



# GCSE Examiners' Report

Geography  
GCSE  
Summer 2024

## Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.  For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

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## Executive Summary

The examination papers in GCSE Geography were generally of a similar standard to the previous examination series. As is always the case, some questions were seen as more demanding in some topics and less demanding in others. The 8-mark answers in Units 1 and 2 proved to be good differentiators in performance, as did the Unit 3 fieldwork questions where candidates who specifically referred to their own fieldwork scored the highest marks.

AO2 questions in general scored very well across Units 1 and 2, with one exception in Unit 1 where the concept of global cities and the challenges facing them were generally not very well understood or evaluated in any depth. AO3 skills questions were done very well across Units 1 and 2, except for working out a percentage for Q2ai in Unit 1, which many candidates found difficult and either got wrong or did not attempt. AO1.1 and AO1.2 weaknesses were seen across Units 1 and 2, with the concept of managing conflicts within National Parks and distinctive landscapes notable for poor knowledge across both Units.

Other key areas of the specification such as the Carbon Cycle and all aspects of Global Cities need to be covered in depth when teaching the content, and candidates must be encouraged to practice AO1.2 questions, for example where, as in Unit 1 Q3aii, it is not enough simply to say what a pyroclastic flow is (AO1.1) when the answer must be linked to why they are a major hazard from highly explosive eruptions (AO1.2).

Similar issues are reported from Unit 3 as in previous years. There is still a high percentage of candidates not specifically linking answers to their own fieldwork and missing out on the higher bands by being too general in their answers. Candidates must pay more attention to the command words within each question so that they use their portfolio with more thought and interpret what they have learnt within the context of the questions asked. Care must be taken to ensure candidates have the most appropriate mapping or graphical technique to represent their data, and to ensure candidates fully analyse their results by looking for patterns and trends within and most importantly links between the data sets they collect. A strength in Unit 3 was the way most candidates were able to explain why data should be collected at different times and/or sites during the investigation data collection process.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
AO1.1 knowledge of certain areas of the specification e.g. global cities, carbon cycle, national parks	<a href="#">WJEC Educational Resources Website</a>	Blended learning resources and knowledge organisers aimed at the whole WJEC specification, covering these topics and more.
Accessing the highest bands for AO1.2 understanding questions.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/ulul025c/geogshots-ao1-2-wjec.pptx">https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/ulul025c/geogshots-ao1-2-wjec.pptx</a>	Geog Shot slides outlining how to write high quality Band 3 & 4 AO 1.2 answers. All Geog Shots produced by Fiona Rennie, GCSE Geography Subject Adviser.

<p>Specific reference to, and discussion of, candidates' own fieldwork in Unit 3 NEA answers. Applying understanding of the fieldwork enquiry process to the NEA fieldwork questions. Ensuring good coverage of the required fieldwork topics for the chosen year to access information from them in the NEA questions. Choosing the most appropriate data presentation methods for data collected, and ensuring detailed analysis of data sets, highlighting patterns, trends and links.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.wjec.co.uk">GCSE Geography (wjec.co.uk)</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.wjec.co.uk/educational-resources">WJEC Educational Resources Website</a></p>	<p>Key Documents Fieldwork Guidance section on the WJEC website has specific presentations on fieldwork topics for current Year 11 (Change over Time &amp; Place, 2025) and incoming Year 10 (Use of Transects &amp; Inequality, 2026). Three blended learning resources also cover accuracy, reliability and validity in fieldwork, approaching fieldwork in the classroom and developing more effective fieldwork investigations.</p>
<p>Writing high quality answers to 'discuss, assess, to what extent, evaluate' questions e.g. the AO2 question from the 2024 Unit 1 paper on assessing/evaluating the challenges facing global cities where detailed chains of reasoning must be developed to access the highest bands.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/uuyfdjhl/geogshots-discuss-assess-to-what-extent.pptx">https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/uuyfdjhl/geogshots-discuss-assess-to-what-extent.pptx</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/owrer0rr/geogshots-ao2.pptx">https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/owrer0rr/geogshots-ao2.pptx</a></p>	<p>Two Geog shots specifically written to address these issues from a WJEC GCSE Geography perspective.</p>
<p>All above points linked to Units 1 and 2 are covered by previous Online Exam Review (OER) resources.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.wjec.co.uk/oer">WJEC OER Website</a></p>	<p>Specific annotated answers showing good practice from previous series papers, using Welsh and English medium answers.</p>

# **GEOGRAPHY**

## **GCSE**

**Summer 2024**

### **UNIT 1: Changing Physical and Human Landscapes**

**3110U10-1/3110N10-1**

#### **Overview of the Unit**

The general performance of candidates in this paper suggests that it was of appropriate standard and a fair test in which the full range of candidates were able to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do. Differentiation was achieved through a balance of short questions and more challenging extended writing sections and there were no individual items evident where large numbers of candidates chose not to attempt. It was pleasing to see that most items in questions 1 and 2 had attempt rates more than 92% with only one (Q2(b)(v)) below this at 87%. Overall, the mean mark for the Unit 1 paper was 35.9/83 which was 2.9 marks below the mean in 2023. As in most years of this specification, candidates tended overall to perform better in question 1 (Theme 1) than on question 2 (Theme 2), despite a generally weak response to question 1 (d) and this was mainly due to a generally disappointing response to items relating to global cities.

