GCE Examiners' Report

Geography

AS/A level

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.[1]

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.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
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.	Portal by WJEC 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: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

[1] ***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.	Portal by WJEC
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.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
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.	Portal by WJEC 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.	Become an Examiner | WJEC

Contents

Executive Summary

Overall, performance in the AS units continues to be weaker than in pre-pandemic years. Though most students are able to access AO3 marks effectively and can make adequate use of resources, their inability to use basic geographical and map skills in an examination environment continues to disappoint.

Where case study evidence is effectively applied in mini-essay questions, it significantly bolsters the AO1 mark awarded. However, a vast number of candidates continue to address concepts and issues in a very generic way. This lack of place knowledge to support ideas and arguments continues to be a concern in both Units 1 and 2.

Performance on Unit 3 continues to be a strength and there was an increase of 5.8 in the overall mean mark when compared to 2023. Performance was marginally stronger than in 2019. Often, as centres and candidates become more accustomed to the nature and weighting of the 21st Century Challenges question, a relatively good score on this question contributes significantly to the overall cover mark. Many are now able to use the range of resources effectively, though a lack of AO1 knowledge and understanding from across the specification effectively applied to the question continues to depress the mark for some candidates. A minority continue to ignore the resources and preclude themselves from gaining any AO3 marks.

Unit 3 candidates are reminded – once again - to use their time wisely. A minority of this year's candidates, as in previous years, wrote three very long essays without leaving sufficient time to answer the shorter questions fully. The net impact on their cover mark was negative.

Compared to previous years on Unit 4, there were far fewer rubric errors, with many candidates addressing the questions set appropriately. In addition, it was clear that candidates were also attempting to apply relevant specialised concepts in their work. However, centres should note that it is not sufficient to simply 'name-check' the specialised concept. The specialised concepts should be fully integrated and discussed for band three credit.

Sadly, there was a tendency to drift from the set question at times in Unit 4. This was a particular issue for questions on China, India, and Sub-Saharan Africa. A lack of case study support is also an ongoing concern. Many of the points relating to Sub-Saharan Africa are very generic year on year.

It was pleasing to note an increase in the mean mark for Unit 5 this year. Centres are to be congratulated for some of the excellent investigations seen and the quality of marking and administration. Where marks are adjusted (for some centres this is an annual occurrence) we urge centres to pay close attention to the individual moderation reports provided and to work with the marked examples available on the Portal.

An area of concern this year, highlighted by nearly all examiners, was the illegibility of candidates' handwriting. Centres are encouraged to provide every possible opportunity for candidates to practise writing in a timed and controlled environment. Where candidates fail to produce legible responses, further advice and support should be sought at the centre.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
AO3: Developing data analysis skills	HTTPS://RESOURCES.WJEC.CO.UK/PAGES/RESOURCESINGLE.ASPX?RIID=3003	Interactive digital resource to support candidates to analyse examination and NEA data resources.
AO2: Developing evaluative writing skills	HTTPS://RESOURCES.WJEC.CO.UK/PAGES/RESOURCESINGLE.ASPX?RIID=3297	Interactive digital resource to support candidates in developing evaluative writing techniques.
Developing an effective sampling strategy (NEA)	HTTPS://RESOURCES.WJEC.CO.UK/PAGES/RESOURCESINGLE.ASPX?RIID=4411	Interactive digital resource to introduce candidates to the principles of developing an effective sampling strategy for their NEA.

GEOGRAPHY

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 1: CHANGING LANDSCAPES

Overview of the Unit

- Overall performance was down on 2023 with a 1.5 mark decrease in the mean mark. The overall mean mark for the paper remains nearly 5 marks lower than in pre-pandemic years.
- Candidates showed good knowledge of coastal erosion, but few were confident in describing the coastal system accurately.
- Candidates showed good understanding of mass balance and the glacial budget but there was widespread misunderstanding of the role of freeze thaw in relation to periglacial landforms.
- There were weaknesses in some map skills, particularly 6-figure grid references.
- Knowledge of the Chi-square test was variable; many candidates could accurately comment on the nature and significance of the result, but significant numbers could not.
- For skills questions, candidates should be encouraged to approach answers methodically, to be precise and accurate, using correct terminology so that meaning is very clear.
- The use of case studies was very pleasing, particularly in question 5(c) and sometimes in 7(a). Detailed knowledge of specific information relating to a case study helps candidates access band 3 for AO1.
- Candidates showed good knowledge of a range of tectonic processes but limited knowledge and understanding of prediction techniques for volcanic eruptions.
- There was good use of resources throughout most of the paper, many candidates were methodical and thorough in their approach to interpreting data and located information.
- However, there needs to be more focus on the requirement of the question, particularly in the higher tariff questions. When using resources to examine or assess, evidence must be directed towards the focus of the question.
- Where diagrams were used, they were often detailed and enhanced the quality of the answer.
- Candidates must be encouraged to be concise to maximise the use of the space. Repeating the question as part of the answer is not necessary.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Changing Landscapes

Q.1 (a) (i) Some candidates were able to correctly give a six-figure grid reference though a significant number could not. The most common mistake was giving the Eastings and Northings the wrong way around and some candidates gave only a four-figure reference, which could not be credited.

(ii) The vast majority of candidates were able to accurately give the direction in which the camera was facing. Some were slightly out, stating South as the answer, and a very few gave the direction the wrong way around (NE).

(iii) There were some excellent answers here demonstrating competency with map skills such as use of the scale. Features of the beach were located clearly using directions or landmarks. Many candidates, however, did not focus on the beach itself, instead describing the town or human features such as the footpaths. Some physical features, such as the headland, were mentioned but this is not part of the beach. No credit could be given for lifting names off the map e.g. “the cove”.

(iv) The best answers included clear explanations of the features of the landscape that triggered a positive impact, the way in which humans may use that landscape and developed their answer to detail a clear positive impact. The majority of candidates recognised the positive impacts of tourism and many could link the attraction of tourists to a specific feature of the landscape. Some candidates commented on such landscapes contributing to wellbeing which was creditworthy. In weaker answers candidates could identify potential human activity in the area but this was not linked explicitly to the landscape and / or there was no development point to explain the nature of the positive impact. Candidates should be reminded to fully develop their explanations for maximum marks.

(b) All candidates were able to attempt this question – a small number of excellent answers focused clearly on the role of cliff erosion in the supply of sediment to the coastal system. These answers demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of the coastal system and were able to describe different inputs of sediment. Excellent examination of the role of cliff erosion considered the relative significance of each source of sediment or commented on how cliff erosion could vary over space and time, and why. The majority of candidates tended to focus on erosion processes, being overly descriptive of these processes and longshore drift. The importance of sediment in the creation of landforms was often examined, this being the wrong focus. Some candidates showed no knowledge and understanding of the coastal system and drifted into an explanation of landform creation.

