

Examiners' Report

June 2025

GCSE Geography A 1GA0 03

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Introduction

This was the seventh series of the Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) Geography A specification. This Examiner's Report is intended to provide an insight into the performance on Paper 3 - Geographical Investigations: Fieldwork and UK Challenges - in particular, analysing the majority of questions in terms of what went well and where common mistakes and underperformance was evident.

This paper consists of three sections. Of the 64 marks, up to 4 marks are awarded for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology. The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, and 8-mark extended writing questions. The command words which are used in this paper are defined on page 43 of the specification. Each question is mapped to one or more of the Assessment Objectives (AOs).

In Section A: Physical Environments, candidates are required to answer either Question 1 (River Environments) or Question 2 (Coastal Environments), depending on their chosen fieldwork investigation.

This section is awarded a total of 18 marks.

In Section B: Human Environments, candidates are required to answer either Question 3 (Urban Environments) or Question 4 (Rural Environments), depending on their chosen fieldwork investigation. This section is awarded a total of 18 marks.

In Section C: UK Challenges, candidates are required to answer all questions, with four marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar on Question 5(d), giving a total mark tariff of 28 for this section.

Question 1(b)

In this unfamiliar fieldwork question, candidates were asked to name the correct unit of measurement for river velocity. A large proportion of candidates found this question challenging and didn't write CUMECs as the proper unit of measurement. Many examiners found candidates writing metres per second (m/s) as their suggested unit of measurement. Candidates must understand the units of measurement involved when collecting fieldwork data for both unfamiliar and familiar contexts.

Question 1(c)i

This pie chart question required candidates to plot the correct lines to form the segments for the given river data. The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly and scored 2 marks for the plotting of the pie chart. Overall, examiners noted that there were fewer blank responses in this marking series, which is a positive development.

- (c) The students produced pie charts to show the percentage of different pebble shapes along a river from source to mouth.

Study Figure 1 below.