As required by the specification, the questions were driven by the assessment objectives with each item assessing a single objective. The balance of marks in each theme accorded to each assessment objective is pre-set to a consistent formula in each series. There was a fairly strong response to the highest tariff item worth 8 marks in the option units where candidates were required to make a judgement based on resources and this demonstrates continuing improvement in this type of question over recent years. Candidates also performed well on another AO2 question where analysis of resources, including an OS map was required and this also represents improvement. It is felt that performance in AO2 has improved markedly this year in comparison to previous series. However, the assessment objective where candidates performed least well was in AO1.2, understanding, which was also referenced in the 2023 report. This was evident in items 1(d), 2(b)(v) and (a)(ii) in both options units, themes 3 and 4. In all cases, it is felt that a lack of confidence with the subject knowledge around which understanding can be demonstrated was a major contributor but as mentioned last year, these answers can be improved by constructing explanations around chains of reasoning.

There was approximately an average 70:30 overall split in response to the optional themes, in favour of Theme 3, this was slightly higher in Welsh medium and slightly lower in English medium. This reflects the pattern in previous years papers. There appears to have been very little difference in levels of accessibility to the optional questions with a total mean mark of just 0.5 between them, in favour of Theme 3.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Theme 1: Landscapes and Physical Processes

- Q.1**
- (a)**
    - (i)** No areas to highlight.
    - (ii)** No areas to highlight.
  - (b)**
    - (i)** Most candidates were able to identify at least one of the factors most likely to lead to flooding.
    - (ii)** Most candidates were able to describe an impact of flooding on people and provide sufficient elaboration to achieve the second mark. It is worth pointing out here that because the question relates to AO1.1, case study material which gave an example of a flood studied was able to be credited for a mark if it related to an impact on people.
    - (iii)** Interpretation of a hydrograph is a specific skill highlighted in Appendix A of the specification. In general, it was pleasing to see that very many candidates were able to reference some of the key elements of a hydrograph such as the base flow, rising/recession limbs, lag time and peak flow in describing how the river responded to Storm Dennis. It was possible to achieve full marks if they recognised, described or were able to quantify within an acceptable tolerance at least two of these features. Most were able to identify the steep or rapid increase in river level following the onset of rainfall as a basic response but a great many went on to identify several of the key elements and made sufficient points to go beyond the 4-mark tariff set for the question. Where candidates were less successful, they tended to simply describe the overall trend as if it were a simple line graph and were thus unable to describe the relationship between the rainfall regime and river level during the storm which is the purpose of a hydrograph. It is also worth pointing out to candidates that when they offer quantification from a graph, they need to take the time to ensure as much accuracy as possible. Even though the mark scheme allowed a level of tolerance for each quantified point, a significant minority of responses fell outside of that tolerance. Example answers with explanatory notes at 2 and 4 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
    - (iv)** This AO2 question required candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of flooding to the scenario presented by the resources for Storm Dennis and Pontypridd. A similar type of question, particularly using an OS map has been set twice in recent examinations and it was very pleasing to see a significant improvement in candidates' ability analyse the factors using the resources, particularly the OS map. This has been identified as an important area requiring improvement when this type of question was set previously. There were a great many responses which earned marks in the top band of the mark scheme where candidates identified the steep slopes surrounding Pontypridd from the contour pattern on the map and/or the lack of vegetation on the surrounding valley sides and linked these to the enhancement of overland flow given the intensity of the rainfall.

Even where use of the map was less evident, candidates tended to refer to the impact of impermeable urban surfaces in leading the flooding. Overall, the question was tackled competently by a great many candidates showing a pleasing improvement in the approach to this type of AO2 question. Example answers with explanatory notes at 3 and 6 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

- (c) (i) Most candidates correctly selected either a line graph or bar graph as being the most appropriate method of representing the data. However, their choice tended to determine whether they were able to gain the second mark. Of those who chose the line graph, very many correctly stated that it is most effective for representing a trend or change over time but only a few who identified the bar graph were able to note that the number of tourists is a discrete variable which is why this type of graph would be used.
- (ii) As this question was limited to a 1-mark tariff, candidates needed to define a honeypot site as attracting many or is congested with tourists. A significant minority failed to add the qualifier, simply linking a place to tourism and thus did not score the mark.
- (iii) This type of question assessing AO2 and requiring inference from a photograph has also been set several times in recent years. On the whole candidates responded well to it and many were able to access band 2 and at least 2 of the 3 marks available. Candidates who identified footpath erosion as the main issue put themselves on the right track and were able to earn the additional marks for the quality and depth of elaboration. Many developed their answer by referring to the walkers needing to take alternative routes and thus exacerbating the problem with resultant impact on biodiversity and/or the aesthetic appeal of the landscape. Approaches such as this were common and often worthy of full marks. Example answers with explanatory notes at 1 and 3 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (d) In the main, candidates found this question a challenge and only a minority were able to demonstrate understanding of the potential conflicts which might arise between different users from the management of landscapes. Most candidates tended to describe one or two strategies at a fairly basic level such as erecting signage and building footpaths and consider the advantages and disadvantages of these rather than focus on the different users of managed landscapes such as tourists, farmers or residents and consider how their views on how the landscape should be managed might vary. Whilst many answers were valid in that they referred to named strategies and thus scored 1 or 2 marks in band 1, very few then went on to show their understanding of how these could create disagreement to move into the higher bands. Where responses were able to demonstrate this, they all too often lacked depth and detail offering only partial explanation which meant that band 3 answers were few and far between. This accounted for the low facility factor and mean mark of 92.1 and 1.8 respectively. I

