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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
GEOGRAPHY**

**SUMMER 2019**

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# **GEOGRAPHY**

## **GCSE**

**Summer 2019**

### **3110U10-1 CHANGING PHYSICAL AND HUMAN LANDSCAPES**

#### **General Comments**

Overall, candidates' performance in the 2019 Unit 1 was broadly similar to 2018 with the 2019 mean mark slightly down on the previous year. This slight fall was largely down to a disappointing performance in the two extended items in question 1, both of which proved to be a real challenge for the majority of candidates. One of these related to AO2, which continues to be the main discriminator between the more and less successful candidates but the second was, disappointingly in AO1.2 and resulted from candidates not reading and responding carefully and specifically enough to the demands of the question. Despite this, there was an encouraging improvement from 2018 in candidates' response to the command 'evaluate' which shows some progress in the grasp of elements of AO2 by candidates.

The examination focused on a range of different areas of the specification content from 2018 and there was no discernible or significant difference found in accessibility to candidates and most appeared to be as comfortable with the overall subject content as in the previous year. As in 2018, there was approximately a 60:40 split in favour of candidates responding to Theme 3 (Tectonics) compared to Theme 4 (Coastal Hazards).

#### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

##### **AO1.1 – Demonstrate knowledge**

Items in the examination which tested candidates' knowledge and their ability to recall information (AO1.1) were found to be accessible to most but also proved to be good discriminators with facility factors ranging from just below 0.5 to around 0.8. In question 1a(iv), most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a basic knowledge of the process of longshore drift and many used key words such as swash and backwash in their description. The candidates who were able to achieve the third mark, gave detailed and accurate description linking these two elements of the process to their relative directions and prevailing winds to transport material along the coast. In question 2b(ii), the majority of candidates were able to correctly identify relevant pull factors attracting people to global cities but, in many cases, they failed to develop these answers in enough detail specific to global cities to earn all of the marks on offer.

Most candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of brownfield sites in question 2c(i) and were able to define them as sites that had previously been built on but many did not develop this in sufficient detail to earn the second mark on offer by adding an example or a second descriptive point. Candidates need to look more carefully at the mark tariff for individual questions and ensure that they make the required number of points to earn the number of marks on offer. In this case, any development of the basic definition to give an example of a place, a type of land use or a recognition that such sites are often derelict earned a second mark.

## **AO1.2 – Demonstrate geographical understanding**

With a facility factor of 0.29, the item which provided the greatest challenge on the entire paper to candidates was question 1c(iii) in which they were asked to explain why the shape of a hydrograph is influenced by land use. This is clearly a test of candidates' understanding of concepts and interrelationships (AO1.2) and it was clear that a great many understood the role of land use in affecting the flows and stores of rainwater in the drainage basin which should have made the question much more accessible than it turned out to be. There were many well written responses related to the permeability of surfaces on farmland and the role of interception by vegetation slowing the flow of water into rivers as compared to the increased overland flow in less permeable urban areas which demonstrated good conceptual understanding. However, many candidates just related this to the likelihood of flooding and did not go on to explain, as required by the question, why this affected the actual shape of the hydrograph. Those who were successful in reaching the top band of the mark scheme linked detailed explanation of the interrelationships above to the concept of the hydrograph shape and the steepness of the rising and recession limbs and/or the length of the time lag between maximum rainfall and peak flow. It was a consistent failure of candidates to establish this link that contributed to a mean mark firmly in the lowest band of the mark scheme for this question.

Questions 2b(iii) and 2c(ii) also tested candidates' understanding under AO1.2 and in both questions, although the majority of candidates were familiar with the subject content of out of town retail parks and brownfield sites respectively, many did not provide sufficient detail in their reasoning to access the full range of marks. In assessing why people might prefer to shop out of town rather than in urban centres, many made fairly bland and often inaccurate statements relating to retail parks having cheaper products and greater choice of shops rather than explaining in detail reasons for less congestion, improved parking and the quality of the shopping environment compared to some town centres. Likewise, the candidates who were able to give more detailed reasons were rewarded for explaining why developing brownfield sites improved previously unsightly and derelict areas and why these sites might be preferable because they already contained certain elements of infrastructure. Many, however, fell into the trap of repeating their definition of a brownfield site rather than offering detailed reasons beyond the environmental benefits of building on them rather than greenfield sites.