Q.2 (a) (i) This was an accessible question, and many candidates were able to write comparative statements which demonstrated change clearly. The best answers identified coastal retreat and used the scale to measure an accurate distance. They used the North arrow correctly to clearly locate features that had changed or been lost. In weaker answers marks were sometimes lost due to changes being listed with no clear location or quantification e.g. “the houses have gone”. As the North arrow did not point to the top of the page, some candidates got directions wrong and there was also some inaccuracy in the use of the scale. It is important to be precise in the use of these skills. No credit could be given for comments on features that appeared to be different due to the position of the tide / season e.g. many candidates commented on the fields being browner in 2019. Equally, the groynes appear “out to sea” as the tide is further in in 2019. Candidates should be reminded of features in a photograph that may simply show seasonal change and other, expected diurnal / annual changes. Finally, a small number of answers included explanation of the changes rather than a description.

(ii) An accessible question. Most candidates explained that groynes stop longshore drift and trap sediment on the beach. A smaller number commented on the fact that groynes are a relatively cheap option as a sea defence. Most answers included development points to explain that the beach is needed as a natural defence or as a tourist attraction. Weaker answers explained that groynes were used to stop erosion but with no development points to explain why that was necessary. Some inaccurate answers stated that groynes “stop waves”, others lost focus by describing the groynes. Candidates should be wary of using abbreviation such as LSD without adequate explanations. They must explicitly show knowledge and understanding of such processes.

(b) An accessible question for most candidates who could demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the meaning of geological factors. The majority of answers concentrated on rock type; a small number included very accurate and detailed information on why different rocks erode at different rates, with reference to composition, solubility and hardness. Most candidates were able to comment that hard rocks eroded more quickly than soft rocks, but generally there needed to be much more explanation about why that is. There was some excellent knowledge and understanding of other factors such as rock structures and the alignment / dip of bedding planes, in addition to the nature of waves and seasonality. A small number of candidates were able to explain these factors very coherently. Case studies were often described, most often Lulworth Cove, which were useful. In addition, diagrams added a great deal to the answers when drawn with the correct focus. Most answers included descriptions of discordant and concordant coastlines. Weaker answers were descriptive rather than giving detailed explanations and / or included inaccuracies such as “limestone is a soft rock”. Another common mistake was to state that destructive waves CAUSE a longer fetch. A minority of candidates did not understand the term geological factors and discussed climate or wave energy only. Finally, many answers included little or no examination of the significance of geological factors in determining rates of erosion.

Q.3 (a) (i) Candidates understood the question and many achieved the maximum mark, though the resource was challenging for candidates with weak grid reference skills.

(ii) Candidates understood the question, though the resource was challenging for candidates with weak direction skills. Many candidates got the answer back to front and offered SW as the answer.

(iii) Many candidates used the contour lines to describe characteristics of the cirque and were able to identify the steep back wall and location of the lake. Some candidates drifted to write about the human features, such as footpaths; this was not the focus of the question.

(iv) This question was accessible for most. Most answers identified that tourists would visit the area and developed the point to include economic benefits for Eryri. A few candidates referred to the agricultural benefits of the glaciated landscape. A small number of candidates included grid references to support their answer. Many candidates achieved 2 out of 3 marks for identifying a reason but not giving clear development points. Candidates should be reminded to make sure they fully develop their explanations for maximum marks.

(b) An accessible question and most candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the importance of winter precipitation to mass balance in a glacier system . Many answers had quality of explanation for AO1, with strong use of terminology and concepts. Most candidates were able to identify winter as the season of accumulation of snow. The best answers took a comparative structure, comparing and contrasting different seasons and the effect on the mass balance of the glacier system. The most sophisticated answers referred to how feedback loop play a significant role. The use of diagrams to support answers worked well for this question.

Weaker answers lacked comparative examination and only discussed the role of winter precipitation. AO2 marks were limited for these candidates because there was no reference to the significance of winter precipitation or comparison to other seasons.

Q.4 (a) (i) This was an accessible question with the photographs being well used by the majority of candidates. Most candidates were able to identify the main changes to the glacier/s. The best answers referred to the whole photograph and not just the glacier, for example referencing the rock and vegetation. Weaker responses tended to produce a list of isolated statements that focused on the glacier only.

(ii) The majority of candidates identified steep slopes as the reason why rapid mass movement may occur. The best answers developed this with an explanation of how steep slopes can lead to landslides because gravity has loosened the rocks. In weaker answers, candidates did not clearly identify the mass movement process.

Many candidates achieved 1 out of 3 marks for identifying a reason but not giving clear development points and failing to identify the process of mass movement. Many candidates identified temperature change as the reason but failed to develop the answer. Candidates could be reminded to make sure they fully develop their explanations for maximum marks.

(b) The majority of candidates found this question very challenging and were unable to identify a periglacial landform impacted by freeze-thaw weathering. There was some confusion between periglacial and glacial landforms and many candidates could not select the correct landforms to answer the question. Most candidates were able to describe the process of freeze-thaw weathering. Strong answers explained how freeze-thaw weathering leads to the formation of block fields, scree slopes and pro-talus ramparts in periglacial environments. Some candidates that had strong answers for AO1 were also able to explain the role of freeze-thaw weathering in the creation of those landforms, for AO2 these candidates discussed the relative influence of weathering in comparison to other factors such as geology, for example. In weaker answers there was no reference to periglacial landforms or processes and therefore there was no examination. A number of candidates did not attempt to answer this question.

Q.5 (a) The resource was quite challenging for many candidates as it shows a lot of variation. As a result, generalised comments such as “it gets lower the further inland you go” were not acceptable. More precise and accurate comments such as “it is mostly very low inland” were accepted. The best answers adopted a methodical approach, dealing with each category in turn and giving precise locations using the scale and compass directions. Weaker answers tended to list places rather than concentrate on pattern and used left and right or were overly generalised.

(b) (i) The vast majority of students gave correct calculations using the information provided on the paper. On occasion the positive or negative sign was given incorrectly, but the calculation was rarely completely wrong.