It was felt that this related more to a lack of confidence in the subject matter of managed landscapes than an ability to provide an explanation but it meant that candidates lacked the basic knowledge to provide the evidence for more detailed explanations of a range of conflicts. Example answers with explanatory notes at 2 and 4 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

## Theme 2: Rural-Urban Links

- Q.2 (a) (i)** Many candidates struggled with the calculation of a percentage increase from the data provided. Although many showed partial understanding of the working required to reach the correct answer this was often incomplete. As mentioned in previous years' reports, it is important to remember that Appendix A forms a key part of the assessment for this specification and candidates will need to demonstrate proficiency in the full range of skills in a geographical context.
- (ii) & (iii)** Candidates are, in the main, comfortable with the topic of retailing and able to relate the subject matter to their own experience. As such most were able to provide creditworthy responses to both items. Most explanations for the growth in internet retailing focussed either on the advancement of technology, the ease and convenience of online shopping and the impact of the covid pandemic and lockdowns where online retailing became a social norm. There was also generally good knowledge shown of the impact on UK high streets with the majority choosing to describe increased shop closures in the face of reduced footfall and turnover.
- (b) (i)** No areas to highlight.
- (ii)** The key point in this question was to acknowledge from the map that the top 10 global cities are broadly different from the 10 largest cities, with a couple of exceptions. Candidates who failed to recognise this, tended to describe the general pattern of each without providing the comparison from this point. As such many were awarded one or two marks for basic description of the location but the third mark was reserved for providing the comparison.
- (iii)** Most candidates correctly identified that Paris is a global due to its many links with other countries/global cities as a major air transport hub. Where they failed earn both marks this simply due to a lack detail in providing sufficient elaboration.
- (iv)** There was a generally disappointing response to this question with only a minority of candidates able to demonstrate knowledge of two clear characteristics of global cities in addition to being a hub for air transport. It was mentioned in last year's report that candidates in general are not confident with the concept of global cities and are unsure of the features that make them distinct from other large cities around the world and this remains apparent in 2024.

Many provided very general responses that could apply to any city and although many others identified one feature, such as culturally significant, financial or commercial hub, national capital or political hub or the location of the headquarters of TNCs, those who could provide two were by and large in the minority. Example answers with explanatory notes at 1 and 2 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

- (v) Although many candidates and a broad knowledge of the informal economy, responses were often descriptive and communicated in a basic way without making the link to its economic necessity in LICs and NICs, thus remaining in band 1. A few developed their answer sufficiently through chains of reasoning to explain why poor access to education means that many people lack skills or qualifications to participate in the formal economy and thus resort to informal work opportunities to support families or provide a living to cope with high levels of poverty and the lack of welfare support available to them in richer countries. However, these responses were far less common and again explains the disappointing mean and facility factor. Example answers with explanatory notes at 2 and 4 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (vi) Again, as with the other items relating to global cities, there was a disappointing response to this AO2 question requiring candidates to evaluate the challenges facing them. Evaluation is one of the four strands of AO2 questions and it has been commented in recent reports that candidates' ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to evaluate different strategies has steadily improved over the life of the specification. However, the propensity to almost completely ignore the command to evaluate the challenges in this question and simply describe the challenges facing global cities from the three resources provided meant that only a minority of responses were able to progress beyond band 1 of the mark scheme. Where answers did gain access to band 2, some chose to consolidate the issues presented in the resources into an overarching conclusion that they all relate to overpopulation and overcrowding in many global cities and this was perfectly acceptable as an approach. Others took the more conventional approach of weighing up the different challenges against each other but unfortunately, both approaches were rare. Example answers with explanatory notes at Bands 1, 2 and 3 for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

### **Theme 3: Tectonic Landscapes and Hazards**

- Q.3**
- (a)
    - (i) Most candidates were able to identify and quantify the negative relationship between the height of the smoke plume and the frequency of eruption.
    - (ii) Many candidates struggled with the wording of this AO1.2 question which asked for explanation of why pyroclastic flows are major hazards in highly explosive eruptions.

