

Moderator's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE A Geography 5GA04_01
Investigating Geography
Controlled Assessment

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Introduction

The Controlled Assessment was offered for the second time as part of the June 2011 series, and attracted a significantly increased number of entries.

Centres were asked to select one or more task topics set by Edexcel, selected to compliment the content of the specification.

As in the previous year, many of the initial aims of the controlled assessment were met with candidates producing a more succinct piece of work, which, due to the nature of the high level of control in the later stages, Candidates tend to be more focussed and concentrate on the main issue of the geography involved.

The resulting submitted work was frequently of a very high standard, and the vast majority of centres are to be congratulated for the way they, and their candidates, have adapted to the demands of the controlled assessment.

Administration

There were only few administrative errors on behalf of the centres, which are to be thanked for greatly assisting the moderation process. However, some instances still arise when there are errors in the addition of candidates' marks. Other usual errors are mistakes in the transfer of marks from the mark sheet to the OPTEMS.

A small number of centres did not send both the highest and lowest marked piece of work in addition to the requested sample.

The majority of work was submitted in simple light weight folders. A minority of centres used bulky ring binders and are requested to avoid doing so for future submissions.

Most centres helpfully provided detailed annotations directly to the submitted work or provided tables of separate comments which helped to clarify the reasons for the mark allocations. Where this did not occur, the moderators found it more difficult to understand the reasons for the mark allocations given by the centres.

The moderators were usually able to agree with the marks awarded by the centres, however there were a number of cases where the mark scheme had not been rigorously applied, and in these instances some adjustment to the marks occurred.

General Comments

The most popular selections of task questions were the tourism, rivers, coasts and urban options.

The majority of centres submitted work based on one task question. Where groups or candidates from the same centre investigated different tasks these were usually the tourism, the rivers or the urban themes. The majority of the centres had evidently carefully designed new tasks with reference to the task questions set, with very adopting their previous coursework to the requirements of the controlled assessment. Centres are to be congratulated on the effective way that they planned the controlled assessment, which frequently allowed their candidates to access the higher levels for each criterion.

A small minority of centres adapted the task question and investigated a different focus from that set by Edexcel, inevitably penalising their candidates to some degree. It is essential that the centres use the task titles as set by the examination board. One centre unfortunately selected the tasks for the incorrect year.

Criterion A – Purpose of the Investigation

The majority of candidates scored highly in this section. The purpose was well identified and broken down into subsidiary questions, which were later addressed. The strongest candidates went to some lengths to explain the sub-questions and their relevance to the enquiry. Geographical theory was evident in nearly all issues addressed although one centre attributed the heat island theory to Ken Livingstone. Locational detail was sometimes less well done as candidates assumed universal knowledge of their chosen site. Google maps were often used, but sometimes without any narrative or any indication of the sites selected for data collection. Very few candidates were able to offer any evaluation in this section.

Criterion B- Methods of collecting data

Candidates who had outlined a series of sub-questions in Criterion A usually gained higher marks for this section, as they were able to explain how the data related to the task question.

The majority of candidates were able to describe the processes of data collection, frequently making use of data collection tables, but only the higher-scoring ones explained and justified the activities. There were many examples of illustrated methods, using both photographs and sketches.

Some centres continued to use a very limited range of one or two data collection techniques such as measuring just the width of a river a number of locations. This invariably limited the data presentation, analysis and conclusion sections and affected the marks that candidates could obtain.

Criterion C- Methods of Presenting Data

The quality of data presentation was variable, with most candidates obtaining marks in the middle band range. There was less ICT evident than in the past, probably because of timetable constraints (centres should note that ICT is not a specification requirement). Weaker candidates tended to produce basic graphs, sometimes without the aid of a ruler and presentation was haphazard. When candidates did offer sophisticated examples, these were often excellent. Typical examples included river cross-sections and long profiles; scatter graphs; annotated photographs and field sketches; traffic and pedestrian flows mounted on street plans; and various types of graphs located on maps. Many candidates offered up to four high quality quality examples.

However, some centres continue to give containing basic data presentation methods such as bar charts, pie charts and photographs, which are simply labelled or not labelled at all full marks for this criterion when they should not be awarded higher than level 1 or a low-level 2.

Criterion D – Analysis and Conclusions

These sections of the controlled assessment are carried out under high levels of control and the majority of centres required their candidates to hand write their responses. Candidates and centres followed a range of approaches, often the data was presented in some form (graphs or flow diagrams, for example) and then analysed. This usually proved to be the more effective approach. Alternatively, the analysis was carried out as a complete section (not always with reference to data) or each subsidiary question analysed. Spearman's rank appeared on a number of occasions, and this can be a very effective tool provided candidates understand its application. Conclusions tended to follow a similar pattern. The most cohesive pieces of work were those which analysed each subsidiary question and then drew everything into an overall analysis/conclusion.

Criterion E – Evaluation

This work was carried out under high levels of control. Some candidates appeared unsure of the task, and went down the "...it would have (sic) been better if we had more time..." road. Some chose to evaluate as they went along, particularly in sections A, B and C. If this approach is adopted it is important that centres ensure the work is carried out a under high level of control. Others carefully evaluated everything in detail, showing that they were fully aware of the limitations and offered suggestions for improvement. A number of centres used a tabulated sheet approach.

Criterion F – Planning and Organisation

Most of the submitted work was well organised, and the majority of candidates attained at least level 2 for this criterion. The most effective studies included diagrams and graphs that were integrated into the text, even if this was a brief comment; 'See my flow map, page 29'.

Candidate acknowledged sources of secondary data, including maps, books and websites where these had been used. Most of the centres made effective use of ICT to enhance studies. Hand written annotations were relatively common this year but where was easy to read. Overall, the vast majority of the submitted work was completed and extremely well presented.

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