Maximising Attainment Information

Which topics are covered at Higher? Environmental Science

Unit	Topics
Living Environment	Investigating ecosystems and biodiversity • Interdependence • Human influences on biodiversity
Earth's Resources	Geosphere • Hydrosphere • Biosphere • Atmosphere
Sustainability	Global challenges • Food • Water • Energy • Waste management • Anthropogenic climate change
Apparatus, techniques and calculations (all topics)	
Assignment - your own experimental/field work investigation	

Are there important dates of which I should be aware?

December – Prelim

January–February – Assignment research and report (20% of final grade)

March – Assignment report sent to Qualifications Scotland (formerly SQA) for external marking

April–May – Final exam: Paper 1 and Paper 2 (80% of final grade)

How is the course assessed?

COMPONENT		DETAILS	LENGTH	MARKS	%
Final exam	Paper 1	• Case study with a separate data booklet • Short questions (1–3 marks each) • Final question (4–5 marks): justified conclusion	45 min	20	80
	Paper 2	• Section 1 – structured questions on all three areas (70 marks) • Section 2 – one extended response from a choice of two (10 marks)	2 hr	80	
Assignment		• Research – your own experimental/field work plus internet/literature data • Report – written up under exam conditions (max 2 hours)	8 hr max (report 2 hr)	20 (scaled to 25)	20

What are the exam question command words?

State / Give / Name / Identify – short, accurate statements; no explanation needed.

Describe – give the key features. For a graph or table, describe the trend and quote figures with units.

Explain – say why or how something happens, linking cause to effect with the correct scientific terms.

Suggest – apply your knowledge to an unfamiliar situation and give a sensible, reasoned answer.

Calculate – process data (e.g. mean, median, standard deviation, interquartile range, ratio, % change). Show working and units.

Compare – give similarities and/or differences between data sets, using figures from both.

Predict – say what is likely to happen, based on the evidence or trend shown.

Present / Draw – construct tables or graphs with headings, scales, labels and units; draw annotated diagrams, e.g. soil profiles.

Plan / Design – describe how to carry out an investigation to test a hypothesis, including sampling and safety.

Draw a conclusion – make a valid statement that relates to the aim and is supported by the evidence.

Evaluate – judge the strengths and weaknesses of an investigation or strategy; suggest and justify improvements.

Recommend and justify – (Paper 1 final question) choose a solution using the case study and your own knowledge, and give reasons.

Where do I find more information about the course?

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45726.html

What resources can I use to support my learning?

Teams/OneNote – lesson PowerPoints, notes, revision materials and past papers (OneNote Content Library).

Course specification glossary – defines all the key terms.

Achieve - https://achieve.hashtag-learning.co.uk/ - revision materials with past papers and mark schemes all arranged by topic.

Quizlet - https://quizlet.com/en-gb (search Higher Environmental Science) – flash cards

Where can I find more information about the exam and assignment?

Understanding Standards has exemplar exam answers and assignment reports with marks awarded.

https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/

Where do I find the past papers?

Past papers and marking instructions are on the Qualifications Scotland (SQA) website.

https://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm

How do I ensure top marks?

- Regular revision of the different topics (interleaving)
- Check how many marks a question is worth
- Check the command word – what is the question asking?
- Learn the key terms for each topic
- Practise calculations and graphs (show working)
- Practise as many past paper questions as you can