

GCSE Examiners' Report

Geography

GCSE

Summer 2025

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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	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitted 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.</p> <p>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.</p>	For unitted 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
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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.

Some key issues identified in the papers this year have been highlighted before and are also pertinent for the new QFF Wales specification moving forward from September 2025. There is a notable weakness in certain areas of candidate knowledge seen in Units 1 and 2 this year, in particular global cities (highlighted in 2024) with both questions on migration into global cities and how cities develop into global cities being in general poorly answered. In Unit 2 the questions on atmospheric circulation and high- and low-pressure systems were not answered well. Centres are reminded that both these topics feature strongly in the new QFF specification and should be covered in depth when preparing for both 2026 legacy and QFF exams. It is worth noting here that global cities and atmospheric circulation/pressure systems were also a weakness in 2025 Eduqas Components 1 and 2, which share the WJEC specification content.

The AO4 skills question from Unit 1 covering interquartile range was not answered well, and centres are reminded that all aspects of the Skills appendix in both the legacy and QFF specifications must be covered, and students must understand all skills and graphical and mapping techniques contained within the specifications.

Other key issues identified in this report from Units 1 and 2 should also be considered moving forward, general AO1.1 knowledge of specific processes, locations and systems is weak overall, with candidates too often providing generic references in their answers rather than linking them to specific places studied, and many candidates are unsure about the AO being examined in the question (only one is ever examined in WJEC questions) for example answering AO1.2 high tariff questions as if they are AO2 questions that demand opinions or judgments on rather than an explanation of a statement in a question.

Issues identified from the Unit 3 fieldwork NEA remain broadly similar to previous series, with candidates who refer specifically to their fieldwork achieving the highest marks, a need identified for candidates to give clear reasons why certain data collection or presentation techniques were chosen and the need to evaluate these techniques in depth, referring specifically to candidates own fieldwork when asked to do so. The advice offered in this report on how to improve the Unit 3 marks for each question remains very relevant for the new QFF specification Unit 2 fieldwork NEA and should be considered by centres when reviewing performance this year and planning fieldwork for the new specification from September 2025.

Exemplar material is not being collected for the legacy specification and there will be no online exam performance CPD this year. Centres are reminded to use the legacy website ([GCSE Geography](#)) where advice and guidance on the final fieldwork topics for the specification can be found, along with past papers, Geog Shots linked to all AO's and key issues, legacy blended learning resources and past examiners reports can be found. The QFF specification for teaching from September 2025 has a separate website ([GCSE Geography | Made for Wales](#)) where all resources for planning the new specification can be accessed.

GEOGRAPHY

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UNIT 1 - CHANGING PHYSICAL AND HUMAN LANDSCAPES

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 which large numbers of candidates chose not to attempt. It was pleasing to see that most items in questions 1 and 2 had attempt rates of more than 92% with only 1bi and 1bii falling below this. Overall, the mean mark for the Unit 1 paper was 38.1/83 which was 2.2 marks higher than the mean in 2024. 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). This was mainly due to a generally disappointing response to items relating to global cities.

As in every previous year of this specification, the questions are 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. However, the actual question structure is not consistent year on year, and it is worth noting that this year there were no questions with an 8-mark tariff as in previous years and the highest mark tariff for any question this year was 6 marks.

Three areas where candidates struggled this year have also been highlighted in previous years' reports. In question 1(b)(i), candidates were asked to calculate the interquartile range of a dataset of the peak flow of the River Severn over an 11-year period. Barring some pleasing exceptions, this proved beyond most candidates, and it is again pertinent to emphasise the importance of the full coverage of mathematical skills and techniques as set out in Appendix A of the specification, all of which require assessment at some point over the life of the specification.

Secondly, and again as in previous years, candidates struggled with the concept of global cities. Global cities, as described in the specification are different from other, often larger cities and although they share many of the characteristics of these cities, there are specific features of global cities that are distinct and fully understood in detail by many candidates. These include major transport hubs, such as ports and airports which facilitate the movement of people and goods between the city and the rest of the world, economic and political importance such as being the headquarters of global companies and organisations and cities with major global cultural and media significance. Responses in questions 2(c)(i) and (ii) required knowledge (AO1.1) and understanding (AO1.2) of these features and all too often candidates' responses lacked specific detail and depth of understanding with by far the most common reference being bland and unspecific references to tourism as the driving factor in the importance of global cities.

