questions (e.g. the production of a graph from primary data and the production of a geological cross section) that have been consistent elements of the examination for many years and should be expected.

Section Three: Extended answer (30 Marks)
Candidate performance in this section was notably inconsistent with that achieved in Sections One and Two. The consistency of this poor performance and its distinction from the other sections of the examination indicates that candidates found this section difficult.