

Examiners' Report
June 2015

GCSE Geography A 5GA1F 01

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Introduction

As in previous series this paper demonstrated the best work from candidates and also the worst. Excellent case-study knowledge (which was focused on the questions set) saw generally high marks for many in the last section of the paper, but explanations were mostly absent. Section A once again revealed patchy skills with OS map-skills especially weak. Competency in understanding the relevance of GIS and its application to how it could provide additional data / information were also notably absent from many responses (Question 2(b)). Many candidates also appeared unprepared for Question 3 which required fieldwork and secondary skills.

Once again, the greatest discriminator was often a lack of clarity about what to do, with command words too often ignored and problems of scale and context all too apparent when looking at the map extract.

This report will provide exemplification of candidates' work, together with tips and/or comments, for a selection of questions. The exemplification will come mainly from questions which required more complex responses from candidates.

Question 1 (d)

On this paper, questions about distribution linked to a particular land use are very common. Some candidates seemed to be well prepared in terms of recognising the need to describe an overall pattern whilst making reference to particular patches of woodland, locations and areas. Best practice included the use of compass directions, regions on the map, and place-names combined with 4 and 6 figure grid references.

Other candidates, however, failed to recognise the meaning of the command instruction and therefore were unable to gain many marks and instead often described the locations of human features such as towns and villages or other physical features not linked to woodland.

The following response scored all 3 marks.

(d) Describe the **distribution** of **woodland** shown on the OS map extract.

(3)

The majority of the map ~~is~~ has small patches of woodland on it. However large segments are found in the west. These segments join on ~~to~~ to a long strip of woodland in the north creating an arc, a large patch of woodland in the east finishes the arc.



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Examiner Comments

There was some good description of pattern in this answer.



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Examiner Tip

This is a familiar line of questioning. Candidates should be well prepared for this type of skill.

This answer scored 3 marks.

(d) Describe the **distribution** of woodland shown on the OS map extract.

(3)

The woodland on the OS map extract is dispersed as it found all over the map. The woodland is mainly to the west of the map with the exception of some to the east. There are also large areas of woodland such as Great Wood (1940) and Edgefield Woods (0837).



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Examiner Comments

This is another solid example, using specific map evidence in the form of named locations and 4-figure grid references.

Question 2 (a) (i)

Most candidates were able to link map evidence to providing an idea (with some development) to access the two marks. It is worth recognising that an 'Outline' question, for two marks, does require a degree of development to access the two marks. But development can come through description or partial explanation. Many candidates focused on the idea that it was high up or exposed, and therefore would receive the maximum amount of wind. Others mentioned the fact that it was away from settlement, therefore it didn't cause noise disturbance to people.

However, there were a significant number of candidates who gave two reasons. Whilst some gave some development for each reason, others failed to provide any extension thereby limiting their response to 1 mark.

Question 2 (a) (ii)

A surprising number of candidates found this question difficult to complete, and in fact shaded in the wrong part of the pie chart or left it blank. Examiners also reported how a large number of candidates found difficulty in replicating the line shading found in the key. Whilst they were not penalised for this as long as it was recognisable to the correct category, it does show that some candidates lack basic graphical skills and need to improve these with more practice.

Question 2 (a) (iii)

The majority of candidates were able to successfully link the information in the resource to their own understanding of possible limitations. Many however didn't recognise the need for brevity (short phrases and statements were all that was required) and instead wrote too much wasting valuable time. Some attempted lengthy descriptions and a few even tried to explain. Once again they need to be reminded of the importance of looking at both the command (in this case 'State') in conjunction with the mark tariff for the question and its components. It was perfectly reasonable to say as the answer: 'not enough people (100)' (1 mark) and 'wasn't asked to local people' (1 mark).

Question 2 (b)

It is clear that for the majority of candidates Google Earth / maps means GIS. Whilst this technology offers a good window into free visualisation of information, it should not be seen as a substitute for more sophisticated GIS. True GIS has the ability to analyse and a number of candidates were writing about two reasons rather than one, hence there was no development of their ideas.

This response scored both marks.

(b) Outline **one** way Geographical Identification Systems (GIS) might be used to find out more information about an area such as Bodham Hill.

(2)

You could use the software ArcGIS where it would allow you to use a map extract and then add extra layers of information over the top depending on what you're looking at. So for Bodham Hill you could look at the wind speeds for the past 5 years.

(Total for Question 2 = 7 marks)



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Examiner Comments

This candidate shows clear understanding of GIS and gives a relevant comment regarding layers and appropriate types of data.