A third area which presented a challenge to candidates, and which relates to the point on global cities above, is where knowledge or recall of key concepts and processes is required in AO1.1. In this paper, candidates required knowledge of hard engineering strategies to reduce the impact of flooding in 1(b)(iii), the characteristics of a named global city in 2(c)(i), the formation of a caldera in 3(a)(ii) and the nature of Shoreline Management Plans in 4(a)(ii). In all cases, even though there were very many strong responses to all of these, showing good knowledge and recall, the overall performance was disappointing.

There was approximately a 70:30 split in favour of Theme 3 in response to the optional themes in the English medium paper, with this rising to closer to 80:20 in the Welsh medium papers. This is like 2024 and follows the pattern of previous series where Theme 3 has been by far the most popular choice of option on this paper. There appears to have been a difference in the level of accessibility for the optional questions with a total mean mark of 13.3 for Theme 3 compared to 10.8 for Theme 4 suggesting that Theme 3 was more accessible overall, although the much higher numbers of candidate attempting Theme 3 may help explain this difference.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Theme 1: Landscapes and Physical Processes

1. (a) (i) No areas to highlight.
- (ii) No areas to highlight.
- (iii) Most candidates were able to identify at least one characteristic of the river shown in the map. The vast majority referred to meanders and oxbow lakes but there were other characteristics identified such as the floodplain and the braiding of the channel in the east of the map.
- (iv) Most candidates were able to suggest how the river course will change in the future by referring to erosion at the meander leading to its migration across the floodplain. A great many developed this to suggest that a cut-off and oxbow lake would eventually form with the river taking a straighter course as a result. For many, reference to the map was implicit rather than explicit with specific reference to the meander in Box A and to oxbow lakes elsewhere on the floodplain but it was pleasing to see some candidates, although a minority, locate these by using six figure grid references and compass directions to demonstrate the changes in the meander position.
- (v) Most candidates were able to describe river processes even at a basic level, but many were unable to explain why storm conditions lead to changes in these processes to influence landforms. A common approach was to describe how storms lead to flooding. However, there were also very many good examples of candidates who were able to create a simple chain of reasoning to link storm conditions to heavy rainfall and increased discharge and thus greater energy/power/force which leads to increased erosion and capacity to transport and eventually deposit more material.

- (b) (i) It would be fair to say that most candidates were completely caught out by this question and did not know how to calculate the interquartile range. It has been signposted in reports from previous examination series that the full breadth of Appendix A needs to be covered but it was clear that this presented too great a challenge for most. Despite this, some candidates, albeit a minority, were able to score full marks in the question whilst others earned themselves one mark for recognising the need to put the data in order but then incorrectly identified the upper and lower quartiles which meant that they were unable to calculate the correct figure for the range.
- (ii) Perhaps surprisingly, many candidates were able to score at least one and, in many cases, both marks for this question despite the overall poor performance in calculating the interquartile range in the previous question. This was because they understood that the data for 2020 and 2021 was outside of the normal range for the period and represented extremes of discharge which may have led to flooding.
- (iii) Although most candidates were able to name at least one hard engineering strategy, many ignored the command words 'Describe *how*' which meant that descriptions were often brief, lacking in detail and not focussed on how the measures actually work to reduce the risk of flooding. However, there were many good answers demonstrating good knowledge of how dams regulate river flow by holding back and storing water, how dredging increases the capacity of the channel and how channelisation can reduce friction and increase the speed of flow away from vulnerable areas. As in previous years, it needs to be emphasised that candidates must read the question carefully and respond to the command word as well as the subject matter of the question.
- (iv) The majority of candidates were able to score on this question with most referring either to the high cost of hard engineering schemes or to their environmental consequences. It should be made clear here that only one reason was required, and candidates should ensure that they develop their answer sufficiently from the first point rather than provide two separate reasons.
- (c) This was an AO2 question requiring candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of distinctive landscapes. Overall, it was answered quite well, and most were able to provide at least a basic response to earn credit at the lowest band of the mark scheme by simply describing what they could see in the two photographs and comparing the differences. However, many produced well thought out and structured responses where they provided often quite sophisticated inference beyond what was immediately obvious around the different types of land use and the differences in the physical and human nature of the two landscapes. For example, some discussed the glacial or river valley versus coastal physical characteristics referring to either U or V shaped valleys and what could be inferred to be a discordant coastline whilst others chose to focus on the nature of different types of tourism which could be present in the two areas. It should be remembered that in such questions, there are no right or wrong answers, and the higher bands of the mark scheme are reserved for those candidates who are able to use the resource as a starting point to think beyond what is immediately obvious.