Unfortunately, the majority knew why they are hazards and gave often very good descriptions of the key elements of composition, heat and speed but then failed to link this to highly explosive eruptions which is where the real understanding came in. Only a minority were able to explain why, in an explosive eruption, a volcanic plume is ejected to great heights where it cools and collapses on itself to generate the devastating impact of a pyroclastic flow. As such, the majority remained in band 1 of the mark scheme. The need to understand the nature of the assessment objective remains an issue for many candidates and the objective in AO1.2 questions is to explain, using chains of reasoning *why* something happens rather than just what it is like. Often, a useful strategy is to pick up on the context provided by earlier items in the question as a signal for what is expected and this is provided in (a)(i) where the focus was clearly on the explosivity and magnitude and frequency of eruptions. This seems to have happened in question 1 where several items relating to flooding built towards the more demanding item 1(b)(iv) which was on whole very competently managed. Example answers with explanatory notes at 2 and 3 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

- (b) (i) The majority of candidates responded quite well to this AO1.1 question and demonstrated sound knowledge of strategies to reduce risk in volcanic eruptions. However, many of the responses were focussed on the idea of monitoring and providing warnings to assist in evacuation plans and often tended to be very generalised and lacking detail. There were relatively fewer who referred to specific strategies and techniques such as the use of tiltmeters, gas analysis and seismic surveys.
- (ii) Candidates generally showed good understanding of the unpredictability of earthquakes in terms of frequency and magnitude compared to volcanic activity.
- (c) (i) Although this AO3 question posed few problems for most candidates, it tended to be the ability to interpret longitude and latitude which confused those who did not score full marks here. There was also a significant minority who were answered 1800km for the distance question rather than the correct 2000km. The question was deliberately set with little difference between the two points to encourage accurate measurement and centres and candidates are reminded that the front cover of the paper recommends that candidates may use a ruler.
- (ii) Candidates are by now well used to this type of question which requires them to use all the elements of AO2 including evaluation, inference from resources and decision making. It is felt that this was one of the strongest responses yet to this format of question and it was pleasing to see many candidates score marks in the higher bands. The best responses made good use of the resources and evaluated several factors to make well evidenced judgements based on logical and detailed chains of reasoning. Where candidates were less successful, the responses tended to be short on detail and/or lacked balance in the argument.

In this regard, candidates should be reminded that where their judgement falls clearly on one side of the argument, they should show that they have at least considered the alternative view. For example, many very good answers recognised that whilst social and economic factors make a major contribution to increased vulnerability, they also contribute to the capacity to prepare for the hazard event and to recover afterwards. At the same time, physical factors determine that plate movement cannot be controlled and that people will always be vulnerable to the high magnitude event regardless of the socio-economic environment in which they live. Example answers with explanatory notes at Band 2 and Band 4 for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

#### **Theme 4: Coastal Hazards and their Management**

- Q.4**
- (a)**
    - (i)** Most candidates were able to identify and quantify the positive relationship between the extreme sea levels and the return periods.
    - (ii)** As with the equivalent question in Theme 3 above, many candidates failed to fully answer the question and provide an explanation of the role of climate change in creating extreme sea levels. The majority were able to explain rising sea levels *per se* in terms of increasing temperatures and melting ice. However, they tended to not pick up on the extreme levels as individual events which result from the increasing frequency and severity of storms which are also a product of more heat in the atmosphere. As such, as with theme 3, many responses remained confined to band 1 and were unable to score the higher marks. Again, as with the comment above in theme 3, it is important for candidates to read the question fully and demonstrate understanding through chains of reasoning targeted at the specific wording of the question. Example answers with explanatory notes at 2 and 3 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
  - (b)**
    - (i)** The majority of candidates responded quite well to this AO1.1 question and demonstrated sound knowledge of hard and soft strategies to reduce risk of coastal flooding. However, in general, candidates were more secure in describing the former than the latter.
    - (ii)** Candidates generally showed good understanding of the nature of cost-benefit analysis and the need to protect more valuable and important stretches of coastline.
  - (c)**
    - (i)** Although this AO3 question posed few problems for most candidates, it tended to be the ability to interpret longitude and latitude which confused those who did not score full marks here. There was also a significant minority who were answered 1800km for the distance question rather than the correct 2000km. The question was deliberately set with little difference between the two points to encourage accurate measurement and centres and candidates are reminded that the front cover of the paper recommends that candidates may use a ruler.

- (ii) Candidates are by now well used to this type of question which requires them to use all the elements of AO2 including evaluation, inference from resources and decision making. It is felt that this was one of the strongest responses yet to this format of question and it was pleasing to see many candidates score marks in the higher bands. The best responses made good use of the resources and evaluated several factors to make well evidenced judgements based on logical and detailed chains of reasoning. Where candidates were less successful, the responses tended to be short on detail and/or lacked balance in the argument. In this regard, candidates should be reminded that where their judgement falls clearly on one side of the argument, they should show that they have at least considered the alternative view. For example, many very good answers recognised that whilst social and economic factors make a major contribution to increased vulnerability, to the capacity to prepare for the hazard event and to recover afterwards. At the same time, physical factors determine that major storm events cannot be controlled and that people will always be vulnerable to the high magnitude event regardless of the socio-economic environment in which they live. Example answers with explanatory notes at Band 2 and Band 4 for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

### **Summary of Key Points:**

1. Candidates' AO1.1 knowledge of some areas of the specification remains weaker than others when examined. From this paper the whole concept of global cities, the reasons for their growth and the challenges they face should be given careful consideration when being taught in future years.
2. AO1.2 questions also need to be carefully practiced and taught, for example many candidates could describe what a pyroclastic flow is, far fewer could link them to being a major hazard as they are the product of highly explosive eruptions. Knowledge and understanding questions are key in this specification and should be a key focus of revision and practice.
3. Performance on AO2 questions has markedly improved and some excellent examples were seen, especially on Questions 3 (c) (ii) and 4 (c) (ii).
4. AO3 questions remain strong, except for some key areas like calculating percentages, latitude and longitude and measuring scale with a ruler. Centres are reminded that all the mathematical and statistical skills listed must be examined during the lifetime of this specification, and all should be carefully practiced during the two years it is taught.