Responses under AO1.2 were generally good in themes 3 and 4 and many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the processes at work in forming ocean trenches in question 3a(iv). The majority chose to illustrate this with a diagram and although this was not mandatory, it was clear that the use of a diagram helped them in their explanation of a landform and it is clear that providing this option for candidates when describing and explaining landforms helps them considerably in organising their answer. It should be noted, however, that some candidates chose not to include a diagram and were still able to achieve full marks through a well-constructed prose response. There was also a generally good understanding shown by a facility factor of 0.55 in question 4a(iv), of the reasons for increased vulnerability of small island states from rising sea levels with many candidates basing their explanation around the low-lying topography or the lack of economic development which reduced the resilience of populations.

## AO2 – Apply knowledge and understanding

The application of knowledge and understanding (AO2) continues to challenge candidates but it was felt that, in general, there was a slight improvement in this from 2018. In particular, candidates' ability to evaluate strategies for managing earthquakes and coastal hazards in questions 3(c) and 4(c) respectively was generally good and the majority made a genuine attempt to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different strategies or to compare one or more strategies with each other. This was especially the case with theme 4 and many candidates wrote at length on the merits or otherwise of a range of hard and soft engineering strategies that often went far beyond simple reference to the relative cost of different strategies. A few candidates were able to consider issues around future sustainability of hard engineering in the light of the increasing intensity of coastal storms resulting from climate change. The quality of responses for earthquake strategies was slightly less than those for coastal hazards, shown by a facility factor of 0.42 compared to 0.49 and this was often because candidates often chose to simply describe the information in the resource rather than evaluate beyond the relative cost of different measures. However, many candidates were able to discuss the viability of hard engineering for earthquake-prone LICs compared to HICs and a few referred to the limitations of hard engineering in very high magnitude events.

The AO2 requirement for candidates to make a decision or judgement was examined in question 2c(iii). More able candidates were able to analyse the resources in relation to sustainable housing to show how the apartment blocks had improved the quality of the built environment of Bristol Docks. They then countered this by suggesting that this was an example of gentrification with modern housing being made unaffordable to local residents with the associated impact on community cohesion as more wealthy residents and possibly second home owners were attracted to buy them. However, although the vast majority did attempt to make a judgement on whether or not they felt that Bristol Docks had been developed sustainably, these judgements were often fairly simplistic and based on a description, rather than objective analysis of the resources in relation to Egan's Wheel and the responses described above were few and far between in what was, admittedly, a challenging question. Candidates were also invited in this question, to use additional evidence to support their judgements and this provided them with an opportunity to use material from other places they may have studied and apply it to Egan's Wheel and either use it to reinforce points already made about Bristol or to provide evidence that could be applied to the segments of the wheel that were obviously not apparent in the resources on Bristol. The command in the question asked candidates to consider places 'like' Bristol and it was felt that this would have given candidates the opportunity to broaden their answers by using material they had studied in class but unfortunately, few saw it in this context and were thus unable to take advantage of the invitation.

Many candidates who used additional material simply described case study information without applying it to the context of the question which was very clearly about sustainable communities as represented by Egan's Wheel. The ability to use resources to make a decision in this way often requires candidates to use their critical thinking skills and again, this remains a key area for improvement in this specification. However, the banded mark scheme for this question still enabled even the weakest candidates to gain access and score marks, as illustrated by a facility factor of 0.43 and there were extremely few candidates who attempted the question and scored no marks. The problem was, that few candidates were able to offer the level of sophistication in making their judgements that was required at the higher bands. It should also be added, however, that with the benefit of hindsight, the resources for this question might have included some additional information at the expense of one of the photographs to help candidates consider the alternative view.

The final element of AO2 requires candidates to analyse, and question 1a(v) invited them to analyse coastal landforms from an ordnance survey map. All too often, ordnance map questions test a fairly narrow range of skills and this question required candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of coastal landforms and landform processes to the area represented by the map extract. Unfortunately, a facility factor of 0.31 shows that this question proved too difficult for a great many candidates and a significant minority chose not to attempt it altogether with many others providing fairly superficial and simplistic responses that were not directed to the landforms shown in the map. Previous items leading into this question pointed candidates very clearly to the sand spit, its trend and to the process of longshore drift which identified the coastline as one dominated by transport and deposition. The candidates who had noted that the sand spit has a south-west to north-east trend were able to identify the direction of the prevailing wind and hence, longshore drift and refer to the role of the river restricting this process and helping to create the hook on the spit. Some candidates were then able to recognise the protection afforded by the spit to create the low energy conditions behind it for the widest part of the beach to be formed at Glan-y-Don and that the beach becomes progressively narrow towards the east as longshore becomes the dominant force again. Analysis is one of the key elements of AO2 and candidates need to be able to analyse geographical information in a range of different formats, including maps as well as numerical data in applying their knowledge and understanding in different real-world contexts. Whilst many candidates made a genuine attempt to answer this question and achieved marks in the middle band, only a few were really successful and this also contributed to the low mean mark for the question as a whole and to the slight reduction in the mean for the paper.

