

Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 9 and 10

Students in Years 9 and 10 are typically from 14 to 16 years of age. As such 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.

Students should be able to confidently seek opinions from the public. They should also take on responsibility for their own learning and be actively engaged in the structure of the fieldwork investigation.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- interconnection
- environment
- space
- sustainability.

Conceptual understandings to be extended

- scale
- change.

Possible sites for Year 9 fieldwork

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

- The school grounds. An area at the school may contain a vegetable garden (or maybe at a nearby school) where the use of water, nutrient levels and the role of technology can be shown to effect crop yields.
- Nearby. A short walk can be undertaken to a venue that attracts crowds of people for an activity, such as a sporting arena, railway station, cinema, park, beach or shopping centre. Data on users of the site, transport, accessibility and perceptions of safety can be studied.
- Further afield. A visit to a farm producing a food crop can be undertaken. Environmental factors, innovative farming methods, changing markets and land ownership, and farm restoration of adverse environmental impacts can be explored. This type of fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.

Possible sites for Year 10 fieldwork

Year 10 fieldwork should be undertaken in the curriculum unit Environmental change and management utilising the chosen environment as the context for study – land, inland water, coast, marine or built. A study of environmental change by human actions and biophysical processes, and management of the environmental change is the focus.

This type of fieldwork is likely to be some distance from the school, and may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements.

Fieldwork activities

These should include observation, collecting data (quantitative data) and perceptual analysis (qualitative data) based on an enquiry approach that is developed with the students – you will need to guide the process as you 'know' the site and have in mind the outcomes to be achieved. Students should also consider the methods to be used to collect appropriate data.

Some possible questions to explore include:

- What environmental factors are obvious in this environment?
- What human factors are interconnected in the environment?
- How do I rank this place against a set of criteria – aesthetic, emotional, spiritual?
- What data can be gathered to support an understanding of the processes at work in this environment?
- How is this environment cared for and managed?
- How could this environment be cared for and managed?
- What interconnections can be found between this environment and other global environments?

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, creating tables, choropleth or dot maps, graphs and flow diagrams to show patterns
- interpreting graphic and tabular data
- presenting summarised points of view taken from interviews and surveys
- interconnecting mapped data and survey responses
- introducing secondary data to add value to student analysis
- utilising geographical terminology in producing an oral report supported by visual aids or writing an extended response
- suggesting a course of action that might be taken to improve sustainability.