# GEOGRAPHY

## GCSE

Summer 2024

### Unit 2: Environmental And Development Issues

3110U20-1/3110N20-1

#### Overview of the Unit/Component

Overall candidates responded well to this paper and all questions were attempted by most candidates, indicating that the standard, phrasing and language used was accessible and appropriate. The paper enabled differentiation to be effectively achieved for all candidates through a range of question styles and a balance of short and extended writing questions which provided challenge equal to papers from previous years. This gave plenty of opportunity for candidates to illustrate their geographical knowledge, understanding and skill. As required by the specification, all 4 assessment objectives (AOs) were examined across the paper with each part question assessing a single objective. There was a relatively even split between the option questions with question 3 being slightly more favoured. However, this difference was more marked in Welsh medium scripts than English medium scripts.

Candidates responded well to questions based on the following AOs:

- AO2 – where candidates were required to apply their knowledge and understanding to an unfamiliar context. Candidates made good use of the resources provided and applied their learnt knowledge to these contexts. Candidates made particular good use of the resources provided for questions 2bii.
- AO3 – where candidates were given a graph or a map to use, they were able to extract relevant information accurately and describe trends from unfamiliar data.

Some candidates found AO1 and AO1.2 (Knowledge and understanding) questions quite difficult. As these are the 'lower' skill level questions candidates should have found these more straightforward, however many candidates appeared to be lacking recall:

- AO1.1 – many candidates were unable to recall the carbon cycle (question 1a ii) or know what a national park was (questions 1e i) and therefore their depth of understanding could be improved.
- AO1.2 – candidates' ability to explain something that should be familiar to them could be improved as their vague explanations showed lack of full understanding e.g. question 1e ii.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Theme 5: Weather, Climate and Ecosystems

- Q 1 (a) (i)** A very accessible question where candidates were able to gain at least one mark, but many gained the full two marks.

- Q.1 (a) (ii)** Some candidates answered this well and were able to describe a natural process that releases carbon. For example, many candidates talked about respiration. However, a significant minority of candidates talked about human activities that increase the amount of carbon in the atmosphere which indicates that they misread the question or did not understand what was meant by 'natural' process.
- (iii)** Candidates responded well to this question and were able to identify a human activity that increased the amount of carbon in the atmosphere.
- (b) (i)** Most candidates were able to read the map correctly and were able to identify the statistical mode of the VEI for the eruptions shown. This showed good application of mathematical understanding.
- (ii)** This question focused on distribution of volcanic eruptions; however, many candidates answered the question as if it had asked about location of the eruptions. As such this question had the lowest facility factor on the paper (15.8). Some candidates were able to give accurate descriptions of distribution – these mainly focused on spatial distribution which was the intent of the question. A few candidates focused on numerical distribution which was also creditworthy. Some candidates (see example) used non-geographical terminology to describe distribution such as 'above' the equator rather than 'north' of the equator. This was not credited. Example answers with explanatory notes at 0 and 2 marks for this question are included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (iii)** Most candidates were able to gain at least band one for this question – recognising that the dust and ash thrown into the atmosphere from the eruption contributed towards climate change. Some candidates were able to explain fully how this happens, although very few recognised that this only occurs with very large explosions such as Krakatoa. An example answer with explanatory notes at 3 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (c) (i)** Most candidates were able to accurately locate the temperature for Buxton on the graph.
- (ii)** Most candidates were able to correctly interpret the graph to identify Bramham as the location with the largest increase in recorded temperature.
- (iii)** Most candidates were able to accurately calculate the range of temperature increase for Goudhurst.

- Q.1 (d)** Candidates made good use of the resources provided and used these to form the basis of their answer. Most candidates were able to get into at least band 2 through some elaboration of either consequences on the environment or economy. However, few were able to provide good elaboration through chains of reasoning (see example) to access band 3 marks. Most candidates did answer the 'to what extent' element of the question but a few provided very good elaboration of the consequences but did not address this part of the question and therefore were unable to gain band 3 marks. A few candidates became confused and began to talk about the impacts of low-pressure hazards. An example answer with explanatory notes at Band 3, 5 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (e) (i)** Only around half of the candidates were able to identify the correct definition of a National Park. As this question provided the definitions and candidates were just required to tick the correct one, it was thought that more candidates would have been able to identify the correct definition.
- (ii)** Following on from the previous question, the responses to this question which asked for explanation of why National Parks are used to manage habitats, candidates were not secure in this knowledge either. Most candidates were only able to gain band 1 marks. Many of the answers were vague and candidates were not able to demonstrate how National Parks manage habitats. Most understood that National Parks helped to 'protect' and 'preserve' habitats, but few were unable to elaborate further than this. Others discussed other benefits that National Parks bring such as the creation of employment but did not relate this back to habitats which was the focus of the question.

