



A hot air balloon travels over the lakes of Killarney in Co Kerry with Torc Mountain in the background. Photograph: Valerie O'Sullivan

Geography paper structure

	Marks	Weighting (per cent)
Core		
12 short answer questions (answer 10)	80	20
3 questions (complete one) combining short answers and multipart questions on Core Unit 1 and skills	80	20
3 questions (complete one) combining short answers and multipart questions on Core Unit 2 and skills	80	20
Electives		
3 questions (complete one) combining short answers and multipart questions on Elective 4 or 5 and skills (students answer on only one elective)	80	20
Optional Units		
3 essay type questions on each optional unit (students will answer on one option only)	80	20
Total	400	100
Investigation Report	100	
Total	500	

The examination will have an assessment weighting of 80 per cent. It will consist of questions requiring short answers and multipart questions requiring more detailed answers. Longer essay-style discursive answers will be required only in the optional units (Higher Level only).

The Geographical Investigation will have an assessment weighting of 20 per cent. It will be assessed separately.

Using the marking scheme to your advantage

Every year, at the beginning of September, the State Examinations Commission produces a marking scheme for the exam that has been taken the previous June. This marking scheme can be of great help to you in preparing for your exam. Your teacher will have a copy of it and may make it available to you; alternatively, it can be downloaded from www.examinations.ie.

You can use the marking scheme to your advantage when you work your way through the 2006 and 2007 exam papers.

Simply read a question on the paper and then look at the marking scheme for the corresponding question. This will show you how many statements are required for each section of the answer.

The marking scheme will help illustrate the structure of the paper (see table, top right).

Students answer a total of five questions in the exam.

Question one – A series of short questions which will range over the core syllabus, ie Physical Geography, Regional Geography and Geographical Skills.

Question two – This question will be based on the Physical Geography Section.

Question three – This question will be based on the Region-

al Geography Section.

Question four – This will depend on which of the electives the student has studied (there is a choice of two).

Question five – This will depend on which of the options the student has studied (there is a choice of four).

Unlike the old exam, there will be no full question on the Aerial Photograph or the Ordnance Survey Map. These sections will be examined with the other questions instead. This is what is meant by the term “skills”.

The layout of the new paper looks very different to the old Leaving Certificate Paper, but it is, in fact, very similar to the layout of the Junior Certificate Paper with which students will be familiar.

study geography at this time of year.

After the mocks

Your paper may be corrected by your teacher, or it may be sent out for correction by an outside agency. Either way, there is a number of steps that can be taken to maximise the feedback from your performance in the mock.

As soon as the mocks are over you should begin an analysis of the paper. Was it as you expected, did you get any shocks? If so, why? Did you complete all questions? How long did the short answer questions take you? More or less than the 30 minutes you should have allocated? Were you able to draw map(s) for your Regional question? Did you handle the time correctly?

Work through questions with your teacher. Listen to the teacher's analysis of the exam and try answering some of the questions again. Hand them up and get them corrected. When you get your answer paper back

you should look at it carefully. Make sure you get a copy of the marking scheme from your teacher. This is vital. Check how your answers were marked. This is not just to see if you can get 1 or 2 per cent more. You should look at the paper, together with the marking scheme, to see where you lost marks. Did you read the questions correctly?

Remember, all answers in the Core and Elective sections should be answered in the form of a Significant Relevant Point (SRP). An SRP is a single piece of factual information to which an examiner will assign a mark weighting as prescribed by the marking scheme. When you have analysed your paper, write down your findings. If you don't, you will quickly forget much of what you have just figured out, and will probably go on to make the same mistake in June.

Post-mock study

Your post-mocks study plan

should involve a number of activities.

Constantly do exam questions. Do these in the 30 minutes allocated. Do each question with the book closed after doing some study on the topic. Spending 90 minutes with an open book answering an exam question is just fooling yourself. You will not have a book open in front of you during the exam, and will be limited to just 30 minutes per answer. Get familiar with these constraints.

Set up a weekly study timetable. Break your study into clear sections of, say, 30 minutes and get clear goals for each section. Keep to your plan.

The Geographical Investigation will take up time for many of you after the mocks. Some students will have completed this but many will be working close up until the late April deadline.

Remember, this carries 20 per cent of the final marks and cannot be neglected.

The A1 student

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I kept on top of things in fifth year. We had the course more or less finished by the time sixth year came along. We'd cover a topic a week in class and we'd get a test on it so it kept us on top of things.

Practice is everything really. It's a new course so there aren't that many past papers, but the sample papers give you something to work with. I concentrated on trying to get the timing down. You have 12 minutes to do an essay question and in that 12 minutes you have to include 11 or 12 relevant points into your answer. It's a lot but it gets easier when you've done it a couple of times. The other thing is to stick to the question all the time. You don't have time to go off the point.

The field study is very important. I spent a lot of time on mine. It's a guaranteed 20 per cent if you do it properly. After we did our field study I wrote a couple of drafts before writing it up properly. My teacher corrected them and I think that definitely helped. Sticking to the correct word count is very important as well. Presentation isn't supposed to matter but it definitely helps to lay it out well. It's also worth bearing in

mind that everyone in the class has the same project and it's important to include a couple of your own ideas, so it's a good idea to make yours a bit different by using some of your own thoughts and ideas.

It's good to have a general knowledge of the course. In physical geography, for example, I focused on rivers, plate tectonics and volcanoes, but I had a good idea of the rest of it because you never know what will be thrown at you. Apart from studying and practising exam questions, it's worth keeping up with current affairs. Global warming was very topical last year and, sure enough, it came up in the exam.

The mocks are a really useful exercise. We had two sets of mocks in my school – the early mocks are at Christmas and then there's another set in April. It's a good way to do it because you can see yourself improving between the two. All the same, the Leaving Cert was very different. I didn't think I got on well at all until I got my result. Certain sections were what I wanted to come up – others not so much. That's why I think it's important to have a general knowledge of the course.