(ii) Questions on statistical techniques require precise and accurate answers, and most candidates found this challenging. A small proportion of candidates were able to describe both the nature of the result and its significance and therefore achieved the full four marks. There were some excellent answers which were very precise in describing the nature of the result– that there is a significant difference between hard and soft geology in terms of intensity of ground shaking. Most answers scored 1-2 marks however; most could state that the null hypothesis should be rejected with a brief reason why. It was evident that significant numbers of candidates did not know about or had little confidence in discussing the Chi-square test. The most common error was to accept the null hypothesis and if candidates had re-read the hypothesis before answering they might have noticed that it is incorrect. Descriptions of correlation between geology and ground shaking could not be accepted as the test does not measure correlations.

(c) There were a variety of acceptable approaches to this question and the majority of candidates focused on social and economic secondary effects. Tsunami, landslides and liquefaction were often mentioned but the main focus of most answers was the social and economic impacts of these secondary effects. Many candidates were able to give detailed and specific knowledge and understanding of a named event. Weaker answers gave generic accounts of “impacts of an earthquake”, which included primary effects and discussed response and recovery. In addition, generic effects were described with a place name tagged on. When using a case study there needs to be some information included that is clearly specific to that event to achieve band 2 or 3.

Q.6 (a) A very accessible question, the majority of candidates achieved 2 marks here. There were some answers however that used ‘down’ and ‘up’ or ‘left’ and ‘right’ instead of compass directions, which cannot be credited at this level.

(b) Many candidates gave concise and accurate descriptions and were able to comment on pattern. Weaker answers tended to list districts which included areas of high vulnerability and many described all categories (low and medium) when this was not required. In addition, there was some inaccurate or vague phrasing such as “it is high on the edge of the city”. Some candidates drifted into explanation of the pattern which again was not required and could not be credited.

(c) It was evident that candidates were attempting to use all of the resources indicated. Some excellent answers fully interpreted the resources rather than lifting information and then developed the answer by examining the link to risk management. This allowed access to band 3. Most candidates attempted to examine the link, though in a rather simplistic way, but this allowed them access to band 2. The weakest answers were very descriptive and copied information directly from the resource, often with a comment that “this makes it difficult”. There needed to be a detailed explanation of exactly why any given factor increases the difficulty of risk management. Common errors were to discuss human factors or less often to discuss factors not shown on the resource at all. A significant number of candidates waste a lot of the space provided by repeating the question over and over e.g. “there are many physical factors which make it difficult to manage the risk from future eruptions of Mount Nyiragongo”. This was often followed by “another factor which makes it difficult…” The impression was that some candidates were not confident with the question but wanted to fill the space.

(d) An accessible question – candidates understood what was required and were able to find several factors to discuss from the resources. Most candidates could identify a range of issues, mainly economic. Excellent answers gave a concise description of each factor followed by an examination of exactly how it contributes to vulnerability. Weaker answers mainly described the resources with little or no examination, or the examination was very repetitive e.g. “this means they can’t escape the eruption” for every factor. A lot of space was taken up with direct lifts from the resources. Further attention needs to be paid to these AO2 questions in this section of the paper. These questions which ask for an assessment/examination of factors or for ‘reasons why’ should not be treated as further AO3 questions.

Q.7 (a) All candidates were able to attempt this question and overall the AO2 content was stronger than the AO1 i.e. candidates could examine the effectiveness of prediction techniques well but were less able to explain the exact nature of prediction techniques and the outcomes of monitoring. Excellent answers described prediction techniques and then gave perceptive comments on effectiveness, often backed up by comparative case studies. Weaker answers did not include information on prediction techniques and mostly drifted into explanations of preparation and mitigation instead.

(b) An accessible question that all candidates were able to attempt. The use of diagrams was widespread, and most were detailed and useful, adding to the overall mark achieved. Some excellent knowledge and understanding of ridge push and slab pull was demonstrated and the features that result, such as fissure eruptions and minor earthquakes. The best answers focussed solely on tectonic processes and included details on the nature of the lava with explanations. There was also effective use of case studies. Many candidates were able to describe processes but needed more explanation of why they occur for band 3 e.g. “magma rises and sinks” with no explanation of temperature / density gradients. Weaker answers were very descriptive with a limited range of processes discussed and did not include geographical terminology.

Other points of note is that there was little reference to rifting and faulting, in particular transform faults, and there was widespread misunderstanding of the term “viscous”. Significant numbers of candidates explained that the lava was viscous as it was a high temperature and flowed quickly. This shows that they have the correct knowledge but are using the wrong terminology. Finally, there were some very detailed and coherent yet partial answers which suggests that some candidates ran out of time at the end of the paper.

GEOGRAPHY

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 2: CHANGING PLACES

Overview of the Unit

- Candidates found most of the paper accessible again this year. There was a slight decrease (of 0.3 marks) in the overall mean when compared to 2023, and the overall mean mark remains over 4 marks lower than it was in pre-pandemic times.

- On the positive side, candidates generally found the resources accessible and were able to respond to the command word of compare and identify that was used in question 1 (a i) and 2 (a i). Despite the candidates' knowledge being sound for 1 (b) and 2 (b) once again they did not really respond confidently to the AO2 command words in these questions or in 3 (a ii).

- Considering that the title of the unit is 'Changing Places' it was felt perhaps that candidates could make better use of 'places' when answering 1 (b) and 2 (b).

- It is interesting to note that for questions 4 and 5 generally performed better than last year there was more parity of outcomes between questions 4 a 5.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) (i) Most candidates managed to identify differences between the location quotients of the three regions effectively. A minority did not refer to the three regions whilst a larger minority did not show sufficient understanding of the term by referring to the national average. Many candidates lifted lots of data from the resource when a little more sophistication/ manipulation of the data to recognise patterns would have helped them gain the full 5 marks.

(ii) Many managed to identify a reason for the difference in LQ, however only a minority managed to develop that answer for the full two marks.

(b) This question showed that candidates were able to identify the impacts of deindustrialisation – however the examination, whilst evident in the strongest candidate responses, was generally not well done. Where the examination was good candidates made use of the term 'severity' in the question. An area for improvement would be the development of a case study to enhance the answer. This precise knowledge was often lacking and answers became generic, completely lacking a 'sense of place'.

Q.2 (a) (i) This question was well answered. Candidates generally managed to identify why the area was suitable for adventure tourism. Some candidates made useful reference to the map by using grid references or contour lines. However, many candidates did not make effective use of both resources. Consequently, they did not focus sufficiently on the suitability of the area and simply listed which activities could take place there.

(ii) In this question most candidates identified positive impacts and managed to develop at least one of these impacts. One factor that resulted in many gaining three rather than the full four marks was the fact that both points were developed in similar ways.

(b) The same characteristics as 1(b) were evident in many of the answers to this question. On the whole, candidates successfully managed to identify the challenges caused by counter urbanisation but many answers lacked the examination element and only in a minority of cases were case studies developed and used effectively.