## **Theme 6: Development and Resource Issues**

- Q 2 (a) (i)** The average mark for this question was 0.4 illustrating that most candidates were not able to identify choropleth as the mapping technique. The vast majority that couldn't referred to 'colour coding'. This indicated that they lacked the correct geographical terminology.
- (ii)** Many candidates were able to gain at least one mark for this question, with many gaining full marks. An example answer with explanatory notes (use of non-geographical terminology) at 0 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (iii)** Most candidates were able to use the map to give the correct water stress level for the USA. However, some candidates gave the middle value between the range which was incorrect.
- (iv)** Several candidates struggled to understand what this question was asking. Some candidates referred to the need for increased water usage due to climate change which was not relevant for this question (an example answer with explanatory notes at 0 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides). The focus is on agricultural change and how this increases water. Most candidates that read the question properly were able to gain at least one mark.

- Q 2** (a) (v) Most candidates were able to name at least one strategy used to manage water resources.
- (vi) Few candidates referred to the international context of this question and therefore were unable to access band 3 marks. The few candidates that did consider an international context provided relevant case studies and brought in the idea of political disagreements between countries (see example). Many candidates' answers were generalised and talked about the cost of building (a dam) and the loss of habitats and therefore were band one answers. An example answer with explanatory notes at Band 3, 5 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (b) (i) Most candidates were able to read the map and identify the correct heights for the two regions. However, a few candidates managed to write the answers in the incorrect columns.
- (ii) Most candidates responded very well to this question and were able to access at least band two marks. They made good use of the resources and were able to explain why the social, economic and environmental comparisons between the two regions would have implications for development. E.g. many candidates correctly identified that Tianjin was coastal whereas Qinghai was further inland and therefore Tianjin would benefit from a port increasing trade and therefore employment. The command word for this question was to evaluate, however few candidates included a conclusion which drew together their points. Evaluative comments were generally made through chains of reasoning but without a conclusion the candidate would not be able to access Band 4. An example answer with explanatory notes at Band 3, 6 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.
- (c) Candidates answered this question a little better than a similar question in the 2023 paper, however many of the answers were still too vague which is why the average mark was 0.9. Some candidates were able to correctly identify a social and an economic impact, but the development of that impact was the cause for the impact rather than development of the impact itself. Other candidates mixed up their social and economic and wrote a valid answer but to the incorrect part of the question. However more candidates than last year wrote a good answer which gained them four marks (an example answer with explanatory notes at 4 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides).

### **Theme 7: Social Development Issues**

- Q 3** (a) (i) Most candidates were able to correctly read the table and identify the appropriate percentage/word in the brackets.
- (ii) Candidates were asked to describe how the development gap was changing. Many candidates focused on the first two elements of the table – literacy rate and access to electricity as these were easier to describe the changes. However, even after describing the changes, many candidates did not relate these observations back to how the development gap was changing.

A minority of candidates did describe carbon dioxide emissions and net migration and recognised that there was a contradiction in the data (see example). Unfortunately, many candidates did not use comparative data in their responses and therefore were limited to band one marks. An example answer with explanatory notes at 4 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

- (iii) Candidates responded well to this question, and most were able to give a health indicator. Knowledge of gender indicators was less secure.
- (b) (i) It was good to see that candidates generally responded well to this question. Many candidates knew one or more reasons why some children in sub-Saharan Africa must work and some gave detailed explanation through chains of reasoning. An example answer with explanatory notes at 6 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

(ii) Many candidates were able to give one consequence of child labour but for some their elaboration focused on the cause of that consequence rather than an elaboration of the consequence itself.
- (c) Candidates made good use of the resource images given and most were able to briefly comment as to whether that strategy would be effective. However, few candidates gave the positives or negatives of each and provided a thorough evaluation. Candidates did not seem to acknowledge or understand what the command word was asking them to do. Those that did gave a balanced answer with arguments for and against local and global strategies. Some candidates brought in their own examples of strategies to reduce child labour which was good to see and was credited. An example answer with explanatory notes at Band 4, 7 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

## **Theme 8: Environmental Challenges**

- Q 4** (a) (i) Most candidates were able to correctly read the table and identify the appropriate figure/word in the brackets.
- (ii) Candidates were asked to describe the changing approach to e-waste for the two countries in the table. Many candidates just focused on the recycling percentage change for the two countries and ignored the other aspects of the table. Others ignored the 'change' element to the question and just focused on comparing the 2019 data. A minority of candidates did make comparisons between how the volume of e-waste generated differs between countries over time and related this to the recycling rates which was good to see (an example answer with explanatory notes at Band 2, 4 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides). Unfortunately, many candidates did not use comparative data in their responses and therefore were limited to Band 1 marks.