Theme 2: Rural – Urban Links

2. (a) (i) No areas to highlight.
- (ii) Many candidates struggled with this question and beyond the very common response that choropleth maps can be challenging for those with colour vision deficiency, only a few were able to successfully describe how data can be distorted by implying abrupt changes at the boundaries between areas and the way in which variations within uniform areas can be disguised. Although considerable leeway was given to candidates in trying to articulate these points, it was not enough to make bland statements such as that the data represented is less specific or not accurate.
- (iii) This was managed quite well by most candidates with most giving a valid reason for low birth rates in Wales but as referred to above, where they failed to earn the second mark it was invariably due to not developing their reason sufficiently or to providing two separate reasons when only one was required.
- (iv) This was generally answered quite well with many candidates gaining access to the upper band of the mark scheme by demonstrating through chains of reasoning one or more problems faced in rural areas due to population decline. However, some candidates strayed away from the question by shifting their focus from the problems faced in rural north-west Wales to discussing the impact of migration from these areas in south Wales, where it was assumed the people had moved to.
- (b) (i) No areas to highlight.
- (ii) The overwhelming majority of candidates ignored the photograph in this question and wrote in very general terms about the arguments against the development of greenfield sites, with the most common response focussing on environmental issues such as habitat loss. Whilst this was enough to earn marks in the lower band, meaning that most achieved half of the available marks, direct reference to the photograph was required for the upper band and only a minority of candidates discussed the potential impact on the small village overlooking the building site by questioning the potential lack of infrastructure and capacity of local services to absorb and the development of sustainable communities. With hindsight, it is accepted that perhaps an explicit command to use the photograph would have helped and that reference in the question to 'sites such as this' was not clear enough for most candidates.

- (c) (i) Candidates have tended to struggle in previous series with the whole concept of global cities and unfortunately, this year was no exception. This question was a test of knowledge (AO1.1) and recall of case study material given that the specification requires study of two global cities. Only a minority of candidates were able to provide specific detail on pull factors attracting people to a named city and most responses tended to be written in very general terms referring to factors such as the provision of jobs and better healthcare which could apply to any city. However, there were some very good responses which showed very good case study knowledge of named cities in both HICs and LICs although those who wrote about an HIC city tended to provide more focussed responses.
- (ii) Again, candidates struggled overall to articulate the key features of global cities which make them distinct from other large cities. In picking up the key idea of connections in the question, many started well by referring to trade but only in very general terms and in the context of trade deals as if cities were countries, which may well have been related to the topical nature of this issue at the time the exam was sat. Only a few were able to refer to trade in the context of trading hubs and major shipping ports which facilitate the physical process of trade which has led to cities becoming global. Another very common response was to refer to cities as tourist centres but again, this was explained in very broad and general terms without being fully elaborated or exemplified to demonstrate how this has caused cities to become truly global. However, there were some excellent answers which provided elaborate chains of reasoning to explain how global cities have become different to other cities due to economic connections created as hubs for TNCs or as major cultural and media centres.

Theme 3: Tectonic Landscapes and Hazards

3. (a) (i) Candidates are generally comfortable with the skill of describing a location and most were able to score marks on this question with many earning full marks. However, it is worth pointing out that although there were several creditworthy points that could have been made, they will only earn one mark for each of an accurate direction and distance from another named point on the map.
- (ii) There were many very good responses where candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the formation of a caldera, with many of the better responses accompanied by useful diagrams and sketches which supplemented the written description. However, there were many more, probably a majority, who clearly did not know what a caldera is and were thus unable to describe the formation. It has been mentioned in previous years' reports that candidates need to cover the full range of landforms in this theme.
- (b) (i) Most candidates used the photograph to identify an impact and were able to score marks. Where marks were lost, it was usually due to insufficient development of the answer to earn all the available marks or an attempt to describe more than one impact.