Q.3 (a) (i) Most candidates managed to identify how residents felt about the new shopping complex. In the process they generally succeeded in making specific reference to both resources. Some candidates made contradictory statements. This had a negative impact on the mark awarded.

(ii) Most responses showed that candidates could effectively identify strengths and limitations in relation to both data presentation methods. However, in what was a common theme within the responses seen, they did not respond as well to the AO2 part of the question with little evaluation seen. Where candidates did gain the AO2 marks it was often done by giving an overall comment on the methods used or comparing both methods and noting which one they thought was the better method. This form of question has appeared in previous versions of this paper and centres are encouraged to regularly practise past questions with candidates so that they become more familiar with the nature of the questions and the requirements of the mark scheme.

Q.3 (b) Most candidates could identify the characteristics of a well-designed questionnaire. Many managed to develop these characteristics. Some candidates' responses lacked clarity resulting in a muddled response where characteristics were not clearly defined. A broad range of answers were acceptable here and many referred to the nature of the questioning but also the suitability of the questionnaire/interview questions for effective data analysis or their suitability in relation the sub-questions identified in an enquiry.

Q.4 Candidates were able to identify the conclusions of their individual study, and in the better answers were able to back these statements up with data from their work. In some cases, candidates drifted too easily into a narrative of 'what they did' and did not include enough detail on their actual conclusions.

Another weakness noted was that some investigations appeared to be brief and did not allow the candidates scope to write in sufficient detail to access the highest band. Most candidates were able to access the AO2 marks. Most made clear reference to their original expectations and understood what they were expecting.

The candidates that scored the highest marks noted clearly the title of their investigation in full and made clear reference to sub-questions/hypotheses. Some titles were vague such as 'A study of psammosere succession'. Such titles made discussing the conclusions in relation to original expectations difficult and often led to an unstructured answer.

Q.5 Most candidates managed to identify two data collection methods. Popular methods included a questionnaire; people count and an EQS. The better scoring answers chose methods that allowed them to describe in some detail their data collection method. Lower scoring answers tended to simply state what the method was e.g. 'We carried out a questionnaire' without providing any further detail.

Better answers made clear reference to their study and collection of data before noting some of the strengths and weaknesses to gain the evaluative AO2 marks. Many candidates referred to their sampling strategy whilst evaluating; overall this proved to be a successful way of accessing high AO2 marks. Better answers also ensured that there was no overlap between the two data collection methods allowing them to access the highest AO1 band.

Most candidates managed to evaluate and again the better answers scored highly for AO2 when there was a real feel for their study rather than generic evaluative comments. A small minority referred to data presentation methods and some focused too much on sampling without discussing the data collection method in sufficient detail.

GEOGRAPHY

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 3: GLOBAL SYSTEMS AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Overview of the Unit

- This component places considerable demands on candidates, in terms of its breadth of subject content; the number of questions derived from different parts of the specification and the challenging nature of the 21st Century Challenges essay question.
- This paper proved to be accessible to most candidates with extremely few rubric errors, but there were quite common misinterpretations of questions.
  - Question 2b – assuming that all antecedent rainfall is heavy or intense.
  - Question 4 – writing about causes of the recent increases in the atmospheric carbon store rather than impacts.
  - Question 7 – writing about economic migrants as opposed to refugees.
- Question 9 was answered by the vast majority of candidates, despite the steer from the resources towards both Q9 and Q10 equally. The 21st Century Challenges questions generally scored very well with significant numbers of candidates scoring 20 or more (out of 26) for this element of the examination.
- Most candidates were able to answer all three sections of the paper within the time allocated. Where candidates chose to do Section C first, there was some evidence that candidates spent too long on this and either had to rush their last question or this was at the expense of other questions.
- The paper differentiated very effectively with substantial numbers of candidates displaying both an impressive level of knowledge and conceptual understanding (AO1) combined with sophisticated skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis (AO2). However, there were also significant numbers of weaker candidates who found some questions very challenging and experienced considerable difficulties with structuring their answers and unlike other years, significant numbers of candidates omitted one or two short-answer questions.
- An area of concern this year, highlighted by nearly all examiners, was the illegibility of candidates' handwriting.

Effective preparation for this examination should focus on:

- Ensuring that candidates are familiar with the wording of the specification, as this is what is used to drive the question setter's questions; e.g. many candidates appeared entirely unfamiliar with the term 'economic injustice' (Q.7) in relation to refugee movements
- Explaining complex concepts and geographical terminology e.g. explaining the impact of antecedent rainfall on the shape of a storm hydrograph (Q.2(b)); explaining the role of stores within the drainage basin or how global flows (of technology) influence the growth of globalisation (Q.5(a))
- Encouraging the candidates to work on their case studies and research to identify possible relevance. A brief fact file on location, causes, impacts etc is often useful, with records of any noteworthy features.
- Using Appendix A (pages 55-56) as a checklist for skills that might be examined in this paper; it appeared that very few candidates were familiar with how the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient might be used to support the analysis of data on a scatter graph. Candidates are to be reminded that there are 3 skills marks (AO3) in each of Section A and B of this paper (in addition to the skills marks in Section C).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Global Systems

Q.1 (a) Performance on this question was disappointing. A significant number of candidates were clearly derailed by this style of skills question opening the paper and many omitted this question. Most candidates who did attempt it were able to score at least two marks in recognition that SRCC would likely identify a negative correlation. The third mark eluded most, who did not make any reference to significance.

Q.1 (b) Whilst this question was answered by most candidates, there was an apparent lack of grasp of the term 'antecedent rainfall', assuming that it was synonymous with 'intense rainfall'. Though this element had the required scope for a full mark answer, candidates missed an opportunity to refer also to a lack of rainfall and how previously dry conditions might affect the shape of the hydrograph.

Q.2 (a) The vast majority of candidates could identify and explain the role of two stores within the drainage basin. For candidates whose answer did not secure Band 3, this was due to absence of detail in their explanation. Candidates are to be reminded to look at the mark allocation and to structure their answer accordingly.

Q2. (b) Most candidates appeared comfortable with the concept of management of peatlands; the majority of candidates recognised the need for management due to peatlands being an important carbon sink and to preserve biodiversity. It was pleasing to see many recognising the importance of peatlands in mitigating flooding, but less satisfying to read of the need to manage peatlands in order to secure an energy source.

