



What's in the CAPS Package?

A Comparative study of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): FET Phase

Geography

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Part 1: NCS/CAPS comparison

Curriculum dimensions compared

- design, format and user friendliness
- aims/objectives
- coverage – breadth and depth
- specification, weighting, emphasis
- pacing
- sequence and progression
- coherence
- specification of pedagogic approaches
- assessment guidance
- integration – internal and external

Design, format and user friendliness

- Shift from an outcomes and standards based curriculum to a syllabus based curriculum
- CAPS a more user friendly format – fewer documents, less repetition with the curriculum policy document itself – but now exam guidelines
- Language more accessible in the CAPS
 - Less abstract and complex expression of outcomes/aims and of content in some places
 - More familiar topic headings; fewer layers in the topic descriptions

e.g. Gr 12 Economic geography

In the NCS:

- Primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary activities
- Influence of economic, physical, political, social factors
- Perceptions of decision makers on the location of industries and other economic activities
- Impact of humans on the location of economic activities
- Response of people to environmental and socio-economic injustices linked to economic activities
- Impact of the change of economic activities on people
- Agriculture as an economic activity: special emphasis on southern Africa, food security, risks and vulnerability

In the CAPS:

structure of the economy [3 hours]

- economic sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary);
- economic sectors' contribution to the South African economy: value and employment; and
- use of statistical and graphical information.

agriculture [5 hours]

- contribution of agriculture to the South African economy;
- the role of small-scale farmers and large-scale farmers;
- main products produced: home market and export market;
- factors that favour and hinder agriculture in South Africa, such as climate, soil, land ownership and trade;
- the importance of food security in South Africa – influencing factors; and
- case studies related to food security in South Africa.

Aims/objectives

- Both refer to the critical cross – field outcomes of the NQF – but not identified as such in the CAPS
- Only the NCS refers to the 5 education based developmental outcomes
- The NCS: 3 broad subject specific outcomes; many assessment standards
- The CAPS: a bulleted list of aims; lists of geographical skills, attitudes and values which curriculum aims to develop
- Noticeable similarities: but CAPS breaks LOs down into more focussed aims

NCS LO 1: The learner is able to demonstrate a range of geographical skills and techniques

CAPS:

- practising essential transferable skills – literacy, numeracy, oracy and graphicacy
- promoting the use of new technologies, such as Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

NCS LO 2: The learner is able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of processes and spatial patterns dealing with interactions between humans, and between humans and the environment in space and time

CAPS:

- developing knowledge about where places are and the nature of a range of different places at different scales
- explaining and interpreting both physical and human geographical processes
- describing and explaining the dynamic interrelationship between physical and human worlds