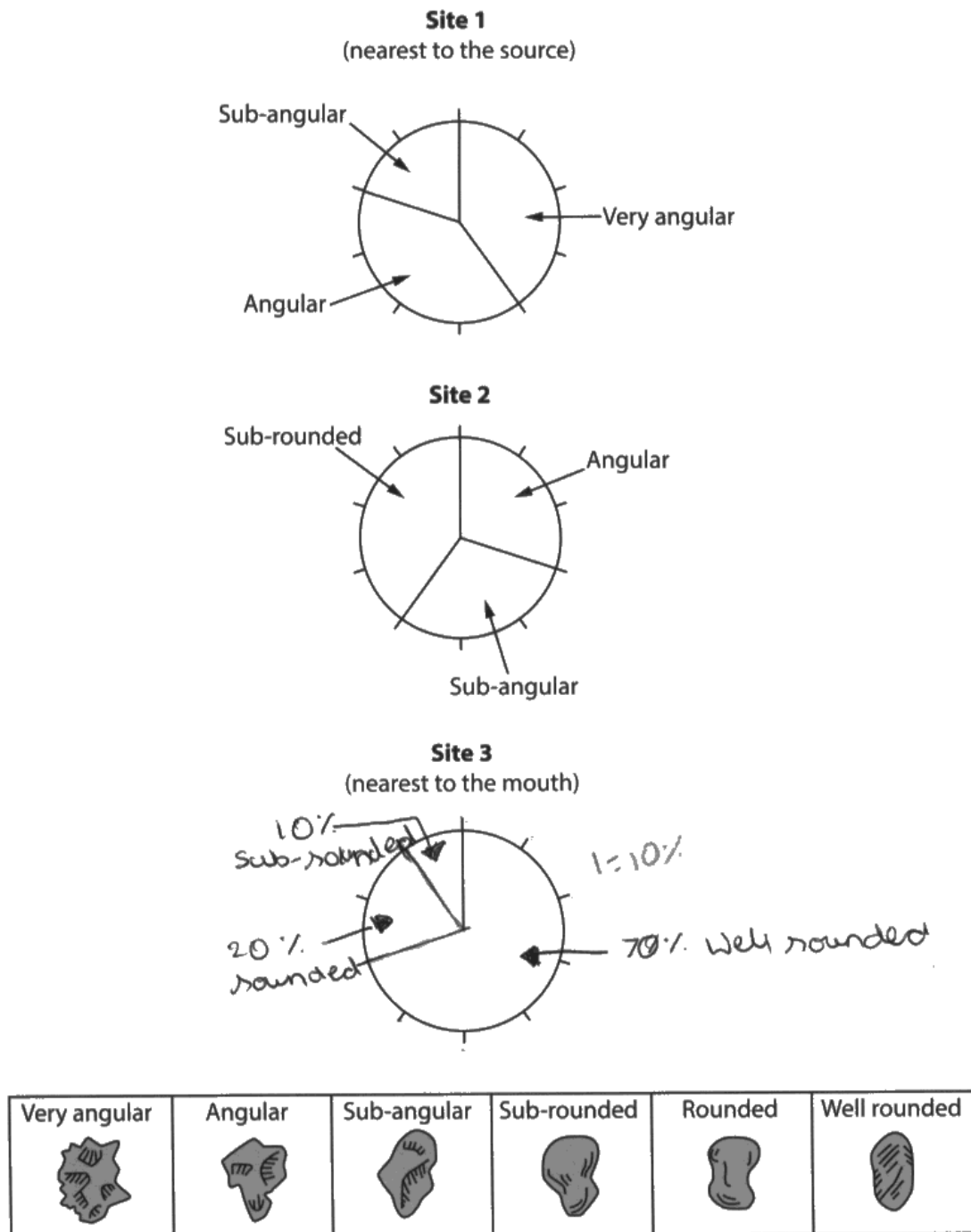


Figure 1

Pie charts to show pebble shapes at three sites along the river, from source to mouth

(i) Complete the pie chart for **Site 3** by plotting the data below.

(2)

Pebble shape	Percentage
1. Sub-rounded	10%
2. Rounded	20%
3. Well rounded	70%



This response scores 2 marks. The candidate has correctly plotted the points using the data provided to complete the pie chart.

Question 1(c)ii

For this 2-mark suggest question, candidates were asked to provide one conclusion that the students could make about the changes in pebble shape shown in Figure 1. Examiners were looking for candidates to give the WHAT and WHY, what would be a suitable conclusion, and why this would be the case. Most candidates were able to provide a valid conclusion, 'the pebble shape becomes more rounded', and develop this to give a reason, such as 'erosion has occurred'. When candidates didn't score the second mark, it was because they missed the development point.

- (ii) Suggest **one** conclusion the students could make about the changes in pebble shape shown on Figure 1.

(2)

The further away from the source, the more rounded the pebbles are.



This response scored 1 mark. The candidate has provided a conclusion about the change in pebble shape by identifying the pebbles become rounder. However, the candidate needs to provide a development point for the second mark.



For this type of question, candidates would benefit from being reminded that for 2 marks they must develop their initial point.

- (ii) Suggest **one** conclusion the students could make about the changes in pebble shape shown on Figure 1.

(2)

Figure 1 shows that
As you go down the river from source to mouth,
the pebble shape goes from angular to rounded due
to the characteristics of the river changing, eroding
the rock



Another example of a 2 mark answer.

Question 1(d)i

In this 2-mark describe question, candidates were asked to describe one fieldwork method that the students could have used to measure river width. Examiners noted that the vast majority of candidates were able to provide a suitable description of measuring river width, such as using a 'tape measure' and placing it from one 'bank to bank' for the development mark. When candidates didn't score the second mark, it was usually because there was no clear development point about how the method would be conducted.

(d) (i) Describe **one** fieldwork method that could have been used by the students to measure river width.

(2)

Tape measure. They could have used a tape measure to measure the width and measured from one side of the river to the other



This response scores 2 marks. The candidate has identified a suitable item of equipment to measure the river width and developed their point to say how this would be conducted.

Question 1(d)ii

For this 2-mark suggest question, an unfamiliar fieldwork question, candidates were required to say one way the method of measuring the river width might not have been accurate. Examiners noted that a large proportion of candidates identified issues with the tape measure, either because it was not tight enough across the river or because it could become caught in the river's flow. This enabled candidates to achieve the first mark. However, not all candidates were able to provide a suitable development point to reach the second mark. In some cases, candidates said that this would lead to 'inaccurate data' and didn't suggest why this would be the case.

Question 1(e)

In this 8-mark familiar fieldwork question, candidates were required to evaluate the following statement about their own geographical investigation.

‘My fieldwork location and survey sites helped me to answer my enquiry question(s)’.