### **AO3 – Skills and techniques to investigate issues and communicate findings**

Questions testing AO3 were generally done well and it was pleasing to see that most candidates were comfortable with basic map reading skills in question 1(a), their ability to describe the relationship between rainfall and river level from the hydrograph in question 1b(ii) and to calculate a basic percentage in question 2b(ii). There were a number of candidates who did not show their working out.

### **Summary of key points**

- Ensure that sufficient detail is included in AO1.1 and AO1.2 answers to earn all of the marks on offer. To show understanding in AO1.2 the use of connectives such as ‘this is because...’ and ‘therefore...’ will help in this regard.
- Improve thinking skills and the ability to analyse resources in coming to a balanced judgement in decision-making questions.
- Be able to analyse a range of geographical information, including OS maps in applying knowledge and understanding in real contexts.
- Pay attention to the entire wording of a question, as well as the command word to ensure that the answer is specific and given the correct context.

# **GEOGRAPHY**

## **GCSE**

**Summer 2019**

### **3110U20-1 ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

#### **General Comments**

The examining of one assessment objective per question worked well this year and it was clear to see that candidates have been taught to understand the command word before answering the question. The majority of candidates gave descriptions for AO1.1 questions and explanations for AO1.2 questions, although these were not always in enough detail.

The paper was accessible to the whole ability range of candidates with only a small number of questions not attempted. There were a range of tariff questions asked (1, 2,3,4,6 & 8 marks) ensuring that the less able candidates were able to attempt all and the higher tariff ones being a good differentiator for the more able and talented. On occasion candidates did not respond well to key terms being used in the wording of questions and teachers should ensure that these are highlighted to candidates.

The option questions gave comparable results through either choice. Likewise, the candidates who took the examination through the medium of Welsh performed similarly well as those who took the examination in English, and therefore there was no advantage given either way.

#### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

##### **AO1.1 – Demonstrating knowledge**

AO1.1 Knowledge questions are worth 15% of the overall assessment weighting. This AO was tested across 5 questions this year carrying 1,2 or 4 marks. Question 1a(iv) was not answered well. The majority of candidates were able to identify at least one distinctive feature of tropical rainforest vegetation and some were able to elaborate it for the second mark. A number of candidates described two different layers of the rainforest as two distinctive features, but this is further development of the same feature and so a maximum of 2 marks was given for this.

Question 2a(v) was also a 4-mark question and this also was not answered well. A significant number of candidates either did not know what infrastructure was or ignored that element to the question, instead giving general positive effects of tourism on a LIC/NIC. Candidates should be aware of all key terms within the specification.

##### **AO1.2 – Demonstrating geographical understanding**

AO1.2 questions are worth 25% of the overall assessment weighting. This AO was tested across 5 questions this year carrying 2, 4 or 6 marks. A common theme across the 6-mark AO1.2 questions was the lack of specificity within the answer. For example, Question 2b(ii) asks about the impact of enclave tourism on development. 18% of candidates did not attempt this question, and the mean mark obtained was 1.9. This resulted in a facility factor of 31 which shows candidates struggled to access the question.

Many candidates answered it generically with either no reference to enclave tourism or giving general impacts of tourism rather than those that enclave tourism specifically cause.

As such they were limited to band 1 marks. A small percentage (less than 5%) answered this very well and provided a detailed enclave specific response and how this affected development. The 'impacts of enclave tourism on development' is a clear requirement of the specification and therefore is something that should be taught in class.

Some good examples of chain of reasoning were seen in responses to question 3a(iv) where candidates explained why a large number of asylum seekers originated in sub-Saharan Africa/Asia. Many candidates were able to access band 3 marks through just one or two reasons that had been fully explained. This was really pleasing to see and should be encouraged to practice in class.

## **AO2 – Apply knowledge and understanding**

AO2 questions are worth 35% of the overall assessment weighting. This AO was tested across 4 questions this year carrying 3, 6 or 8 marks. The 3-mark question (Q1civ) was not answered very well with candidates either giving very generic answers such as 'tourists' or 'pollution' rather than specific reasons such as 'tourists walk on the reef and damage it' or naming a specific type of pollution. However, it was very pleasing to see the responses to the higher 8-mark tariff questions. The majority of candidates attempted all of these questions with most being able to access at least the marks in band 1. (The average mark for these questions was in band 2). Good use was made of the resource materials provided and the majority of candidates were able to apply their knowledge and understanding of issues to the context provided. It was clear to see that some candidates have been taught to address both sides of the argument, make a decision and justify it. This is good practice and should be further encouraged! Candidates were able to demonstrate this in the HS2 question 2c(ii) as well as the final question in the option units - 3b(ii) and 4b(ii). These extended 8-mark questions were answered comparably well, showing no bias between the options and the mean score of each being in band 2.