Q.3 This question was slightly less popular than question 4 and carried a lower mean mark (8.4). Where candidates were comfortable with the subject matter and structured their essays in a logical manner, they were effortlessly able to score marks in Band 3 for AO1. Candidates were clearly familiar with the terminology used in the question (derived directly from the specification) however, a small minority of candidates focused their essay on carbon transfers rather than water which was disappointing. Scores for AO2 were slightly less good with candidates omitting explicit examination of how the transfers varied over time. Simple mini-conclusions at the end of each paragraph examining the role of time would have enabled many candidates to secure Band 3 marks for AO2.

Q.4 This question demonstrated depth of candidate knowledge and understanding relating to the interaction between the carbon and water cycles, and clearly many candidates were well prepared for this. The mean mark on this optional question was higher at 9.2. Where candidates stumbled was firstly, by spending far too long describing the causes of the increases in the atmospheric carbon store when the question asked for impacts, and secondly by giving large amounts of case-study style detail about social and economic impacts when the question asked for impacts on the water cycle and oceans. Candidates are advised to consider every word in the question before starting to write their answer. There was a place for social and economic impacts in the answer, but they needed to be examined in order to be of use. Similar to question 3, the absence of clear examination left AO2 marks lingering in Band 1 and hence, the overall mark was somewhat depressed.

Section B: Global Governance: Change and Challenges

Q.5 (a) As this question is derived from the opening focus box of the global governance element of the specification, candidates were clearly confident with this question opening this part of the paper. Most were able to address the link between technology and globalisation. The most competent answers dealt fully with 'how' technology influenced the 'growth' of globalisation. As might be expected, many discussed social media apps, linking with cultural exchange. Relatively few candidates addressed the importance of real-time financial transfers influencing growth of globalisation.

Q.5 (b) This question was answered well by candidates with a grasp of the concept of colonialisation, however it appeared that a significant minority were unfamiliar with the concept. The best answers included reference to the Windrush generation and the role of the British education system in many parts of the Commonwealth as well as an appreciation of the role of diaspora communities in supporting migrants.

Q.6 (a) Most candidates scored full marks on this question. There was evidence, however, that some had not had use of a calculator and therefore the final element of the calculation was omitted. Candidates are to be reminded that they might expect a skills question involving a calculation and therefore to be fully prepared for this.

Q.6 (b) Many candidates answered this question well, clearly fully conversant in the term 'supranational institutions. The best answers separated their explanation of the role of the UN from NATO – and recognised the intrinsic differences between them. Some candidates successfully referenced other supranational institutions such as the EU and its Common Fisheries Policy in providing governance of the Earth's oceans.

Q.7 This question was slightly less popular than question 8 and carried a relatively low mean mark of 7.8. Where candidates were comfortable with the concept of economic injustice as one cause of refugee movements amongst others, they were able to secure Band 3 marks for AO1, and where this cause was compared to other causes, AO2 marks in Band 3 were also achieved. Many candidates provided good answers relating to land grabs by MNCs with full governmental support, particularly affecting the Gambela region of Ethiopia, and to consider whether the displaced communities become IDPs or refugees. Many candidates considered the role of conflicts in Ukraine and Syria in generating refugee numbers as well as that of climate refugees. Unfortunately too many candidates seized upon the term economic injustice and took their answer into the territory of relative poverty attracting large numbers of economic migrants from Poland to the UK. Some lower-scoring responses to this question, tended to dismiss the essay title out of hand and focused instead on other causes of migration. Candidates are always advised to focus their argument primarily on the ideas, concepts or issues that they have been presented with in the essay statement.

Q.8 Many candidates answered this question well and the overall mean mark was higher at 9.6. At the upper end of the mark range, they produced well-informed essays focused on restrictions placed on landlocked countries and, for example, the role of resources in the South China Sea underpinning the tension between surrounding nations and China. Some were able to contrast these scenarios with the complexities of managing overlapping EEZs to produce an assessment of how states were disadvantaged by this element of the legal framework provided by UNCLOS. In the middle of the marking range, candidates typically wrote about a narrower range of themes (perhaps just two) and whilst they may have assessed each theme on its merit, their answers would have scored more highly (AO2) had they contrasted between the themes presented.

Section C: 21st Century Challenges

This section of the paper produced some very high scoring answers with many candidates clearly well-prepared for this element of the paper after several years of its inclusion in the rubric for this unit. Centres are to be thanked for how they have prepared their candidates for this section. Where candidates have not scored well in this section, it was largely due to either focussing solely on the resources, thereby restricting any access to AO1 marks or making no reference to the resources and consequently restricting access to the AO3 marks.

Q.9 Most candidates chose question 9 (nearly 90%). The mean mark was 15.4. They were able to tell a coherent geographical story using the four figures combined with their own understanding from taught elements of the course. Typically, candidates identified risks to the planet from water insecurity, natural hazards, and climate change. Better candidates acknowledged the role of human action in reducing risk via afforestation or Managed Aquifer Recharge. Candidates supported their analysis of the risks presented in the resources with their own knowledge and understanding of for example, human role in climate change or lack of human ability to mitigate the effects of volcanic eruptions. Better answers recognised that building houses in volcanic environments was a human-made risk. Very few candidates made any reference to risks in coastal or glacial environments. This was disappointing, yet understandable given that Unit 1 content is not revisited in the second year of the two-year A level programme.

Q.10 It was surprising how few candidates opted for this question given that management of risks is a central theme throughout the A level specification and candidates are clearly comfortable with the specialised concept of risk mitigation. Those candidates who did attempt this question were able to make good use of all of the resources to provide some contrast between management of risk in contrasting localities. Many used the 8.1 billion estimate of current world population as a useful steer for their answer, acknowledging that population growth remained an obstacle to effective mitigation. The overall mean mark was 14.0.

GEOGRAPHY

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 4: CONTEMPORARY THEMES IN GEOGRAPHY

Overview of the Unit

- Unit 4 assesses all assessment objectives (A01, A02 and A03). A01 makes up 30% of the marks on the Section A Tectonics essays. A02 is worth 65% of the marks in Section A, and A03, 5%. In Section B, A01 is worth 41%, A02 50%, and A03 9%. A01 marks are awarded for the knowledge and understanding of places, environments, concepts, processes, interactions and change at various scales. A02 assesses the ability to apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts to analyse, interpret, or evaluate geographical issues and information, including the relevant application of specialised concepts. A03 tests the ability to use various geography skills to construct arguments and communicate findings.
- Unit 4 assesses students' ability to demonstrate their critical knowledge and understanding of various physical and human themes: Tectonics, Ecosystems, India and China, Sub-Saharan Africa, Energy, and Weather and Climate. Candidates are encouraged to write analytically and come to logical, reasoned conclusions.
- Compared to previous years, this year's very few rubric errors were pleasing, with many candidates addressing the questions set appropriately. In addition, it was clear that candidates were also attempting to apply relevant specialised concepts in their work. However, it is not sufficient just to name-check the specialised concept. The specialised concepts should be fully integrated and discussed for band three credit. Sadly, there was a tendency to drift from the question at times. In particular, this was an issue for questions on China, India, and Sub-Saharan Africa. A lack of case study support is also an ongoing concern. Many of the points relating to Sub-Saharan Africa are very generic.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Theme 1: Tectonic Hazards