Question 3

This was challenging for a number of candidates as they found it difficult to transfer knowledge and understanding from fieldwork and investigative design to the question. These skills are required as a core component of Unit 1, Topic 4, Geographical Enquiry Skills. Not only did many candidates struggle with the identification of a reasonable question or hypotheses (this was to provide context to what they were doing), but they also found it hard to subsequently find appropriate fieldwork and research that linked to this statement. Many candidates seemed to lack the specialist vocabulary and ideas needed to describe data collection methods, instead talking about generic 'surveys' and use of 'information from the Internet' as secondary research. Only a very limited proportion of responses contained any reference to sample size or a notion of design / location, for example when undertaking a questionnaire survey. Instead it was the low level 'do' which typically only got into Level 2 at best. There was also a lack of meaningful links to secondary data, although the best candidates were able to mention specific agencies, e.g. DEFRA, EA, or local newspapers and editorials.

This answer was awarded 5 marks.

* 3 Study Figure 3 in the Resource Booklet and the OS map extract.

A group of GCSE students carried out their Controlled Assessment in north Norfolk.

For **one** of the topics shown on Figure 3:

State a suitable geographical **question** or **hypothesis** for a geographical enquiry.

How ~~does~~ river ~~and coastal~~ management needed to keep north Norfolk not flooded.

Describe the primary and secondary information you would need to collect to investigate your question or hypothesis.

It may help you to use an appropriate plan or geographic enquiry sequence.

At first the student would have to collect data from several places alongside the river (River Glaven) for example they would collect ~~the~~ the velocity, depth, width etc. Afterwards they would compare the results of the sites. ~~and~~ Using GIS (secondary) they would view the areas they have chosen for flooding, ~~and~~ when it last happened, how frequently and how bad. This will help the GCSE students take a conclusion on how much help the management does to a place.

* places with hard, soft and no management



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Examiner Comments

This response represents Level 3 at Foundation Level. The fieldwork described is relevant to the title / focus given. The idea of collecting data from different places is quite important here.

Question 4 (b) (ii)

Whilst it was clear that most candidates knew what climate change was and that different people perhaps had different ideas about the science, they found it difficult to put this into words in the context of a response. Again this was a 'one reason' question, yet many did not develop their ideas clearly enough to get the two marks. The easiest way to show development in a question such as this is to offer some explanation (... 'because') or at least a clear comparison between different users or groups who may have contrasting views (... 'whereas').

This answer was awarded both marks.

(ii) Outline **one** reason why there are different attitudes about climate change.

(2)

There are different attitudes about climate change because people don't fully understand what it is and what it is doing for instance people that don't watch the news won't know it's a big deal.



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Examiner Comments

There is clear understanding of the idea of attitudes here, even though the candidate found it difficult to express their ideas clearly.

This answer also scored 2 marks.

(ii) Outline **one** reason why there are different attitudes about climate change.

(2)

Some people believe that climate change is man made as people are making it happen, whereas other people believe it's mainly caused by natural things like a volcanic eruption.



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Examiner Comments

This is a response which again definitely illustrates understanding in the context of attitudes to climate change.

Question 4 (c)

It was pleasing to see some good answers for this question. Most were linked to methane demonstrating good understanding at this level. It may well be worth feeding back to candidates the need to use semi-technical language, e.g. swap 'farts' for 'flatulence'! Once again, some candidates need to be reminded to give only one reason, otherwise they run the risk of not getting two marks as the response will lack sufficient development.

This response was awarded both marks.

(c) Explain **one** reason why the amount of methane in the Earth's atmosphere is increasing.

For developing ~~countries~~^{places} like Asia, The population ⁽²⁾ is increasing which increases the demand for meat. More cows are needed to feed people so there is more methane.



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Examiner Comments

A very clear 2 marks here. Good focus on 'why' methane is increasing.

Question 4 (d)

Some good answers were given to this question, demonstrating good recall of factual information derived from a variety of sources. This was, once again, a 2 mark 'describe' question so some simple development or extension was required to access the two marks. Historically this type of question has a mean in the region of 1.2-1.4 marks, which illustrates how a good number of candidates are failing to develop their responses sufficiently. It is worth reassuring centres at this point that it is fine to use examples that are not in textbooks and instead to use more up-to-date and, likely more relevant, local examples. In fact this could be regarded as better practice than relying on the ones that are provided (there were a lot of 'Live Simply').

Both marks were awarded for this answer.

(d) Describe **one** local response to climate change.