## **AO3 – Skills and techniques to investigate issues and communicate findings**

AO3 Skills questions are worth 25% of the overall assessment weighting. This AO was tested across 12 questions this year carrying 1, 2 or 3 marks. Candidates responded to these questions very well which included plotting and interpreting graphs, calculation of range and percentage, and interpretation, description and adaptation of maps.

The majority of candidates were able to gain marks interpreting climate graphs, correlation and bar charts. It was clear to see that this skill had been practiced and should be encouraged. The majority of candidates were able to do the required calculations but some did not include their workings out. As a result, they lost 50% of these marks due to not reading the requirements of the question properly. Candidates were weaker on the map skills questions as opposed to the graphical or calculation ones. In questions 3a(ii) and 4a(ii) candidates were required to describe the pattern. Many candidates focused on naming individual countries rather than describing where the most or least locations were or using comparative quantification. This is a key skill that is examined frequently and therefore should be practiced in a variety of contexts and scales. Questions 3a(iii) and 4a(iii) asked candidates to suggest one way in which the map could be adapted. Again, this was very poorly answered with the mean score being below 1. Some candidates focused on adding extra information to the map which is not what the question was asking. Many candidates offered a valid adaptation but did not gain the second mark in explaining why this would have helped to illustrate the information more clearly. Selecting and adapting a variety of skills and techniques is a central element of this AO and should be addressed regularly in class to promote critical thinking.



## Summary of key points

- Candidates should be aware of all key terms in the specification as they may be used in the wording of the question.
- Candidates should be as specific as they can in their answers and avoid generalised statements, especially in the AO1.2 and AO2 questions. The use of connectives such as 'therefore...', 'this is because...' and 'as a result...' may help candidates develop their responses.
- Candidates should regularly practice the interpretation and analysis of maps and graphs and also discuss their limitations; suggesting ways in which these could be improved and/or adapted.

# GEOGRAPHY

## GCSE

Summer 2019

### 3110U30-1 FIELDWORK ENQUIRY

#### General Comments

This was the second year of the new Unit 3 NEA assessment and there was certainly evidence to show advice had been acted upon by staff and therefore students. Overall, the paper worked well, and nearly all candidates answered all questions – attempt rates were 98% or above on all items.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Q.1 (a) AO1.2: 4 marks

Most candidates were able to achieve a minimum of Band 1 and the mean mark was 1.8. The main factor which prevented candidates from being credited with Band 2 was the inability to read the question carefully and recognize the difference between qualitative and quantitative surveys. Too many candidates responded to this question by referring to quantitative information such as questions related to traffic surveys or pedestrian counts.

Better candidates were able to link their answers to specifics from their fieldwork, often with exemplification of what they had done during the fieldwork. The reference to specific information from the investigation is crucial to reward at the higher bands.

##### Advice:

- Candidates need to have a clear understanding of the terms 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' in relation to how these influence the nature of data collection and further aspects of any investigation. Knowledge and understanding of key terms and command words continues to prevent some candidates achieving better outcomes.

##### (b) (i) AO3: 6 marks

A question linked to graph drawing should be an opportunity for most candidates to excel. However, the quality of responses to this question was mixed with too many being awarded Band 1. The mean mark was 3.2. Answers often showed too little attention to detail and as such inaccurate and/or incomplete graphs were produced. This included the drawing of radial graphs which could not be credited with full marks because the axis was drawn inaccurately. In several cases, a table of data was provided that showed quantitative rather than qualitative data leading to graphs representing pedestrian counts or traffic flows. These may have been accurate, but they did not answer the question correctly.

On occasions the quality and variety of graphs varied according to centre or teaching group. Consequently, candidates were not helped to reach higher bands because they may only have been familiar with a few techniques from which to select the most appropriate type.

There were excellent examples where candidates answered this question well. Compound bar graphs and radial graphs were well executed, meeting the criteria for Band 3.

**Advice:**

The drawing of graphs is an important aspect of any investigative study and it is important to note the following points in improving standards further. Candidates should:

- produce a table of data that is easily read by the examiner. (In too many a table was not included which created problems for the assessment of an accurate and complete graph). Candidates should also only include data which is specific to the graph they are going to produce
- learn about different graphical techniques and their assessment using the SAC method (suitable, accurate and completed) and the SALT method (scale, axis, labels and title).
- provide a key to their bar graphs
- draw the graph in the allocated space of the answer booklet
- not submit graphs that were clearly not done in the assessed time
- Base maps with graphs must have authentication from the teacher to be credited with any marks.