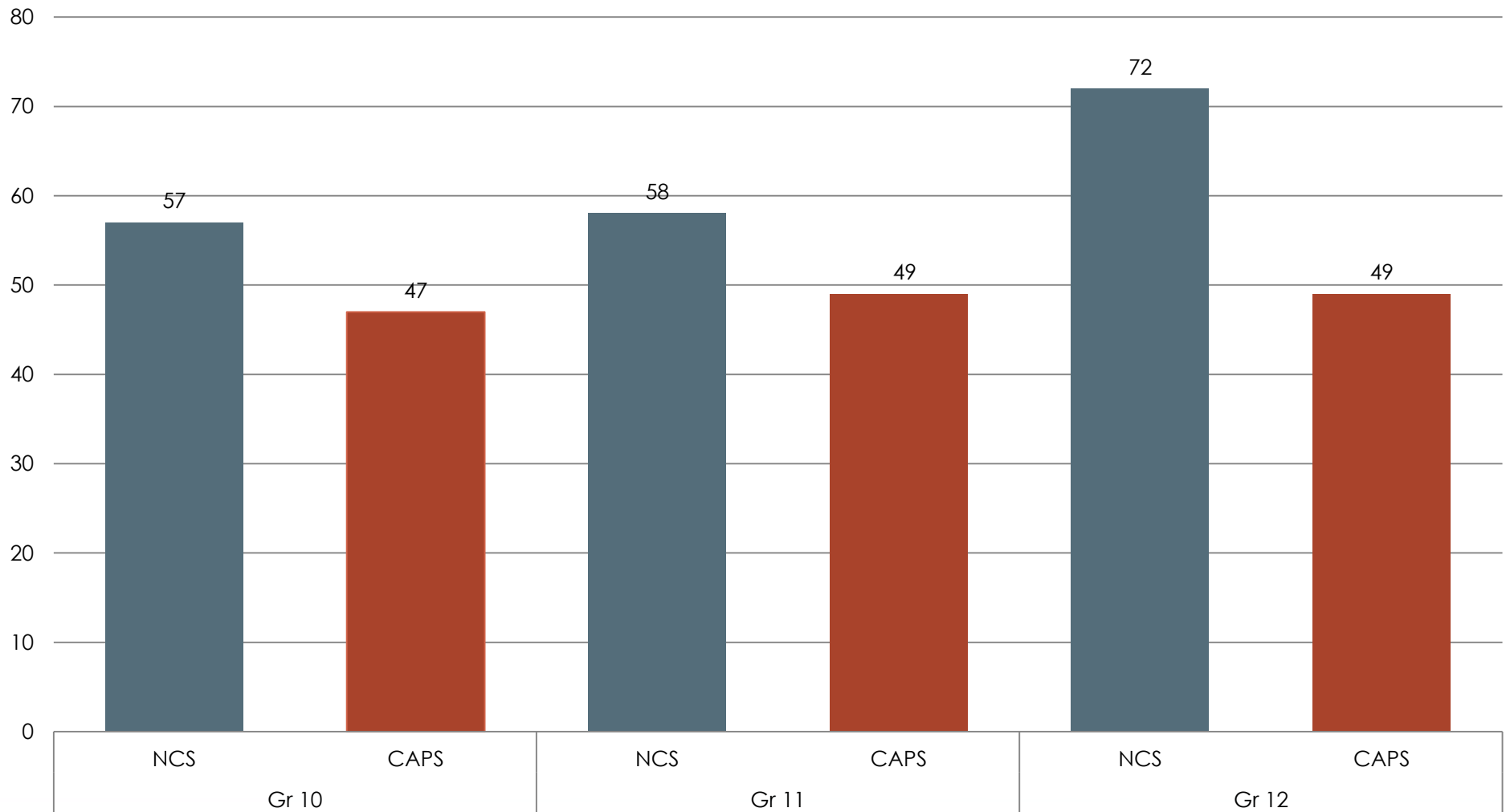
NCS LO 3: The learner is able to apply geographical skills and knowledge to environmental issues and challenges; recognise values and attitudes; and demonstrate the ability to recommend solutions and strategies

CAPS:

- creating awareness and sensitivity to inequality in the world
- developing a commitment towards sustainable development
- fostering empathy, tolerance and fairness
- making and justifying informed decisions and judgements about social and environmental issues

Curriculum Coverage - breadth

Graph 1: Total Number of Topics per Grade



Content changes in Grade 10

NCS	CAPS	Comment
Weather and climate	The atmosphere	Similar content – acid rain and deserts removed; climate systems in Africa now in Grade 11
Structure and changing landforms of the Earth	Geomorphology	Weathering and erosion removed – now only in GET; structure of earth and rocks added to CAPS
People and place: population	Population	Similar content, but no specific focus on Population issues and dilemmas : poverty, racism, employment, conflicts, inequalities and gender issues – though refugees and xenophobia remain
People and their organisations		Entire topic removed
	Water resources	New in Grade 10 – contains much of the content from Grade 11: <i>Water in the world</i>

Content changes in Grade 11

NCS	CAPS	Comment
The significance of water masses		Subtopics relocated or removed (eg. El Nino to <i>the atmosphere</i> ; coastal geomorphology to GET)
Ecosystems		Removed (but subtopics on soil now in <i>Resources and sustainability</i>)
	The atmosphere	<i>Earth's energy balance</i> and <i>Global circulation</i> from Gr 12; <i>Africa's weather and climate</i> from Gr 10; desertification
Development and sustainability	Development Geography	Very similar – subtopics on role of development aid and trade and development added
People and their needs – resource use and management)	Resources and sustainability	Similar – but conflicts and opportunities created by resource use and management; impact of values and attitudes of people affected gone
	Geomorphology	From Gr 12 – <i>Slopes, Topography associated with horizontal and inclined strata and massive igneous rocks; mass movements</i>

Content changes in Grade 12

NCS	CAPS	Comment
Climate and weather	Climate and weather	Reduced – subtopics moved to Gr 11
Fluvial processes and landforms	Geomorphology	Reduced – subtopics moved to Gr 11
People and places – rural and urban settlement	Rural and urban settlement	Similar; Added – origin and development of urban settlements; recent urbanization patterns in SA.
People and their needs – Economic activities; Water as a critical resource in South Africa	Economic Geography of South Africa	Much more clearly described; Gone: emphasis on environmental and social injustices related to economic activities; Added: <i>Mining</i> Relocated: <i>Water resources to Gr 10; Globalisation to Gr 11.</i>