Q.1 Most candidates dealt with this question effectively. Candidates displayed sound knowledge and understanding of the primary and secondary hazards associated with earthquake activity and used subject-specific terminology confidently. Successful responses evaluated the demographic, social, economic, and environmental impacts of earthquake activity on people and their environment. Most commonly, case studies of Christchurch, Haiti and Kobe supplemented and enhanced the A02 component. Here is an extract from an excellent response: "Not only did this earthquake impact Chile as a nation, but it also had a widespread global negative multiplier effect." Weaker responses lacked focus and tended to be too descriptive. Some candidates spliced Q1 and Q2 together, with one candidate stating: "One case example which shows poor governance and therefore increased impacts to people and their environment is in Haiti". Overall, the mean mark for this question was lower than for Q.2 at 11.5 marks.

Q.2 This was less popular, but tackled marginally more effectively with a mean mark of 12.4. Commonly cited case studies for this question included Mount Merapi, Nevado Del Ruiz, Mount Ontake, Mount Saint Helens, and The Soufriere Hills. Successful responses were able to discuss the influence of quality of governance compared to other factors, such as time of day, level of economic development, and geographical and political factors. Here is an extract from an excellent response: "Other factors influencing an area's vulnerability are also important, such as population density. Iceland has a population of around 380,000, which is very small, making it easier to adapt and mitigate against the hazards." Weaker responses lacked discussion and provided a descriptive account. To attain full credit for the A02 component, candidates needed to weigh the influence of the factors introduced and assess their importance.

Section B

Theme 2: Ecosystems

Q.3 Many responses focused on "The Amazon." However, more specific details were needed about the threats to biodiversity in tropical rainforests, as many of the threats discussed were generic and lacked case study support. Here is an example of comments commonly made by candidates: "The tropical rainforests have the highest amounts of illegal logging compared to any other biome ... this causes a major threat to biodiversity." In addition, threats to other ecosystems, such as coral reefs and wetlands, were ignored or only given a token mention. Some candidates made brief references to the Great Barrier Reef. This lack of balance hindered the A02 component.

Q.4 Candidates mainly focused on the negative impacts of climate change on the Arctic tundra biome, namely the demographic, social, economic, and environmental implications. Some good knowledge and understanding were seen, alongside some good A02. Here is an extract from a good answer: "Climate change is causing a warming effect in the Arctic tundra region. This warming has caused the melting of the permafrost, an important global store of carbon. More carbon dioxide is being released into the atmosphere, leading to greater warming and a positive feedback loop, accelerating the biome's decline." However, opportunities to discuss some of the positive aspects of climate change in the Arctic tundra biome, such as policies to mitigate against climate change and to make the environment more resilient, were largely missed.

Theme 3: Economic Growth and Challenge - India or China

Q.5/Q.7 Overall, the responses provided needed more focus on the demographic characteristics of India and China, as many answers were rather broad and generic. References to population size, distribution, growth and structure would have been ideal. Here is an extract from a good response: "In China, there are 34 million more men than women ... in 2030, there is expected to be 30 million men of marriageable age more than women in China. Culture has influenced these statistics greatly." Candidates often stated that various cultural, physical, economic, social, and political factors influenced India and China's demographic characteristics. However, support and analysis were often lacking: "The Tibetan Mountains and The Himalayas have made it harder for the population to grow as they are so far away."

Q.6/Q.8 Notably, most candidates addressed the questions set, and there were very few rubric errors. Many candidates discussed the Three Gorges Dam, the South-North water transfer, biogas production in rural areas of India, and solar energy development in the Thar Desert. An area to address here would be the quality of A02 provided. Candidates needed to evaluate the success of strategies to improve the sustainability of either water, food, or energy supplies in India/China. Comments commonly seen were: "This caused a lot of internal migration; this point shows how it wasn't made in a sustainable way." "These strategies were successful, as the main cities in China are now powered sustainably, however, the process to build the dam wasn't done sustainably, so it is quite successful." These descriptive comments hindered the A02 component of essays, as they failed to unpack and explore the social, economic, environmental, short-term and long-term implications, which would have enabled the application of specialised concepts and awarding further credit.

Theme 3: Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

Q.9 Many candidates needed a more robust understanding of conflict minerals. However, some excellent responses referenced cobalt, coltan, and tantalum. The best responses used case studies to supplement and effectively support their discussions—the Democratic Republic of Congo was a popular example. Here is an extract from an excellent response: "The Democratic Republic of The Congo is the second largest producer of coltan, which goes for 20 Euros per kilogram on the global market, as it is used for batteries in phones. This could massively develop DRC on a big scale over time, as the country has a HDI of 0.481." However, many responses were generic, failing to provide specific information about Sub-Saharan African countries. Geo Factsheet #430 would be an ideal starting point.

Q.10 This question needed more focus from candidates. Many candidates spoke at length about the causes of desertification. A summary of the causes would have provided context, but it should not have been the essay's primary focus. In addition, a lack of support was an issue once again. Sub-Saharan African countries are named, but depth and detail still need to be improved. Here is an extract from a weak response: "The first major consequence of desertification is the loss of valuable farm and pastureland. Africa is already a continent suffering from acute food shortages, so the loss of what, in the case of some countries like Eritrea, is some of their only bits of arable land, which can be devastating." The lack of evaluation and application of specialised concepts reduced the marks awarded for the A02 component.

Theme 4: Energy Challenges and Dilemmas

Q.11 Good answers referenced case studies such as Iceland, Saudi Arabia, and the Horns Rev and London Array wind farms. Better responses discussed the relative role of climatic factors, geological factors, location, and relief. Weaker responses gave a more descriptive account and failed to examine the relative influence of the factors identified. Here is an extract from an excellent response: "Firstly, climate determines the amount of energy that can be created and supplied by renewable energy types such as non-critical renewables (wind power, solar power, and hydropower) and critical renewables (biofuels) ... however, there is a very small window of speed that wind power is effective, if windfarms are placed in areas of extremely high winds, their threshold is crossed, so they no longer sustainably generate energy."