Whilst the mark scheme identifies the indicative content for this question, it is not an exhaustive list. Candidates were awarded marks for relevant understanding, interpretation, and skills that are not listed. Ultimately, when deciding on the final mark, examiners used the level descriptors to allocate a ‘best fit’ level to the response and then decided where, within the level, the response fell. The level descriptors are the same for all ‘evaluate’ questions, and across all the papers in both GCSE Geography specifications. It is, therefore, essential that centres and candidates become familiar with them and understand how they are applied in the context of the paper and the specific question being asked. In the case of these questions, the assessment objectives (AOs) which were being examined were AO3 (4 marks) and AO4 (4 marks).

To demonstrate evidence for AO4, candidates needed to provide information relating to their own fieldwork, which examiners reported was often about the survey sites visited for their river investigation. In a large proportion of responses, candidates were able to use ‘fieldwork colour’ to outline the context of the survey sites. It was reported that some of the best responses provided detailed information about the suitability of the survey sites and how their fieldwork location was within a travelling distance, allowing them to collect data effectively during a day. Examiners noted that when candidates didn’t achieve the higher marks in level 3, this was often due to their argument being imbalanced and lacking sufficient detail on how the fieldwork location and survey sites impacted their answer to the enquiry question(s). In some cases, examiners noted that candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about their data collection methods and the limitations they encountered.

Question 2(b)

In this unfamiliar fieldwork question, candidates were asked to name the correct unit of measurement for beach gradient. The vast majority of candidates answered this correctly, identifying degrees as the unit of measurement.

Question 2(c)i

This pie chart question required candidates to plot the correct lines to form the segments for the given beach data. The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly and scored 2 marks for the plotting of the pie chart. Overall, examiners noted that there were fewer blank responses in this marking series, which is a positive development.

- (c) The students produced pie charts to show the percentage of different pebble shapes along a beach from north to south.

Study Figure 2 below.