- (ii) This GIS format is a different type of map than has been set in previous years and it was pleasing to see candidates respond well to it with the mean mark of 2.7 suggesting that the majority found it very accessible.
 - (iii) On the whole, this question was well done, and most candidates were able to suggest social and economic impacts in La Palma by using the resources and then applying their knowledge and understanding to develop these impacts in La Palma and thus enter the second band of the mark scheme. There were also many good responses which were able to earn marks at the higher band by moving from the local to the regional scale and considering potential impacts across the wider area of the Canary Islands and this was the key discriminator in the question. Where this was done well, candidates responded to the issue of volcanic ash being ejected into the atmosphere and the reference to tourism in the resource and the number of airports on the map to discuss the potential danger to aircraft impacting on the tourist economy across the entire region.
- (c) Again, there was a generally pleasing response to this question and candidates appear to be comfortable with the concept of vulnerability between HICs and LICs. There were some very good responses demonstrating chains of reasoning based around the increased capacity to prepare for and protect against tectonic hazards in more wealthy countries. Where candidates failed to access the higher band of the mark scheme, it tended to be due to a lack of balance in the answer where candidates did not consider both social and economic factors to a relatively equal level with economic factors generally tending to be stronger than the social. Interestingly, a minority, albeit a significant one responded as if the question was assessing AO2 and requiring a decision or opinion on the statement, rather than demonstrating understanding through more straightforward explanation. Where this happened, it didn't detract greatly from the quality of responses, but this once again illustrates the importance of reading the question carefully and responding directly to the command words.

Theme 4: Coastal Hazards and their Management

4. (a) (i) As with the corresponding question above, candidates are generally comfortable with the skill of describing a location and most were able to score marks on this question with many earning full marks. However, it is worth pointing out that although there were several creditworthy points that could have been made, they will only earn one mark for each of an accurate direction and distance from another named point on the map. Also, when working out a distance between two points by using the scale, candidates need to ensure a reasonable level of accuracy and a tolerance of only ± 0.5 km was allowed in this question which caught out a number who applied guesswork only.
- (ii) This was a straightforward AO1.1 question testing recall of knowledge and whilst most candidates had a general idea of the purpose of a Shoreline Management Plan, answers often tended to be rather vague and lacking sufficient detail to earn the full 4 marks. Having said this, however, there were many good examples of good knowledge demonstrated, and many candidates scored well on this question.

- (iii) Candidates coped quite well with the wave rose diagram and most were able to earn at least one mark and many achieving all three. For this reason, what was originally thought may have been a challenging diagram for candidates, proved to be a good discriminator.
- (b)
 - (i) Most candidates used the photograph to identify an impact and were able to score marks. Where marks were lost, it was usually due to insufficient development of the answer to earn all the available marks or an attempt to describe more than one impact.
 - (ii) Candidates tended overall to struggle with this question with many unable to use the map and provide detailed reasons for the different strategies deployed in different parts of the coastline. This may have been linked to candidates who performed less well in part (ii) above and were less secure in their knowledge of what a Shoreline Management Plan is used for and thus were less able to draw on knowledge and understanding to apply to the context provided. Many candidates managed to get themselves into the middle band but then failed to provide sufficient detail through chains of reasoning to access the higher marks. Despite this, there were some very good examples of well-constructed and detailed answers showing good application of knowledge and understanding by suggesting actual strategies which might be used to hold the line in populated and economically important areas and description of how and why managed retreat might be used in other areas.
 - (c) As with 3 (c) above, there was a generally pleasing response to this question and candidates appear to be comfortable with the concept of vulnerability between HICs and LICs. There were some very good responses demonstrating chains of reasoning based around the increased capacity to prepare for and protect against coastal hazards in more wealthy countries. As above, where candidates failed to access the higher band of the mark scheme, it tended to be due to a lack of balance in the answer where candidates did not consider both social and economic factors to a relatively equal level with economic factors generally tending to be stronger than the social. Also, as with above, some responded as if the question was assessing AO2 and requiring a decision or opinion on the statement, rather than demonstrating understanding through more straightforward explanation. Where this happened, it didn't detract greatly from the quality of responses, but this once again illustrates the importance of reading the question carefully and responding directly to the command words. It is also worth noting that in hindsight, the question could have helped candidates a little more if it had referred to coastal hazards in general, rather than just erosion and this may have enabled more able candidates to provide more breadth to their responses.