Q.12 Candidates knew and understood the demographic, social, economic, technological and political factors that influence the changing demand for energy. However, a lack of detailed support and discussion was a key feature. Here is an example: "Demographic factors, such as a large population, can be a cause for change in energy demand. This is true for India, with the largest population. India has a large demand for energy. Social factors can also be important." This lack of support and discussion reduced the marks awarded for A01 and A02.

Theme 5: Weather and Climate

Q.13 When addressed effectively, candidates scored well on this question. Many candidates opted to discuss Hurricane Katrina's demographic, social, economic, and environmental impacts. It was pleasing to see the inclusion of specialised concepts in the form of spatial and temporal scales. Weaker answers drifted to discussing/comparing the impacts of high-pressure systems and the management of low-pressure hazards. Here is an extract from a weak response: "Alternatively, long-term hazards occur on high-pressure systems such as drought and heatwaves ... in summary, high-pressure systems have greater impacts as they are long-term and affect bigger regions."

Q.14 Candidates addressed this question poorly and the mean mark was the lowest of any essay on this paper at 10.8 marks. The main issue was the need for more focus on the question set. Many candidates attempted to invert the question and focus on how the atmosphere impacts humans. There needed to be more knowledge, understanding and discussion of the impacts of human activities on the atmosphere at local and regional scales. The specification highlights the impacts of urban areas on temperature, wind, precipitation, humidity, air quality, particulate pollution, photochemical smog, and acid rain.

UNIT 5: INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION

Overview of the Unit

As with previous years it was very pleasing to note that many candidates undertook a variety of interesting and mostly appropriate investigations, the majority of which were clearly linked to the specification. It should be noted that as the specification relates to the 21st Century, candidates must be encouraged in their planning not to become too historical, particularly in relation to theories such as Burgess and Hoyt. However, it was good to note that where relevant theory was identified better candidates referred to their theory throughout the work, while weaker candidates tended to ignore theory after it had been identified at the outset.

Administration was mostly excellent although it was noted that some declaration forms are still not being signed or even submitted, and that there are several centres that still do not use the published proposal form, instead generating their own. It remains worrying that several proposal forms are very poorly completed, showing little evidence of planning or discussion. Marks sheets did have some addition errors, these should be double checked by each centre before submission, and it would also significantly help the moderation process if the mark sheets could be annotated in some way to illustrate the centre's marking process. Additionally, it would be helpful if the sample work itself was clearly annotated, with clear statements rather than just AO levels. Some centres submitted candidate work with no annotation. ***Centres should note that there is now an updated declaration form on the WJEC website which refers to the use of AI within investigation write-ups. This form must be used with all further cohorts.***

Planning the investigation is very important, and it is the one aspect where candidates can be given support and advice by their teachers. Completion of proposal forms is quite variable, the strongest examples are detailed, have a well-focussed title, clear reference to the specification, relevant sub-questions (no more than three or four) and some ideas about data collection and relevant theory, with supportive teacher comments. Weaker examples tend to have unfocussed titles that are far too broad in scope, sometime no reference to the relevant part of the specification, and even no sub-questions or teacher feedback. ***If there is any doubt as to what a candidate is trying to achieve, centres are advised to make use of the free advisory service that is available from WJEC. These forms should be submitted by the teacher and, if the process is to be effective, should contain detailed reference as to what the candidate is proposing.***

During the planning stage, candidates **MUST** be advised to consider the scope and scale of their investigation and should be encouraged to edit their work carefully before submission to minimise unnecessary, repetitive, unfocussed and/or irrelevant discussion. Conciseness is necessary to achieve the higher bands in the Conclusion and Presentation element of the mark scheme.

It was noted that once again most centres allow their candidates to far exceed the guidance of 4 000 words, too often work was in excess of 10 000 words, and as such may have been penalised on the grounds that it lacked conciseness.

It was disappointing to note that an increasing number of centres were not following the prescribed structure as outlined in the specification. This applied to font sizes, spacing and pagination, while grayscale photocopied work often loses the impact of colour from the original.

Candidates should be aware that using AI to plagiarise content for GCE Geography assessment constitutes malpractice that can have severe consequences. In academic settings, plagiarism undermines the value of honest, original work and goes against the principles of integrity and academic honesty. It is important for candidates to properly cite sources and give credit to the original authors to avoid plagiarism. Centre MUST ensure that all candidates are fully aware of the restrictions relating to plagiarism and the use of AI.

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Context

The best candidates clearly identified the relevant section from the specification, e.g., 1.1.8, and the relevant bullet points, to guide the necessary data collection. A reasonable number of candidates did not match their data collection to the sub-questions identified, and issue that should have been remedied at the planning stage. Theoretical context still appears to be an aspect of Geography that many candidates fail to understand thoroughly, again better candidates did well here, and clearly identified relevant theory. They also clearly located their study and justified their choice of location, while some were poor and at times went into pages of unnecessary text, emphasising a lack of guidance on conciseness. However, many investigations would benefit from providing clearer locations for the study. An unannotated screenshot from Google Earth does not constitute a valid map.

The use of literature is steadily improving with the best candidates making excellent use of literature throughout their work, with relevant sources clearly identified in the text, using a recognised system such as Harvard. There was some varied use of literature reviews, while most had a list of sources in their appendix, often it was just reference to web sites.

Most candidates had clear reference to risk assessments, but many tended to be generic in nature. This is often a limiting factor and should be explored further with candidates at the planning stage. Many showed a lack of understanding of ethics, which tended to be covered very weakly, or was even absent. This also remains an area that centres are advised to work on with candidates.

Methods of Field Investigation

The best candidates clearly linked their methods to sub-questions using a comprehensive table. This allowed for a clear description, justification, relevant sampling and in some cases evaluation. However, the latter should ideally be reserved for the evaluation section of the work. When using questionnaires or environmental surveys, for example, good practice would be to include a blank copy which could be annotated to emphasise the relevance or otherwise) of the questions or statements posed. Some candidates completed pilot studies which greatly assisted their outcomes.

Good examples of methodologies were ones that had well-described, replicable, and justified methods. Many weaker candidates had a limited range of sometimes dubious methods that did little to allow relevant data to be collected. There was evidence that some centres were using the same fieldwork experience each year as a class activity for NEA data collection. This can be detrimental as it can limit a candidate's ability to fit the group data to their identified title and can severely limit individuality within final investigations. Centres that continue to follow this model would be well advised to consider the impact of this method on their NEA outcomes.

Census data is often used by candidates and presented as screen shots, which suggests that candidates do not understand or did not know how to extract the data that was relevant for their specific purpose.

