



Pearson

Coursework Advisory Service

GCE Geography

The purpose of this non-examination assessment is to test students' skills in independent investigation.

Students are required to undertake an independent investigation that involves (but which need not be restricted to) fieldwork. The focus of the investigation must be derived from the specification. The guidance for word length is 3000-4000 words.

The student independently defines a question or issue relating to the compulsory or optional content. The student's investigation will incorporate fieldwork data (collected individually or as part of a group) and their own research and/or secondary data. The student's report will evidence independent analysis and evaluation of data, presentation of data findings and extended writing.

The proposal must be submitted by the teacher on behalf of the candidate. The email address provided must be from a member of staff. We will be unable to provide advice if these requirements are not met.

All submissions from a centre must be submitted together at the same time. For example, if you would like to use the service for 30 candidates in your cohort, you need to submit all 30 in one submission. If a centre uses the service more than once, per academic year, we will be unable to give the additional advice.

If you would like feedback on your student's independent investigation proposal(s), please submit your query via the [**Coursework Advisory Service**](#).

The Coursework Advisory Service is a service for teachers to better understand how their students' proposals allow access to the assessment criteria. Therefore it may contain **specific guidance** for teachers. This should inform future teaching and learning about the first stage on the route to enquiry: 'Purpose, identification of a suitable question/aim/hypothesis and developing a focus'. It is important that teachers do not share the coursework advisory service feedback directly with students but only give **general guidance**. For examples of general and specific guidance please see [Appendix 14 in the specification](#) and the [Guide to developing titles and completing the proposal form](#).

You will need to provide the following information for each candidate:

- Submission date
- Investigation title
- How the title links to the specification content
- Planned investigation hypothesis or question/sub-questions
- Investigation focus
- Planned methodology

We will be unable to offer advice if you fail to provide all the information above.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do I have to submit my independent investigation proposal for approval?

No. It is not compulsory to submit all proposals. The service is to offer advice to teachers, based on the information you provide, as to the appropriateness of the proposal.

Q: When can I expect to receive a response to my submission?

We will aim to respond to your submission within 20 working days, however, at peak times such as the exams period (May, June and July), it may take up to 30 working days.

Q: Why do I need to provide so much information about my student's fieldwork and research?

An appropriate fieldwork and research data programme is essential if there is to be a meaningful analysis and conclusions for the chosen title. Our advisers will be unable to provide advice without the full range of information.

Q: Does my title have to relate to only the compulsory topics in the specification?

No. It can come from any part of the specification, both the compulsory or optional content.

Q: Does my programme of fieldwork have to relate to processes in both physical and human geography?

It is a DfE requirement that all A level Geography students complete 4 days of fieldwork. Fieldwork must cover processes in physical and human geography. The Independent Investigation could be based on either physical or human geography. Alternatively, students could choose to do investigations with a people–environment theme. The key point is that there should be a clear link to the specification and it therefore does not matter which aspect students choose. Teachers need to ensure that students have participated in physical and human fieldwork; however, this should not pre-determine students' choice of Independent Investigation.

Q: Can I use fieldwork data collected as part of a group?

Although students can collaborate when collecting data, this is not a requirement and they can work individually if the teacher is assured that there are no health and safety concerns. In addition, if students have collaborated when collecting initial primary data, this does not prevent them from gathering additional data pertinent to their own investigation. Teachers should make students aware that they must organise their own data collection so that there is evidence of their own work in their investigation.

Q: Do students need to have quantitative and qualitative data?

All of the Awarding Organisations state that qualitative and / or quantitative data are required, as appropriate / justifiable to the student's Independent Investigation.

Q: Can students use data they collected previously, e.g. on an AS fieldwork trip, as the primary data for their individual investigation? Can students use data collected by a previous cohort as their secondary data?

Students should only collect primary data once they have designed their investigation and completed the Independent Investigation Proposal Form; they cannot use data that they have collected previously as the primary data for their own investigation. Students can use data that they or another cohort collected previously as secondary data if they independently arrive at the decision to do so and, where relevant, approach their teacher to

request access to this data. Students should reference the use of this data in their written report as they would with any other secondary data they have independently sourced.

Q: How different do the titles have to be across the same group of students?

Students must devise their title **independently**; failure to do so would constitute malpractice. Teachers and students must declare that the requirements of the Independent Investigation have been followed, and this includes that investigation titles are devised independently. This is an opportunity for students to explore in depth an area of geography which interests them; independence enables students open access to the entire specification, which should mean that similar titles are unlikely.

Q: What if two students come up with the same title?

If multiple students have the same or similar titles then this is only malpractice if students did not independently come up with their own titles. Inevitably, if students all visit the same environment(s) for fieldwork, there is a possibility of narrowing of titles. This is acceptable as long as students have made decisions about their planned investigation themes and titles independently. If some students independently come up with the same or similar titles, the Independent Investigation Proposal Form and written report provide every opportunity to demonstrate independence.

The full set of FAQs can be found [here](#).