Summary of Key Points:

1. Candidates' AO1.1 knowledge of some areas of the specification remains weaker than others when examined. Global cities were identified as a weakness in candidates' knowledge in 2024 and this remains an issue in 2025.
2. Centres are reminded that all the AO3 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. This will apply to the skills listed in the new specification starting in September 2025 as well.
3. The use of photographs in answers should be highlighted to candidates, there were several questions in this paper where photographs were provided and their use in answers was not always as strong as it might have been. Candidates should always be encouraged to use evidence that clearly comes from the photographs provided. This was particularly seen in Question 2 (b) (ii), although it has been acknowledged in this report that an explicit command to use the photograph would have made this AO2 question more accessible.
4. Attention should be paid to the AO the question is assessing to ensure candidates answer the question correctly. Questions 3 (c) and 4 (c) were AO1.2 questions, however some candidates answered them as if they were AO2 and gave a decision and/or an opinion on the statements in the question rather than demonstrating understanding through more straightforward explanation.

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GCSE

Summer 2025

UNIT 2: ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Overview of the Unit

The overall performance of candidates in this paper indicates that it was of appropriate standard, providing equal balance of challenge and support. All questions were attempted by most candidates (most questions had an over 90% attempt rate) indicating the phrasing and language used in the questions, together with the time allowance given, were accessible and appropriate. The balance of short and extended writing questions across the paper enabled differentiation to be effectively achieved for all candidates. These provided plenty of opportunity for candidates to illustrate their geographical knowledge and understanding together with the opportunity to demonstrate their geographical and mathematical skills. There was a relatively even split of candidates completing the option questions in the English medium scripts, but for the Welsh medium, more candidates answered the questions in Theme 3 compared to those in Theme 4, although this was not as marked as in previous years. As required by the specification, all four assessment objectives (AOs) were examined across the paper with each part question assessing a single objective.

Some areas where candidates particularly struggled this year include:

- Q.1 (b) (ii) where candidates were asked to explain why weather conditions are different between high pressure and low-pressure systems in the UK. Most candidates were only able to describe the differences. Very few candidates attempted to explain why these weather characteristics occur.
- (c) where candidates were asked to describe the global distribution of the tundra biome using the map provided. This question showed the lack of geographical terms used by candidates to accurately describe a distribution e.g. rather than saying 'North of the equator' most candidates wrote 'above the equator'.
- Q.2 (a) (iii) where candidates were asked to describe one political factor that may lead to varying levels of wealth across the UK. Many candidates did not seem to know what a political factor was and wrote about economic factors.
- (b) (ii) where candidates were asked to give two reasons why tourism can have a negative effect on employment within a country. Many candidates did not pick up on the context of employment for this question and gave general negative effects. For others they gave the same answer twice but written in a slightly different way e.g. seasonality of employment.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Theme 5: Weather, Climate and Ecosystems