- Q 4 (a) (iii)** Many candidates struggled with this question and particularly the impact on people element. Some were able to suggest the advantage of earning an income from recycling it which was good to see. However most other comments were too vague – talked about the impact of waste in general on people rather than e-waste. Candidates had more success in providing an impact on the environment, but again many answers were too vague e.g. pollutes the environment.
- (b) (i)** The mean score for this question was 0.7 which was disappointing as the question is straightforward and one that it was thought candidates would respond well too. However, many candidates ignored the ‘short term’ element to the question and instead talked about a long-term effect of climate change – most commonly sea level rise which wasn’t creditworthy.
- (ii)** Most candidates gained band one marks for this question. Many candidates took the approach of ‘how’ people need to consider living differently rather than ‘why’. For those that started to address the ‘why’ the most common answers seen were that many coastal locations are under threat from sea level rise which leads to the need to migrate elsewhere and restart their lives (see example). A minority of answers linked this well to located examples e.g. the Maldives or Tuvalu; those that did this well using chains of reasoning were achieving Band 3 more easily as they had understood the need to demonstrate ‘understanding’ of why people need to live differently in places or environments. An example answer with explanatory notes at 4 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides
- (c)** Like the equivalent question on question 3, most candidates were able to achieve band 2 marks. Candidates used the image resources provided and most were able to briefly comment as to whether that strategy would be effective. However, again few candidates gave the positives or negatives of each and provided a thorough evaluation – acknowledgment of the command word was lacking. Those that did gave a balanced answer with arguments for and against local and global strategies. An example answer with explanatory notes at Band 4, 7 marks for this question is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

### Summary of key points

1. Candidates need to understand the command word for the question. It was obvious that most candidates had the geographical knowledge but were not answering the question that was being asked. E.g. if a question asks for an evaluation, then candidates should consider the positives and negatives of each factor.
2. It was clear that centres have been improving candidates AO2 skills as candidates demonstrated and improved ability to apply geographical knowledge to an unfamiliar context compared to last year’s cohort.
3. Improvements could be made in candidates recall and understanding. Candidates did not perform as well as anticipated in relatively straightforward questions.
4. When candidates are asked a question where there is a mark awarded for the point being made and a second mark for elaboration, candidates need to ensure their elaboration is taking their point forward in more detail rather than explaining the point e.g. Q 3bii/Q4bi

## Geography

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### UNIT 3 – NEA FIELDWORK ENQUIRY

3110U30-1/3110N30-1

#### Overview of the Unit

Overall, the paper worked well, and nearly all candidates answered and attempted all questions. The following points pertain to most examples:

- Most scripts were well organised and presented. Most centres followed the guidance, with regards to the number of additional sheets that were permitted to be included. In some instances, a few centres continue to include too many additional sheets, and in a small number of cases, the whole portfolio. This is not required and is unhelpful to examiners.
- Many candidates continue to make general comments to their own fieldwork. Candidates need to refer to and use actual evidence/data from their own investigation in order that answers can be credited at the higher bands.
- Candidates need to pay more attention to the command words within each question so that they use their portfolio with more thought and interpret what they have learnt within the context of the questions asked. Assessment at higher bands clearly differentiated between 'general' responses and those which more 'specific'. More general comments resulted in candidates being credited with lower marks in Band 1.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a)

AO1.2: 4 marks

- Most candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for this question with the mean mark being 1.5. Candidates found this question the most challenging on the Unit 3 NEA Paper, with a facility factor of 38.7. The main factor which prevented candidates from being credited with band 2 was the lack of specific reference to the candidate's own enquiry and in the context of transects.
- Many candidates described the sampling technique, without giving a specific explanation as to why the named sampling technique was used.
- Very few candidates achieved Band 2 for this question.

#### Advice

- Candidates need to learn more about why they are undertaking certain sampling techniques in the context of their fieldwork.
- Candidates should use and refer to their own study/investigation.

**Q.1 (a) (i)****AO3: 6 marks**

Generally, candidates performed well in this question with the overall mean mark at the top of Band 2.

- Nearly all candidates did draw their choice of graph in the allocated space in their answer booklet. Graphs must not be drawn on separate paper and/or stuck on page 10 of the answer booklet without a teacher's signature to confirm the work was completed during the allocated time.
- E.g. Some candidates had converted raw data from their table, for example, to percentages. This data was then located in pie charts on a base map along a transect. The base maps and located pie charts were not authenticated by the centre as in the guidance.
- In some cases, candidates were not able to access Band 3 because the graph or map they chose to draw did not include all the data from the table that was drawn. Consequently, candidates lost marks for accuracy.
- There were fewer inaccuracies in the drawing of graphs in terms of scale/figures on the X and/or Y axes as well as plotting points/drawing bars from their table of data.
- A significant number of graphs were incomplete (lacked titles/labelled axis). This limited candidates from achieving 'completeness'.
- Some candidates chose inappropriate graphing techniques that were not wholly correct or suitable for the qualitative data collected and the context of qualitative surveys.
- Some candidates failed to reach full marks because the data chosen for their graphs was quantitative data.
- In general terms the graphs chosen by the candidates to draw tended to be suitable though some were not the most suitable in terms of qualitative data.