Geographic skills and techniques

- Very similar – but more emphasis on GIS
- Sub-topics linked to content topics more directly than in NCS

Breadth – key differences

- Overall, NCS broader than the CAPS
 - Loss of some topics altogether
 - Relocation of some to GET
- Biggest reduction in breadth is in Grade 12
- Relocation into Grades 10 and 11 is accommodated by loss of topics there
- Generally, content much the same – apart from loss of *ecosystems* and *weathering and erosion* – but repackaged
- Less emphasis on social and environmental justice issues?

Curriculum Coverage - depth

1 = introductory level content; superficial; mainly definitions and descriptions

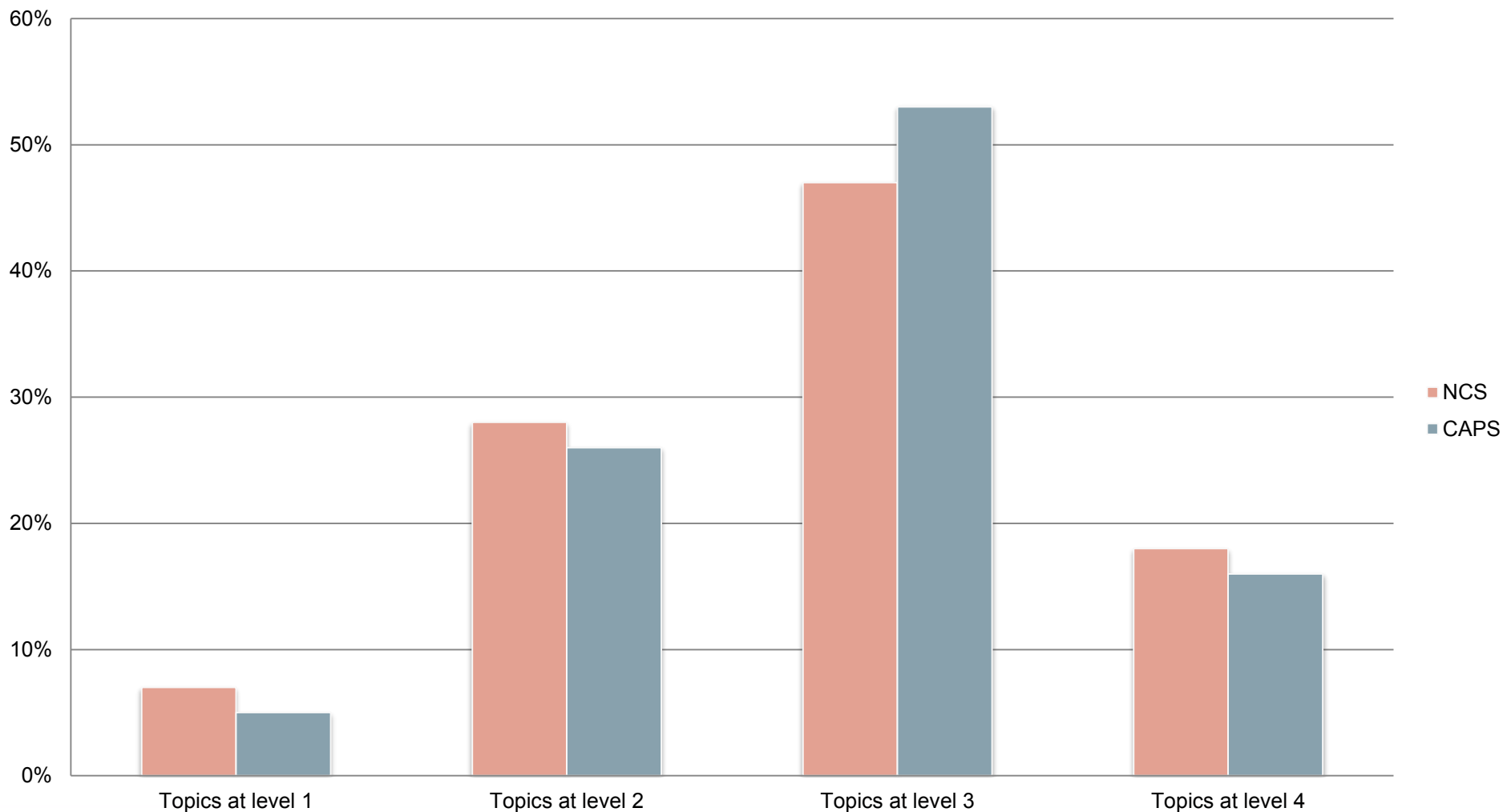
2 = definitions and descriptions plus some detail provided; involving simple relationships between concepts, and simple numerical calculations