1. (a) (i) No areas to highlight
 - (ii) Many candidates were able to identify that Falmouth was the settlement on the map with the highest average January temperature, however of the candidates who stated the incorrect answer, many gave Perth as their response (which was the location with the coldest temperature shown on the map.) This might possibly have been due to candidates not being able to interpret isotherm lines or that they interpreted the word 'highest' in the question to mean 'coldest'.
 - (iii) The majority of candidates were able to identify a factor from the map that influenced January temperature, but for many the explanation of the factor was vague. A few candidates were able to explain how warm ocean currents from the Gulf of Mexico have a warming effect on the southwest of the UK or why being near the sea has a warming effect in the winter which was great to see.
 - (iv) Overall candidates responded well to this question with most candidates achieving band 2 marks. Most were able to identify an overall trend such as Haverfordwest receiving more total rainfall than King's Lynn. Some also identified the difference in pattern with Haverfordwest's rainfall fluctuating and King's Lynn's being more constant. Most candidates remembered to include data in their response, some of which they had manipulated (e.g. they had calculated the range) which was pleasing to see.
- (b) (i) The majority of candidates correctly identified the Hadley cell but less were able to identify high and low pressure as the correct responses in the other parts of this question. This may be due to a lack of understanding of high and low pressure, which was exposed further in the next question.
 - (ii) This question had a low facility factor of 25.1 and the average band achieved was band 1. Many candidates were only able to describe weather conditions during high or low pressure, and a significant minority got these the wrong way round. Many of the descriptions were very basic and showed a lack of knowledge and especially understanding of high- and low-pressure systems. Some candidates talked about the formation of these in tropical regions, but the question was in the context of the UK. However, a minority of candidates were able to explain about air rising in low pressure systems and sinking in high pressure systems and how this results in the characteristic weather for each, which was great to see as clear understanding was shown. For those answers where candidates were able to demonstrate chains of reasoning in their explanations, low pressure systems tended to be explained a little better than high pressure systems.

- (c) This question asked candidates to describe the distribution of the tundra biome, and they were directed to use map evidence only. This was a relatively straightforward question, yet responses resulted in the lowest facility factor on the paper (19.5). This is mainly due to the lack of geographical terms used when describing distribution. Most candidates referred to above or below certain points on the map, but this is not geographical. Candidates are expected to use terms such as 'north of' or 'south of'. As a result, many candidates failed to score marks for this question.
- (d) Candidates responded to this question well, with the majority gaining band 2 marks. Weaker candidates were able to make good use of resources and were able to expand on the information provided, stating how a factor influences biodiversity in the Tundra. Many candidates focused on climate rather than human influence, so many of the answers were unbalanced. However, some candidates also referenced other biomes that they had studied (usually tropical rainforest) which reinforced their observations about the Tundra. Many candidates answered the 'to what extent' element of the question with the more able candidates giving a reasoned conclusion at the end of their response.

Theme 6: Development and Resource Issues

2. (a) (i) No areas to highlight.
- (ii) No areas to highlight.
- (iii) Candidates struggled with this question, and it was evident to see that many did not know what a political factor was. Many candidates gave an economic factor as their response which was obviously not creditworthy.
- (iv) Most candidates were able to describe one way in which a positive multiplier can help a region develop, but many did not provide 'the next step' as to what this might lead to e.g., they might have stated a new business opening leads to more employment, but then not linked this to greater spending in the local community.
- (v) This question looked at the economic and social impacts of regional inequalities in the UK. Most candidates gained band 2 marks and were able to use the resources provided and expand on them a little. Others described the north/south divide in the UK, but did not focus on whether the impacts were economic or social. The depth of the response and lack of chains of reasoning was the limiting factor in gaining higher bands. Most candidates addressed the 'to what extent' element of the question with some more able candidates providing a reasoned conclusion. The accuracy of writing marks was also part of this question, and it was good to see that the vast majority made good use of punctuation and paragraphs as well as trying to correct spelling errors.

- (b) (i) Many candidates were unable to describe the relationship between employment and income growth shown on the graph and as a result the facility factor for this question was 30.2. Many candidates did not provide data in their answers, despite the question directing them to do so. Also, many candidates described the first part of the graph as both elements increasing over time whereas it was only the employment that increased, and the income growth stayed relatively stable.
- (b) (ii) Again, this question had a low facility factor suggesting that candidates did not have secure knowledge of the effects tourism has on employment. Many candidates were able to suggest that seasonality of employment was a negative factor but then could not elaborate as to what impact this had e.g. unemployment for certain months of the year.
- (c) (i) The majority of candidates gained band 1 mark for this question. Many focused on brand awareness and increasing sales being the reason why MNCs locate in more than one country. However, band 2 candidates were able to make the link between lower wages for example in another country would lead to increased profitability for the company. A clear link as to why companies do this was needed to access band 2 marks.
- (c) (ii) Some candidates did not pick up on the 'to the country in which they locate' element to the question and therefore gave responses that referenced impacts on the workers (e.g. poor working conditions). These responses were not credited. However, many candidates were able to provide at least either an advantage or a disadvantage.

