

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE A Geography 5GA04\_01  
Investigating Geography  
Controlled Assessment

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## **General Comments:**

The 2013 entry was similar in size to that of 2012 and although there were a high percentage of River, Coast, Tourism and Environmental task themes, all the tasks set by Edexcel featured.

The majority of centres used the same task for all their candidates, and nearly all the primary data was collected during day field trips to selected locations. It was evident that most centres had prepared their candidates thoroughly, with a number producing data collection booklets for use during the data collection process. It is always extremely helpful to moderators when an example of these booklets is included with the Controlled Assessment sample.

It was pleasing to note that a high proportion of candidates produced focused and succinct reports. There was evidence, as last year, of some truly out-standing work from a significant number of candidates. However, some controlled assessments are still significantly over-length and akin to the old coursework from the legacy Specification. Centres are asked to particularly note that a 2,000 word limit will be imposed from 2014.

A significant proportion of the work seen was a very high standard, with candidates demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of geographical theory and terminology.

## **Administration**

The majority of centres sent the correct sample by the due date, and completed all the administrative tasks correctly and proficiently. These centres are thanked for their assistance in assuring that the moderation process was smooth and effective.

However, as in previous years, there are some errors in the addition of candidates' marks. It was felt that there was a marked increase in such mistakes this year, and also in the transfer of marks from the mark sheet to the OPTEMS. A very small number of centres sent the Controlled Assessment Record Sheet without the teacher's and candidates' signatures and had to be contacted to rectify this. Other administrative problems included the incorrect Candidate record sheets being used, some dating back to the specimen sheet provided when the Specification was published and others using 2014 with risk assessment and word limits requirements imposed.

Very few centres submitted the incorrect title for the year, although a few adjusted the task as set by Edexcel. It is very important that the correct titles and set tasks are used. Centres are particularly asked to note that the titles change on an annual basis and it is essential to submit the correct and unaltered titles for the relevant year. Details of the titles for 2014 can be found, via secure download, under Controlled Assessment at <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/geography/a/pages/default.asp>  
[X](#)

Most centres helpfully provided detailed annotations directly to the submitted work, or provided comments on the Candidate Record Sheets which helped to clarify the reasons for their mark allocations. Where this did not occur, moderators found it much more difficult to understand the reasons for the mark allocations given by the centres. The majority of centres had marked accurately and had carried out carefully internal standardisation. In the small number of cases where it was felt that the marking did not conform to the published mark scheme, adjustments to the centres marks were made during the moderation process.

### **Criterion A – Purpose of the Investigation**

The majority of candidates attained the higher mark bands for this section. This part of the Controlled Assessment is usually most effective if the main task question is broken down into three or four (two to three for 2014 onwards) sub-questions.

A large number of candidates located their data collection sites in detail by indicating the exact location of each on a base map, or by supplying a six figure grid reference for each site, or both sometimes map work was weak. Many used maps from online sources to show the data collection area. Having downloaded a couple of maps, some candidates added a few arrows, assuming it was obvious where the fieldwork data collection took place, however, this is not always the case. Where non-specific locations were given some mark adjustment took place during moderation.

### **Criterion B- Methods of collecting data**

Most of the seen work was carefully and thoroughly planned so that the candidates were able to use a variety of data collection methods. This not only helped them to collect relevant information, but also helped to develop their geographical understanding.

Candidates who divided the main task question into three or four relevant sub-questions (Criterion A) usually reached the higher mark bands for this section. Nearly all the candidates were able to give an outline of the data collection processes, but this frequently lacked sufficient detail to reach the higher mark bands. Candidates should try to describe their methods in such a way that another person could collect data by following their instructions. The following is an extract from such an account; 'We roughly paced out a 10metre area, along a chosen road using a pre-determined scale, using items such as cars and lamp posts as markers. We then stood at one end and timed any cars that came through the marked area.'

Another moderating issue was the lack of explanation of how the selected methods enabled them to answer each of the sub-questions. Frequently candidates' explanations followed the line of justification 'because this data will be useful for the study', yet some centre assessors awarded level 3 marks for such basic statements.

## **Criterion C- Methods of Presenting Data**

Some superb data presentation methods were used, many of which were sophisticated. Sophisticated methods are usually those that combine two techniques, such a well-annotated photograph which has been located by a six figure grid reference, a series of graphs located onto a base map to show spatial distributions or a well-constructed kite diagram. To obtain the highest marking level candidates should produce at least three different sophisticated methods.

However, some centres continue to mark a map, a couple of bar charts and a pie chart or a labelled photograph as being Level 3. These methods can be considered as a range, i.e. a number of different methods for representing data, but are not sophisticated.

## **Criterion D – Analysis and conclusions**

As in the past, a number of different approaches were used for this section of the controlled assessment. Candidates often analysed their data as it was presented, i.e. directly beneath a graph or diagram. This approach is frequently appears to be very beneficial to the less able candidates. Other formats included the analysis as a complete section (not always with reference to data) or with each subsidiary question analysed individually. Spearman's rank was used on a number of occasions and can be a highly effective analytical tool providing it is understood by the candidates.

Conclusions followed a similar pattern i.e. were drawn after each data set or as a separate section. The best accounts tended to be those which analysed each subsidiary question and then drew everything into an overall analysis/conclusion.

## **Criterion E – Evaluation**

This section is completed under a high level of control and is worth an appreciable number of marks so and it is recommended that it is given more than the one to two hours that some centres appear to allocate. A number of candidates are producing some out- standing evaluations covering the data collection and presentation as well as evaluating the over- all study.

However, assessment Criterion E tends to be another area where several centres experienced misinterpretation of the mark scheme. Many candidates' evaluations focussed exclusively on inaccuracy of data collected yet assessors again frequently awarded top level marks.

A number of evaluations were presented in tabular format. Centres may find this approach beneficial from 2014 as it may help to keep the work within the word limit.

## **Criterion F – Planning and Organisation**

As previous years, most of the submitted work was well organised, and the majority of candidates attained at least level 2 for this criterion. All the work seen contained at least some geographical terminology and followed a logical sequence. There were very few examples of incomplete Controlled Assessments.

It would be extremely helpful if centres could encourage candidates to write their name, candidate number and centre number clearly on the front of the actual submitted work, in addition to filling these details on the Controlled Assessment Record Sheet.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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