(2)

Pimlico Academy recieved £35 million so they can build a more eco-friendly school. Therefore there is now double-glazing windows, solar panels, grass on the roof, light ~~sensors~~ sensors so less energy is being wasted.



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Examiner Comments

It was good to see an alternative local response being used here - the local school.



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Examiner Tip

It is not a requirement to use standard textbook examples. Credit will always be given as long as it is appropriate to the question being asked.

Question 5 (b)

Most candidates seemed to have reasonable or good knowledge of the effects of resource extraction; of course degradation of tropical forests was the most popular. The best answers are always those that are supported with factual accuracy and clear development, as at least two effects are required for the maximum 4 marks. Many candidates offered partial explanation which was good practice as it led to development, hence an 'outline' of effects, which was what was required in the question.

Full marks were awarded for this answer.

(b) Using examples, outline the **effects** of resource extraction on tropical rainforest environments.

(4)

In Ecuador, oil was being extracted from the ground. However, the pipeline in which the oil was being extracted split, and oil leaked everywhere. The oil destroyed animal habitats and also leaked over farmland, destroying crops. Then, Texaco paid \$40 million to repair the pipeline, and help transport the oil. The effects of this on the environment was loss of habitats, loss of crops, and a loss of money for farmers.



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Examiner Comments

There is familiar exemplification material here; however, the candidate has provided a clear focus on effects and has therefore gained 4 marks.

Question 5 (c)

Once again, this final question with its demand for extended writing proved challenging to a large number of foundation level candidates. On the whole, most seemed to find it difficult to both decide and select the sort of case-study vs knowledge part of the question as well as knowing how to respond to the command instruction 'explain'. The vast majority of responses were simply descriptive and narrative with little, if any, attempt to explain. This does not seem to be due to a lack of knowledge in many instances, but moreover an approach to writing and having the right language skills to express themselves so that the answers provide examination rather than just 'stuff'. Many responses were also very simplistic in terms of style, and often lacked punctuation and paragraphs which restricted them to the lower end of the range of SPaG marks.

* (c) Explain how the **policies** used by some large organisations help to make them more sustainable.

(6)

Markes and Spencers plan A policy help them become more sustainable in many ways.

One way is that they recycle 80% of their packaging. This helps the cut down on their waste.

Another way is they use tear-drop shaped lorries. This make them more aero-dynamic, which causes them to use less fuel.

Also, in their stores, they have walls which filter out pollution.

One other way that the become more sustainable, is by using LED lighting in their ~~stor~~ stores. This replaces the florescent tubes that they used to use. The LED's are better because they use less energy, reducing Mark and Spencers energy consumption.



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Examiner Comments

This is a Level 3 answer scoring 6 marks. There is a good level of detail and focus on the question. It scored 3 marks for SPaG.



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Examiner Tip

This response has explanation - many candidates failed to deliver on this.

* (c) Explain how the **policies** used by some large organisations help to make them more sustainable.

(6)

policies in large organisations such as Nokia have systems set up where they ask for you to donate your old nokia in so they can re-use and recycle parts. So for example when they would re use the glass in your old phone to replace an ~~old~~ ^{new} one. 50% of us get a new phone every year. The old phone just sits in the cupboard or you can donate it in. Other organisations such as walmart have changed all sorts such as the lighting in the car park and background lights in fridges and freezers they use 60% less energy. Another thing they have changed is that ~~people~~ they insist in less packing on their products so that they can reduce packing but also fit more stock into trucks. So they don't have to use as many lorries which will cut down on fuel and CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere.



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Examiner Comments

There is a good level of detail in this answer but it achieves a low score for SPaG. The response is moving towards explanation, but it could be much clearer.

Paper Summary

Once again, the paper this series revealed some inconsistencies in candidates' performance and centres and candidates are advised to pay particular attention to the following:

- There were some excellent answers linking together knowledge and understanding through case study material, e.g. slightly longer answers in Question 4.
- This was in marked contrast to the performance on the skills elements of Questions 1 and 2. Map skills were sometimes quite poor even from candidates who did well later on in the paper.
- A particular aspect of this was the inability of some candidates to grasp the idea of scale – this lack of skill was exposed in Question 1(b)(i) for instance.
- A number of candidates still seem to struggle with ways of displaying and interpreting data. Question 2(a)(ii) was a particular example of this problematic understanding even though it was targeting those at around an F grade.
- As previously suggested in other series, it is probably a good idea for centres to try and integrate these map skills into general teaching and learning of topics rather than seeing them as a stand-alone unit of work.

Grade Boundaries

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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