Theme 7: Social Development Issues

- 3. (a) (i) This question was straightforward, and gridlines were provided to enable candidates to be accurate with their plotting of the point. However, some candidates did not place their plot point precisely and therefore did not gain a mark for this question.
- (ii) No areas to highlight.
- (iii) The majority of candidates were able to respond to this question and were able to make at least one observation about the death rates shown. However, many did not refer to accurate quantification – the question asked about death rate change and therefore any quantification needed to be for two dates, whereas many responses only referenced one date.
- (iv) This question asked candidates to describe one economic factor that could reduce death rates in sub-Saharan African countries. Many candidates were able to give an economic factor, but this was not qualified – they needed to explain that 'more' money was invested into something which led to the change in death rates. Many candidates just stated a single factor such as healthcare for example.

- (v) Similar to the previous 4 mark 'Explain' question, many candidates were able to name a political factor that could influence birth rates e.g. war but then could not explain how or why this would affect the rate. Therefore, most candidates gained band 1 marks.
- (b) (i) Many candidates were able to state a challenge that Malaria created in sub-Saharan Africa, but their elaboration was more of an explanation as to why malaria created this challenge rather than an elaboration of the challenge itself. Therefore, most candidates gained one mark.
- (ii) Many candidates struggled to provide a reason as to why an international approach is necessary. Those that did provide a valid answer mainly focused on the lack of affordability for many LIC countries but then struggled to elaborate on this.
- (c) Many candidates structured their answers appropriately for this question which was great to see. Many answers discussed the strategies that were provided in the resources, but good examples were seen of answers containing strategies such as vaccinations and removing stagnant water pools. Most candidates focused on the positives of each strategy and more able candidates were able to suggest the negatives of each strategy. More able candidates were able to provide balance to their answer not only between strategies but also between strengths and weaknesses.

Theme 8: Environmental Challenges

- 4. (a) (i) Similar to Q3 (a) (i), this question was straightforward, and gridlines were provided to enable candidates to be accurate with their plotting of the point. However, some candidates did not place their plot point precisely and therefore did not gain a mark for this question.
- (ii) No areas to highlight.
- (iii) The majority of candidates were able to respond to this question and were able to make at least one observation about the changes in coastal defence spending shown. However, many did not refer to accurate quantification – the question asked about changes in spending on flood and coastal erosion defence and therefore any quantification needed to be for two dates, whereas many responses only referenced one date.
- (iv) This question received better responses than the equivalent on question 3. Many candidates were able to give one long-term effect of climate change on people, and some were able to appropriately elaborate this point by using the 'therefore this means' approach. For those candidates who did not gain a mark for this question, this was often due to their responses not being linked to people e.g. rising sea levels.
- (v) Again, marks were limited for this 'Explain' question as many candidates did not provide a clear link as to why climate change has a long-term impact on government spending in the UK. Many candidates described what the money would be spent on but failed to clearly link that spending to impacts of climate change.

- (b) (i) The majority of candidates were able to give a negative impact of tourism on either freshwater or seawater resources, and many were able to elaborate this further. Some candidates were a little vague in their response e.g. stating pollution without clarifying this was water pollution.
- (ii) Candidates responded to this question much better than the equivalent on question 3. Most were able to provide a reason, and some were able to elaborate as to why managing tourists can benefit the ecosystem.
- (c) Similar to question 3 (c), many candidates structured their answers appropriately for this question which was great to see. Most answers discussed the strategies that were provided in the resources, however there were less examples of candidates bringing in their own management strategies for tourism. A number also struggled to fully understand the impact of the green tourism award in the resource which might have led to the slightly lower facility factor for this question compared to Q3 (c). Most candidates focused on the positives of each strategy, but able candidates were also able to suggest the negatives of each strategy. Some could provide balance to their answer not only between strategies but also between strengths and weaknesses.

