

Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 7 and 8

Students in Years 7 and 8 are typically from 12 to 14 years of age. Students should be encouraged to suggest some of the possible elements that can be explored on the fieldwork. They are capable of an entire day outside the classroom and should be encouraged to measure and collect data, photograph and sketch at the fieldwork site.

With growing confidence, students should be able to seek opinions from the public.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- interconnection
- environment
- space
- scale
- change
- sustainability.

Possible sites

The school grounds can be used to introduce apparatus that might be used in the field, but this does not replace actual fieldwork.

- The school grounds. Areas around the school may provide the opportunity to look at land degradation and the processes involved. Is there a walkway that is eroding or soil compaction on a path? Students may consider what ought to be done to remedy the situation.
- Nearby. A short walk to a town area can be undertaken to administer a pre-developed survey on the liveability of an area and to undertake observation of sustainable lifestyles. This can include elements such as the use of tank water for gardens, soil protection, paved surfaces, solar panels, air conditioners, chimneys and evidence of bicycles.
- Further afield. A visit to a number of sites along a river within one catchment can be undertaken to consider changing flows and changing uses of the water on the sustainability of the river. This type of fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.

Fieldwork activities

Significant preparation time ought to be given for students to assist in determining the activities that will take place at the fieldwork site. They can also plan the methods to be used to gather data, which should include observation, collecting data (including the use of a survey) and use of the senses based on an enquiry approach.

Some possible questions to explore include:

- What happens here?
- How do I rank this place against a set of criteria – aesthetic, emotional, spiritual?
- What data can be gathered to support an understanding of a local issue?
- How do processes and factors effect what is happening?
- How has this environment changed over time?
- Is there evidence of sustainability of the place?
- What ought to be done to ensure the future of this place?
- How can I assist?

Reporting on the fieldwork

A few suggestions include:

- identifying and labelling places that identify data collection sites on a map using geographical conventions, and annotating the map with drawings or photographs of well-selected material to support the enquiry
- counting and collating data including that from a survey
- creating tables, graphs and overlays to show patterns
- interpreting graphic and tabular data
- presenting summarised points of view taken from interviews and surveys
- identifying data as 'quantitative' or 'qualitative'
- introducing secondary data to add value to student analysis
- producing a report on the investigation, utilising geographical terminology and graphic representations, or communicating ideas through an oral report or the use of media (such as a Wiki)
- designing and conveying actions in response to improved sustainability.