As in previous years, the main weakness with this section was the identification and justification of a sampling strategy which, to many candidates, appeared to be a complete mystery. Most candidates made brief statements and there was clear misunderstanding of certain strategies, particularly random sampling when opportunistic sampling would have been more appropriate. Justification of the chosen sampling strategy was often missing or limited. To access band 5 candidates are required to have a "**sampling *strategy that is well designed, explained and justified. The strategy is wholly appropriate to the investigation***." The WJEC has provided a freely accessible digital resource to assist candidates with this element of their enquiry. The link can be found on page 5 of this report.

Data Presentation and Findings

While there were some examples of good and varied practice here, candidates need to be reminded that to access band 5, they should demonstrate "***wide ranging and accurate use of appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative data presentation methods/techniques. Well selected, applied and wholly appropriate cartographic and graphical techniques to support the analysis of findings***." Sadly, this was often not the case, with a notable weakness being the use of multiple bar and pie charts and inappropriate graphs for the data collected.

Better candidates used more sophisticated methods with data, such as photographs, radar charts and other graphs located on maps or satellite images. The use of maps appeared to have eluded many candidates, who used only Google maps or satellite images. While the latter are acceptable, they tend to lack some clarity relating to other information such as the location of sites or routes of transects shown.

Candidates **MUST** be reminded to use appropriate map protocols, and clearly label the axes of graphs, particularly on beach profiles where vertical axis was often absent or showing degrees rather that height. Photographs would benefit from annotation rather than labelling and should be clearly located and orientated. With beach and dune investigations there was a tendency for the data and the profile to be separated – a missed opportunity to integrate both.

Evidence of raw data having been collected was often absent. It would be beneficial to see tables of raw data clearly referred to in the appendix.

Maps, diagrams, and photographs from secondary sources should be clearly identified as such and cannot be credited as the candidate's own work. Many candidates reduced their maps, photographs, and graphs to a size so small it was almost impossible to comprehend what they were about, candidates should be reminded that it is important to ensure that all data presented is legible and clear.

Analysis and Interpretation of findings

Centres are reminded that to achieve band 5 marks candidates are required to give a "***sophisticated analysis and interpretation of findings, clearly showing why they were appropriate and relevant to the research question***." Ideally, they should show some individuality and/or links between the study and other aspects of Geography, i.e. synopticity. The best candidates also reflect on their theory, secondary data, and literary review.

Stronger investigations attempted to use statistical methods to support their analysis, most commonly Spearman Rank and Chi-square, though it should be noted that for the latter, expected values should not usually be less than 5, and for Spearman Rank there should be at least ten data sets to allow a valid test to be completed. Candidates should also be remined that data sets can also be analysed using more basic measures of central tendency e.g. mean, mode and median (as relevant). Often these opportunities are missed. In weaker investigations candidates often failed to show their working, the raw data, state a null hypothesis and/or demonstrate an understanding of reliability or validity. Where findings were integrated within the analytical context the interpretation was much more effective and focussed. Some excellent work was seen on glaciation, which included some varied and sophisticated work. In the very weakest investigations the tendency was to methodically describe each graph, offering little to no analysis.

Candidates should be encouraged to make greater reference to the theory that underpins their investigation, showing to what extent their findings support the theory. It would also be good to indicate how their findings link to wider aspects (synopticity) of Geography e.g. future implications for the economy, people or environment.

Conclusions and Presentation Requirements

To access band 5 marks conclusions should provide a "***sophisticated and confident summary, drawing convincing and thorough individual conclusions that address the research questions and substantiate the analysis and interpretation***." This was attempted with varying degrees of success. The most effective conclusions drew the investigation to a close linking the findings back to the sub-questions and the research title. Often, however, there was a tendency to repeat what was in the analysis and even introduce new data and ideas, which was not always clear or relevant. Weaker investigations were often not concise and ideas were not substantiated by any actual data within the investigation.

For band 5 candidates are also expected to produce "***a well-structured, concise and logical report; accurately referencing secondary information***." While sub-questions were covered, elements such as 'Assess', 'Contrast' or 'To what extent' introduced in research titles were frequently neglected.

Returning to the suggested word guidance, candidates should be reminded that producing work that is considerably over this guided limit carries risks. It should be noted that bands 4 and 5 require concise work. Many candidates have a tendency to believe that 'more is more', particularly within the context section of investigations. Many draw multiple and often unnecessary comparisons with a range of different places that have limited relevance to the investigation being undertaken. All centres should attempt to spend some time discussing this issue with their candidates. Overly long and wordy context sections will not gain more marks and candidates should work hard to self-edit any unnecessary content from their final write-ups. This is a challenging but a necessary part of producing pieces of research in this form.

Evaluation

Candidates should be reminded that this section is worth 25% of the total marks, and that to achieve band 5 marks they must show a "***highly effective evaluation of the knowledge and understanding gained from field observation. Must have a perceptive evaluation of each stage of the fieldwork investigation including the ethical dimensions of the field research; and a perceptive and well-considered reflections of further research and extension of their geographical understanding***.' It was noted that many centres overmarked this section, particularly when the evaluation was limited, for the most part, to the data collection phase.

The best candidates tackled this well, using sub-titles to clearly identify each of the stages of the investigation: Planning, Knowledge and Understanding, Context, Methods of field investigation, Data presentation of findings, Analysis and Interpretation of findings, Conclusions and Presentation, Evaluation, Improvements, and Further Research and Extensions. Their evaluation was often perceptive with well-considered reflections for extensions and their wider geographical understanding.

It might help candidates if they focussed their evaluations upon this section rather than drip feeding evaluation throughout. Centres should be reminded that marks are awarded for focussed reflections rather than writing at great length, possibly using bullet points where appropriate.

Ideas for improvements are still quite basic in most investigation, e.g., collect more data and do it on different days. There remains scope to develop ideas for further research, extensions of their geographical knowledge, and further consideration of theory.

Weaker investigations tended to be selective in the stages considered, mostly covering data collection and presentation, and less so analysis. Often, much that was written was a repeat from earlier in their work and was descriptive rather than evaluative.

Task marking
Comments on approaches to internal marking

Overall, centres are to be congratulated for guiding their students and preparing them effectively. Administration, marking and annotation is exemplary at a majority of centres. However, a number of centre's marks continue to be significantly adjusted on an annual basis. Where centre marks are adjusted, we encourage the centre to analyse their individual centre reports carefully. Full guidance is provided on where the marking of the centre differed from the marking of the moderator. Centres should also make use of the marked examples provided on the Portal and to the various digital resources provided by WJEC to support effective marking and delivery of the NEA.

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: 02922 404 281
Email: GCEGeography@wjec.co.uk
Qualification webpage: https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/geography-as-a-level/#tab_keydocuments

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