**Advice:**

- All the data that candidates include in their tables must be included in their graph. If candidates include data in the table, but not in the graph, then 'A' for Accuracy cannot be awarded.
- Teachers are reminded that if a candidate is unable to complete the graph on page 10 of the answer booklet, then any additional paper that candidates use **must** be authenticated.
- There were still cases where a table of data was not included and therefore it was not possible to assess accuracy as part of the SAC criteria.
- Candidates need to ensure that they choose the most suitable graph for the specific data that they have included. A simple graph, e.g. a bar graph, is not always the most suitable graphing technique, and candidates need to be taught suitable graphing techniques that candidates can use in their portfolios.

**Q.1 (a) (ii)****AO3: 4 marks**

- Many candidates were able to offer some explanation as to 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 as to why they had chosen the technique. Answers tended to be very generic, e.g. 'easy to draw and read' were common. Many could not relate the graph to their fieldwork. This resulted in a mean mark of 1.6.

- Some candidates described the data presentation technique rather than give reasons why it was the most suitable and/or why other techniques were not.
- Example answers at 0, 1 and 2 marks are included within the online exam feedback CPD slides.

#### **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 must offer clear, detailed and specific reasons for their choice of graph or mapping technique that relates to their own investigation.

#### **Q.1 (b)**

**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 reliability' was a key differentiating factor in the outcomes for this question. At least half of the candidates resorted to describing what qualitative techniques they had used during their investigation.
- Clear reference to their 'portfolio work' was lacking and this discriminated well.
- Some candidates only offered a description of their fieldwork sampling techniques and therefore weren't awarded more than Band 1.
- An example answer of 6 marks is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

#### **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.1 (c)**

**6 marks (AO2)**

- The mean mark for this question was 2.7 and most responses fell into Band 2.
- Candidates continue to show a lack of understanding of the command word 'analyse'. Most candidates described individual data points, rather than identifying and illustrating trends, patterns and links in their investigations. Some candidates described their main findings without using supporting evidence.
- Example answers at 3 and 5 marks are included within the online exam feedback CPD slides.

#### **Advice**

- To reach the higher bands, candidates need to make links between data sets and must make effective connections with theories and concepts in relation to their evidence and investigation.

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

- Most candidates could only give two general reasons why their fieldwork locations were appropriate to investigate cycles and flows. As a result, most candidates were awarded Band 1 for their responses.
- 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.
- An example answer of 3 marks is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

**Advice**

- Answers should emphasise specific details related to their own investigation to justify their choice of fieldwork locations.

**Q.2 (b)****6 marks (AO1.2)**

- Most candidates could give an answer which showed a general understanding of why it is important to collect data at different times and/or different sites when investigating cycles and flows. Answers included some specific reference to candidates' own investigations.
- An example answer of 6 marks is included in the online exam feedback CPD slides.

**Advice**

- To reach marks in the top band, candidates needed to show a more detailed and specific understanding of why it is important to collect data at different times and/or different sites when investigating cycles and flows through chains of reasoning. This needed to include specific reference to candidates' own fieldwork.

**Q.2 (c)****6 marks (AO2)**

- In general terms most candidates were able to offer conclusions and/or describe their findings, however candidates struggled to weave in detailed and specific information from their fieldwork/evidence to support their response to this question (evidence, figures, named places, streets, etc).
- Several candidates explained why the conclusions of their fieldwork investigation were the same as, or different from, what they expected.
- This question was generally answered well. The mean mark for this question was 2.9 – Band 2 responses.
- Some candidates referred to conclusions in their fieldwork on qualitative surveys, as well as cycles and flows.
- Example answers at 2 and 4 marks are included within the online exam feedback CPD slides.

**Advice**

- Candidates need to address the question. They need to go further than describing their main findings and ensure that their explanations include evidence from their own investigations, which supports their findings.
- Candidates are failing to access Band 3 because of a lack of specific detail included in their responses which are related to their fieldwork.

## Summary of key points

- 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 – evidence should not be submitted in bulk (beyond 5 pages) and should follow the guidance given on the WJEC website.
- Centres need to pay full attention to the AOs in this assessment so that answers have more focus and avoid description.
- Many candidates' responses stay in the lower bands, as the mean mark for each question suggests, as these responses provided very limited reference to the candidate's own study/investigation. The higher bands credit more detailed and specific responses to candidate's own investigation.
- It is important that candidates have knowledge and understanding of the most appropriate graphing or mapping technique to represent their data to be awarded the higher bands.
- Understanding of command words, for example, 'analyse' and 'evaluate' is a key differentiating factor. Candidates need better understanding of these terms.

## Supporting you

### Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4276

Email: [GCSEGeography@wjec.co.uk](mailto:GCSEGeography@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Geography \(wjec.co.uk\)](https://www.wjec.co.uk/gcse-geography)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

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WJEC  
245 Western Avenue  
Cardiff CF5 2YX  
Tel No 029 2026 5000  
Fax 029 2057 5994  
E-mail: [exams@wjec.co.uk](mailto:exams@wjec.co.uk)  
website: [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)