Summary of Key Points

1. Candidates need to study and be familiar with a variety of graphs to represent data. It was clear that candidates could see trends in the rainfall graphs in question 1 (a) (iv) whereas they struggled to describe trends in the other graph questions on the paper.
2. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of high- and low-pressure systems (when not related to hazards) appears to be weak and candidates should understand why different weather patterns are associated with each system in addition to being able to describe the weather each system brings.
3. Candidates are expected to use geographical terminology in all questions across the paper but especially when describing the location or distribution of something on a map. Words such as above, below, close to etc should not be used and candidates should use geographical terminology such as the points of the compass in their descriptions.
4. In numerous sections throughout the specification, different types of factors are referred to e.g. political/social/economic. It is vital that candidates understand this terminology and ensure that they consider all these factors where relevant.

GEOGRAPHY

GCSE

Summer 2025

UNIT 3 – FIELDWORK ENQUIRY

Overview of the Unit

The paper was accessible to the whole ability range of candidates with over 98% of candidates attempting every question. Most examples included well organised and presented scripts. The quantity of portfolio work attached to the answer booklet was less, and 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 when assessing the NEA.

Centres are advised to follow the guidance, with regards to the maximum number of additional sheets included with candidates' scripts.

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.

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.

Comments on individual questions/sections

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

Most candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for this question with the mean mark being 1.8. Candidates found this question to be more accessible this year, with several answers including more specific reasons as to why they chose their fieldwork locations. 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. There was a lack of specific reference to the candidate's own enquiry and in the context of change over time.

Advice:

Candidates need to learn more about why they are undertaking certain sampling techniques in the context of their fieldwork.

Candidates should use and reference their own study/investigation.

Q.1 (b) 6 marks (AO3)

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. For example, 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 the completeness mark.

Some candidates chose inappropriate graphing techniques that were not wholly correct or suitable for the data collected and the context of change over time.

Some candidates failed to reach full marks because the data chosen for their graphs was quantitative 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 they 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 must 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 (b) (ii) 4 marks (AO3)

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.

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 (c) 8 marks (AO2)

Candidates were asked to evaluate the quantitative techniques used to collect their primary data whilst investigating change over time. 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 this paper, with a facility factor of 36.6.

The best answers were able to draw on detailed, specific information from their investigation, describing strengths and limitations well. The command 'evaluate the techniques' was a key differentiating factor in the outcomes for this question. Many candidates resorted to describing different data techniques rather than evaluating the strengths and weaknesses as a technique.

There were several examples where candidates described or evaluated the qualitative techniques they had used during their investigation. Consequently, this limited the candidates' marks to Band 1.

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.

Centres must ensure that candidates collect a range of qualitative and quantitative data. This is a requirement of the NEA and explained in the specification.

Q.2 (a) 6 marks (AO2)

The mean mark for this question was 2.5 and most responses fell into Band 2.

Candidates continue to show a lack of understanding of the command word 'analyse'. Most candidates describe individual data points, rather than identify and illustrate trends, patterns and links in their investigations.

Advice:

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

Q.2 (b) 6 marks (AO2)

Most candidates understood what secondary data was and were able to give general strengths and weaknesses of secondary data in general terms.

Most responses provided a more general understanding of the value of secondary data. Many candidates also struggled to refer effectively to their secondary evidence to support their evaluation of the statement.

This was reflected in the mean mark for this question – 2.4 marks (Band 2).

At Band 1 the responses were often generalised, with vague references to online articles or photographs. In addition to these generic references the candidates offered very little if any connection to how secondary information applied to their study / investigation.

Band 3 answers provided a specific and detailed understanding of the value of the secondary data used within candidates' own investigation into place.

Advice:

Once again, candidates are failing to access Band 3 due to a lack of specific detail related to their fieldwork being included in their responses. Candidates need to demonstrate specific understanding of the value of the secondary data that they used in their investigation.

Q.2 (c) 6 marks (AO1.2)

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 (e.g. evidence, figures, named places, streets).

A significant number of candidates struggled to make the link between predicted outcomes and their conclusions and as to why they were the same as, or different from, what was expected.

The mean mark for this question was 2.6, in Band 2 responses.

Some candidates referred to conclusions in their fieldwork on change over time instead of place.

Advice:

Candidates must 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 need to better understand the term 'conclusion'.

Candidates are failing to access Band 3 because of a lack of specific detail included in their responses which are related to their fieldwork.

Please read the **Advice** sections for a summary of key points for this Unit.

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 2026 5114

Email: gcsegeography@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Geography](#)

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

CPD Training / Professional Learning

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Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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