**(ii) AO3: 4 marks**

Many candidates were able to offer some explanation why they chose their graph and relate this to the nature of the data presented in the table. However very few were awarded full marks because they were unable to elaborate and link the graph or map to their data and offer a more than basic reason why they had chosen the technique. This resulted in a mean mark of 1.7.

Some candidates described the data presentation technique rather than give reasons why it was the most suitable and/or why other techniques were not.

**Advice:**

- Candidates must learn specific details about different graphical techniques, avoiding the use of very generic and simple statements that could apply to any presentation technique.
- Candidates need to consider the suitability and effectiveness of the technique to their own data. For example, candidates who had used bar charts stated that bar charts are useful for presenting data from large data sets and for showing anomalies, even though their data set was small and had no anomalies.

**(c) AO2: 8 marks**

In these responses there were fewer errors in relation to the reference to quantitative rather than qualitative techniques. The best answers were able to draw on detailed, specific information from their investigation, describing strengths and limitations well.

The command 'evaluate the techniques' was a key differentiating factor in the outcomes for this question. At least half of the candidates resorted to describing what different graphs showed about their investigation almost appearing to be copied from a standard textbook response rather than evaluating strengths and weaknesses as a technique. This is certainly a factor in the mean mark being 3.5 out of 8. Evaluation must also show balance. Clear reference to their 'portfolio work' was lacking and this discriminated well.

**Advice:**

- Candidates must learn to evaluate techniques rather than just describe them.
- To achieve answers at the higher bands this evaluation needs to be applied to their actual fieldwork experience and should include a balance between strengths and weaknesses. This reference to specific details is a key to achieving higher marks.

**Q.2 (a) AO1.2: 4 marks**

The mean was 2 marks. Many candidates were able to describe why they went to the chosen location but often at a basic level. Responses that focused on pragmatic reasons such as cost, proximity to school or available parking were common but few elaborated on these basic points. Some candidates described their location as unique or distinctive without explaining why this factor was important.

**Advice:**

- Candidates need to read the question which asked for two reasons.
- Answers should emphasise specific details related to their investigation to justify their choice of fieldwork locations

**(b) AO2: 8 marks**

Understanding of the term analysis was generally poor with most candidates describing individual data points rather than identifying and illustrating trends, patterns and connections. Some candidates described main findings without using supporting evidence. Others described headline data without identifying a pattern or trend.

Very good answers to this question showed candidates carefully selecting information from their fieldwork portfolio and using specific understanding from fieldwork activities, making links to geographical concepts and theories. This type of response pushed the mean mark to 3.7.

Some candidates struggled with referencing evidence from their portfolio and what the data showed and even fewer used secondary sources to support conclusions.

**Advice:**

- Candidates need to improve their geographical literacy. 'Patterns' and 'trends' were often applied loosely by candidates and without precise meaning.

**(c) AO1.2: 6 marks**

There were some very good answers to this question with candidates making good reference to the primary and secondary data sets and offering specific responses to match the study they had investigated.

However, some centres had not helped candidates by choosing locations and areas to research and investigate that proved difficult for candidates to fully expand and elaborate on in their conclusion.

Unfortunately, a significant number of candidate's responses did not address the question. They often described their main findings but were awarded a lower band, because explanations lacked evidence from their own investigations to support their findings. Fewer again used secondary sources to support conclusions.

Similarly, too many candidates failed to understand the significance of the term 'conclusion' (the ability to use evidence to support an overarching statement that pulls different lines of enquiry together). In these cases, candidates wrote lists of simple statements, with or without the support of evidence that lacked any explanation or suggested reason for their findings.

**Advice:**

- Candidates seemingly failing to read questions and/or failing to understand command words remains an issue. It appears that some candidates are confused with what a conclusion is.
- As Candidates are failing to access Band 3 because there is a lack of specific detail related to their fieldwork included in their responses.

In terms of administration of the Unit 3 assessment centres need to consider the following:

- Where asked to submit additional pages from their portfolio, these should only be attached if they can provide useful evidence in support of an answer to a specific question.
- Some centres have not helped candidates through poor organisation and collation of the answer booklet, particularly the inclusion of additional information (beyond the five pages) from their own investigations.
- Candidates not following instructions on the examination script.
- Candidates must indicate the beginning of each new response and number the answer carefully and clearly. This is especially true where candidates decide to give responses out of sequence.
- Centres need to pay full attention to the AO's in this assessment so that answers have more focus and avoid description.



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