

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCSE in Geography A
(5GA04)

Paper 1: Investigating Geography

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General Comments

The 2014 series saw some changes to the mark scheme, and, for the first time, a word limit of 2,000 words was introduced. Although all the tasks set by Edexcel were attempted by centres, the most popular tasks continued to be River, Coast, Tourism and Urban task themes.

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. Some centres used residential field centres, particularly those in Wales and the Lake District. It was evident that most centres had prepared both their candidates and the actual planning for the controlled assessment very thoroughly, with a number producing data collection booklets for use during the data collection process. These were frequently referred to by the candidates but were not always sent to the moderator. It is always extremely helpful to moderators when an example (one copy is enough) 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 within the word limit. There was evidence of some truly outstanding work from a significant number of candidates. However, some controlled assessments are still significantly over-length.

A significant proportion of the work seen was a very high standard, with candidates demonstrating excellent knowledge and use 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 i.e. the legacy sheets for submission in 2013. In such cases there may be changes to the centres marking as the moderators were asked to apply the 2014 mark scheme. For such centres, the following has been added to their individual report;

'Please note that the work submitted did not use a task title as set by Edexcel.

For future submissions please ensure you use the correct task title, as failure to do so may impact negatively on your candidates' results.'

Pleasingly, no centres submitted the incorrect title for the year. A very small number did not use the task set by Edexcel, it is very important that the correct

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 tiles for 2015, and some guidance to assist centres in their planning can be found at;
<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/geography/a/pages/default.aspx>

Most centres helpfully provided detailed annotations directly to the submitted work, or provided comments on the Candidate Record Sheets which explained 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. It is essential that centres ensure that internal standardisation takes place when more than one teacher is involved in marking the candidates work.

Criterion A – Purpose of the Investigation

The mark scheme for this criterion remained very similar to the legacy scheme except for the inclusion of; 'a well-focused statement that identifies and contextualises the issue or question' in the highest mark band. In essence, this can be achieved by providing a relevant locational setting for the work, or by linking the controlled assessment to a valid model or geographical theory. Many centres ensured that their candidates did both, and there were some excellent links to the Bradshaw and Butler models in particular.

The majority of candidates attained the higher mark bands for this section. This part of the Controlled Assessment is essential for helping the candidates to focus carefully on the task title, and is most effective if the main task question is broken down into two or a maximum of three sub-questions. Some centres are devising six or seven sub-questions which lead the candidates to collect too much data and exceed the word limit. Too many sub-questions tend to result in poorly focused work in later sections of the Controlled Assessment.

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. Some candidates produced detailed tables such as:

Site number and location	Grid reference (O.S.)
Site 1 Main buildings, Windsor Castle	SU9701977005

Many used maps/ aerial photographs from online (GIS) sources to show the data collection area. This helped them to gain credit for using GIS (criterion b). When non-specific locations were given but exact locations were credited by the centre responsible for the marking, some mark adjustment took place during moderation.

Criterion B- Methods of collecting data

This criterion had the greatest number of changes for 2014. The additional requirements were:

- To include secondary data.
- To carry out a risk assessment.
- To provide an indication of the part individual students played in the data collection process.
- To use GIS as part of the data collection process.

Most of the seen work was carefully and thoroughly planned by the centre so that the candidates were able to use a variety of data collection methods and meet the new requirements of this criterion. This not only helped them to collect relevant information, but also helped to develop their geographical understanding and helped them to prepare for the other units in this specification.

Candidates/centres who divided the main task question into two or three relevant and focused sub-questions (Criterion a) usually found it easier to reach the higher mark bands for this section. Nearly all the candidates were able to give an outline of the data collection processes. Due to the word limit, a large number of centres encouraged their candidates to use tables for this section of criterion b. It is important that sufficient detail is given 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 concise instructions. Most candidates used the same table as part of their evaluation section (criterion e) and whilst this is perfectly acceptable, it is very important that centres ensure that all evaluative comments are completed under high levels of control.

The new sections of this criterion (see above) do not need extensive writing to reach the higher mark bands. For example, secondary data might be researched visitor numbers (tourism) or rainfall data/river flows (rivers). Many centres used brief tables or encouraged their candidates to annotate one or more photograph to provide risk assessments, and similar annotated photographs were frequently used to show individual students collecting data. The GIS requirement was often met in criterion a. Centres are asked to note that well annotated photographs, maps and field sketches used in any section of the Controlled assessment contribute to criterion c, data presentation, and should be marked accordingly.

Criterion C- Methods of Presenting Data

The marking criteria for this section of the Controlled Assessment are unchanged.

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, graphs located onto a base map or photograph to show spatial distributions, a well-constructed kite diagram or cross sections drawn to scale. To obtain the highest marking level candidates should produce at least two different sophisticated methods. (Note this number

has been reduced since 2013 in response to the implementation of the word limit). Data presentation techniques can be used in any section of the controlled assessment and centres are encouraged to credit these.

A small number of centres continue to mark a basic 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 considered sophisticated.

There was a marked increase this year in all the candidates from a centre using identical data presentation techniques, in some cases the graphs were identical for every candidate. Centres are requested to ensure that each candidate produces their own data presentation techniques, and encourage candidates to be individual and creative.

Criterion D – Analysis and conclusions

The marking criteria for this section of the Controlled Assessment are unchanged. This section of the controlled assessment must be completed under a high level of control.

As in the past, a number of different approaches were used for this section of the controlled assessment. There was a marked increase in the use of tables this year, no doubt a response to the word limit. Some candidates found it helpful to incorporate the data presentation and the analysis i.e. including analytical comments directly beneath a graph or diagram. There were some excellent succinct sections in which the candidates made supported comments that explained rather than just described the data. The following example indicates the type of comments which might be used depending on the task title;

' the car park which was most used was Rayrigg with 78% of the spaces taken. This is the car park nearest to the centre of Bowness, and people tend to park closer to the attractions as then they do not have to walk as far. However, the car park generates significant amounts of noise and air pollution, and therefore has a marked negative effect on the environmental quality of the local area. It is also visually unattractive as it has a tarmac surface, again reducing the environmental quality of this part of the town. It would be fair to conclude that the extensive car parking has a negative rather than positive impact, and tourism appears to be lowering the environmental quality of the immediate area during the summer.'

Conclusions followed a similar pattern i.e. were drawn after each data set, included in tables or were presented as a separate section. The better conclusions tended to be those which analysed each subsidiary question and then drew everything into an overall analysis/conclusion. The candidates who were attempting to answer two or three sub-questions found this much more achievable than those faced with a large number of sub-questions.

Criterion E – Evaluation

The marking criteria for this section of the Controlled Assessment are unchanged. This section of the controlled assessment must be completed under a high level of control.

There was a marked improvement in many of the evaluations this year, although centres still tend to mark this section leniently. Nearly all the candidates gave some evaluation of their data collection, and many also evaluated the data presentation and the over-all study by providing comments about the validity of the conclusions. A number of centres used tables for the evaluation in an attempt to reduce the word count.

This section 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.

Criterion F – Planning and Organisation

The marking criteria has the following added to the top mark band. Students must be within the word limit to achieve this level.

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.

A number of centres awarded full marks for this criterion even though the work was clearly in excess of the word limit.

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.

Please use Edexcel's free Ask the Expert Service if you have any particular queries; also the Edexcel Geography website and Communities provide support for planning and undertaking the controlled assessment.

Grade Boundaries

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