3 = detailed indications of concepts/topics; requires understanding of relationships between concepts; involving complex computations and interpretations

4 = high level of abstraction; topic required to be dealt with in a conceptually challenging way; requires complex understanding of relationships between concepts; requiring very demanding mathematical computations and problem solving

Graph 2: Percentage of topics at different depth levels across FET Phase

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Depth – key points

- Very similar distribution across the levels in both curricula
 - Most weighted at Level 3 – followed by Levels 2 and 4
 - Low weighting at Level 1
- Some concern regarding omission of work on concepts related to adiabatic heating and cooling, lapse rates and stability and instability

Specification of topics

- Higher specification in the CAPS document
- Low specification in NCS document compensated for by detail in the SAGS and in the Exam Guidelines – but documents sometimes contradictory
- Better specification levels the playing fields – but:
 - must be seen as the minimum not maximum that can be taught by district officials

Topic weighting and curriculum pacing

- NCS does not indicate time to be spent per topic or sub topic; the CAPS more helpful here
- Both have topics on physical, human and environmental aspects of the subject and specify map work and other geographic skills – weighting similar?
- Lack of time allocation in the NCS leaves decisions about pacing to the teacher; much more guidance in the CAPS
- The greater number of topics in the NCS with similar depth scores to the CAPS implies the need for a faster pace

Specification of Curriculum sequencing

- High specification of sequence from grade to grade in both – certain topics clearly allocated to certain grades
- Low within-grade specification of sequence in the NCS - inferred from the order in which it is recorded and from sample learning programmes
- High specification in the CAPS – including sequence of sub-topics

Within and across grade sequencing

- Within each grade in both curricula, topics tend to be self standing and sequence not an issue – generally the physical then human geography topics
- Across grades, sequencing generally logical – lower grades provide a foundation for work in later grades
- Improved sequencing in CAPS with inclusion of *Climate* and *Geomorphology* in Gr 11

Within topic sequencing

- Some concerns with within topic sequencing in CAPS (e.g in Gr 11 climate) – but CAPS an improvement on NCS – e.g *the Significance of water masses* topic a jumble of unconnected subtopics - now allocated to other topics more logically;
- Specification of sequence can be restrictive if unduly enforced:
 - teachers need some flexibility in what they teach when so as to be able to pick up on current events
 - where within-topic sequence is based on a certain logic and determines a certain methodology, teachers should be able to teach in a different sequence

Curriculum progression

- **Within-grade** progression rated as moderate for both curricula
 - most complex topics not necessarily at end of year
 - uneven degrees of complexity through the year
- **Within a topic**, there is usually progression in subtopics in both curricula - some exceptions in NCS such as *The significance of water masses* in Gr 11

- **Across-grade** progression in the CAPS was rated moderate and in the NCS low/moderate
 - Some Gr 11 topics more complex than Gr 12's in both (e.g development in Gr 11).
 - Some clear progression in certain aspects of geographic techniques – particularly GIS; Gr 12 more demanding in terms of application of theory to practice in map interpretation.
 - Many topics have both complex and less complex subtopics regardless of grade, and do not necessarily progress from grade to grade

Pedagogy, integration and demands on the teacher

- Pedagogy poorly specified in both – but suggested as enquiry based
- Little to ensure this approach is used in either
- No support for the teacher with regard to pedagogy
- Physical and human geography integrated to some extent in both
- Very little integration across topics, or with other subjects
- Opportunities for integration with 'real life' – case studies emphasised in the CAPS

Pedagogy, integration and demands on the teacher (cont)

- Teacher will need strong content and skills knowledge
- Less demand on learning programme planning in the CAPS than the NCS
- Demand on assessment task design in both – though high degree of specificity in the CAPS has led to development of these by publishers in learner books and teacher guides.

Assessment Guidance

Aspect	NCS	CAPS
Number of assessment tasks specified	Gr 10 = 7 Gr 11 = 7 Gr 12 = 8	Gr 10 = 7 Gr 11 = 7 Gr 12 = 8
Types of assessment tasks specified	<u>Gr 10 & 11:</u> 3 assessmt tasks 2 tests 2 exams <u>Grade 12:</u> 3 assessmt tasks 2 tests 3 exams	<u>Gr 10 & 11:</u> 3 assessmt tasks 2 tests 2 exams <u>Grade 12:</u> 3 assessmt tasks 2 tests 3 exams
Examples of dominant types of assessment specified	Test/exams	Test/exams
Specificity of assessment guidance (General / Subject-specific / Both)	Both	Both
Clarity of assessment guidance (High / Moderate / Low)	High	High

- Very clear specification of kind of assessments.
- In CAPs, these are linked to each term (such as, a data handling task in Term 1 in Grade 11) – can be restrictive
- Very clear details are given about the structure of the examinations in each – numbers of papers; number of questions, weightings for different topics, kinds of questions that can be expected – and distribution of marks across
- Noticeable changes in the above from NCS to the CAPS – same time, fewer marks; higher cognitive demand.

Comparison of structure of each Paper

1

Paper 1			
Aspect	NCS	CAPS	change NCS → CAPS
Length of paper	3 hours	3 hours	Same
Number of marks	300	225	75 fewer marks
Number of questions set	4 Physical and 2 Human	4 Physical and 2 Human	Same questions, answer
Marks per question	100	75	25 fewer marks per question

?

Comparison of structure of Paper 2

Paper 2			
Aspect	NCS	CAPS	change NCS → CAPS
Length of paper	90 mins	90 mins	Same
Number of marks	100	75	25 fewer

Changes in weighting of cognitive demand

	NCS		CAPS		Change NCS → CAPS
Low order	Knowledge	30%	Knowing	25%	Decrease: 5%
Middle order	Comprehension	40%	Understanding; Applying	50%	Increase: 10%
High order	Application; Analysis; Synthesis; Evaluation	30%	Analyzing; evaluating; creating	25%	Decrease: 5%

Key differences

In the CAPS

- Much clearer description of what is to be taught/learnt
- Fewer documents to consult - though might be changing?
- Greater specification of time to be spent and sequencing of content.
- Less content in general - and especially in Grade 12
- Content more 'geography' focussed through loss of 2 topics
- Improved sequencing of content
- Less overt support for integration of outcomes/aims and content
- Perhaps less overt focus on issues of social and environmental justice

- Greater specification of assessment tasks per term
- NSC examination the same length – but carries fewer marks – more time for learners to do the required work – if marks per fact remain the same
- Similar structure to papers, and types of questions – but paragraphs now carry fewer marks
- Cognitive demand specified for paper has shifted upward

Part 2: Exit level outcomes



Content Knowledge specified

- Across the FET phase as a whole, 12 topics
- Good balance of physical, human and resource management content areas – with some integration of these dimensions in most topics
- Content studied at different scales – giving learners perspectives on systems, processes and issues local, regional and global contexts
- Both the theoretical work, and application in case studies; perhaps more underlying theoretical work possible in certain topics – land use and economic development?

Skills specified – directly and indirectly

- Geographic skills and techniques – such as map and photo work; GIS;
- Research and information processing skills
 - Work with diagrams and data; field work (optional)..;
- Language and cognitive skills
 - write short answers, paragraphs and essays (optional); write a research report; express and support a point of view; compare and contrast; suggest solutions to problems; describe and explain relationships, patterns and trends...;
- Social skills, attitudes and values
 - work independently and collaboratively; in reasoning and making judgments, demonstrate sensitivity to and concern for the environment, an appreciation of the attitudes, values and indigenous knowledge systems of others...

Generally – appropriate exit outcomes

Recommendations

- Strengthen emphasis on social and environmental justice issues by indicating places where they can be foregrounded e.g include:
 - environmental impact of mining;
 - historical factors affecting current spatial patterns in urban areas.
- Allow teachers some flexibility:
 - in including content beyond the minimum
 - in when to set which kind of assessment task
 - when to teach which topic within a grade, and in order of subtopics
- Consider including more work on lapse rates and stability and instability
- Allow for more use of ICT in the GIS section – a least over time

- Greater guidance with regard to pedagogy is needed
 - an enquiry- based approach is implied but not carried through into the content statements
 - content statements should link better to skills so that the focus of work is not on content and ‘remembering’ is not foregrounded.
- Work toward encouraging fieldwork – even on a small scale
- Ensure that language skills are better foregrounded, and included in marking memos – so that formulation and expression of ideas not just repetition of facts is credited
- Make essay writing compulsory, not optional – and increase marks for longer pieces of text in final exam (at present 4 x 2)