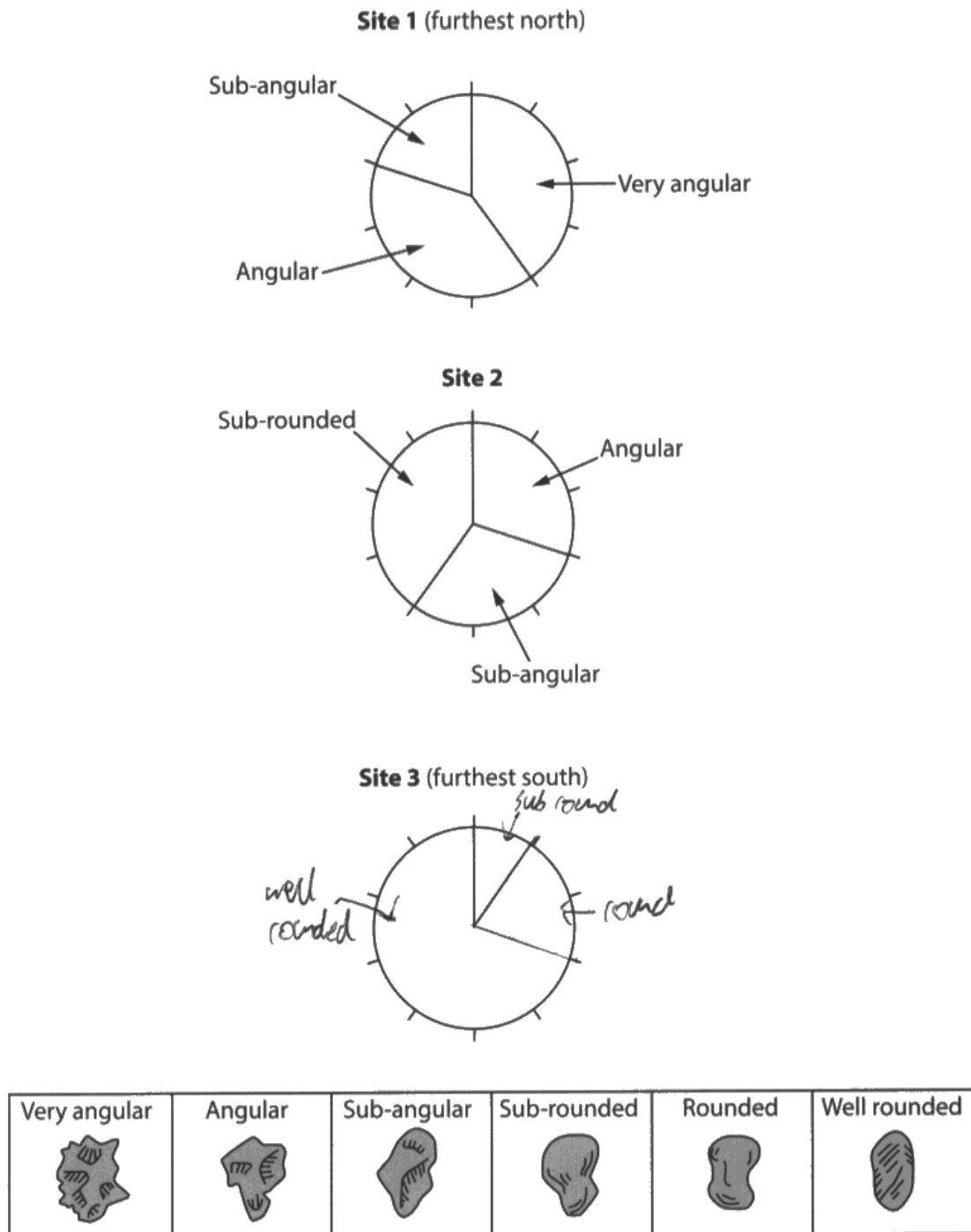


Figure 2

Pie charts to show pebble shapes at three sites along the beach, from north to south

(i) Complete the pie chart for **Site 3** by plotting the data below.

(2)

Pebble shape	Percentage
1. Sub-rounded	10%
2. Rounded	20%
3. Well rounded	70%



This response scores 2 marks. The candidate has correctly plotted the points from the data provided to complete the pie chart.

Question 2(c)ii

For this 2-mark suggest question, candidates were asked to provide one conclusion that the students could make about the changes in pebble shape shown in Figure 2. Examiners were looking for candidates to give the WHAT and WHY, what would be a suitable conclusion, and why this would be the case. Most candidates were able to provide a valid conclusion, 'the pebble shape becomes more rounded', and develop this to give a reason, such as 'erosion has occurred'. When candidates didn't score the second mark, it was because they missed the development point.

- (ii) Suggest **one** conclusion the students could make about the changes in pebble shape shown in Figure 2.

(2)

The further south you get, the more erosion happens as more pebbles are well rounded



This response scores 1 mark. The candidate has indicated the change in pebble shape and developed this with a link to erosion for the development mark.

Question 2(d)i

In this 2-mark describe question, candidates were asked to describe one fieldwork method that the students could have used to measure beach width. Examiners noted that the vast majority of candidates were able to provide a suitable description of measuring beach width, such as using a 'tape measure'. When candidates didn't score the second mark, it was usually because there was no clear development point about how the method would be conducted. In some cases, examiners noted that candidates had misread the question and described how the students could have collected data for the beach gradient. Candidates must read the question carefully and identify the key words to provide a suitable response that is directly linked to the question asked.

Question 2(d)ii

For this 2-mark suggest, an unfamiliar fieldwork question, candidates were required to say one way the method of measuring the beach width might not have been accurate. Examiners noted that a large proportion of candidates identified issues with the tape measure, either because it was not tight enough or because it could become caught in the wind. This enabled candidates to achieve the first mark. However, not all candidates were able to provide a suitable development point to reach the second mark. In some cases, candidates said that this would lead to 'inaccurate data' and didn't suggest why this would be the case.

Question 2(e)

In this 8-mark familiar fieldwork question, candidates were required to evaluate the following statement about their geographical investigation.

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Whilst the mark scheme identifies the indicative content for this question, it is not an exhaustive list. Candidates were awarded marks for relevant understanding, interpretation, and skills that are not listed. Ultimately, when deciding on the final mark, examiners used the level descriptors to allocate a ‘best fit’ level to the response and then decided where, within the level, the response fell. The level descriptors are the same for all ‘evaluate’ questions, and across all the papers in both GCSE Geography specifications. It is, therefore, essential that centres and candidates become familiar with them and understand how they are applied in the context of the paper and the specific question being asked. In the case of these questions, the assessment objectives (AOs) which were being examined were AO3 (4 marks) and AO4 (4 marks).

To demonstrate evidence for AO4, candidates needed to provide information relating to their own fieldwork, which examiners reported was often about the survey sites visited for their river investigation. In a large proportion of responses, candidates were able to use ‘fieldwork colour’ to outline the context of the survey sites. It was reported that some of the best responses provided detailed information about the suitability of the survey sites and how their fieldwork location was within a travelling distance, allowing them to collect data effectively during a day. Examiners noted that when candidates didn’t achieve the higher marks in level 3, this was often due to their argument being imbalanced and lacking sufficient detail on how the fieldwork location and survey sites impacted their answer to the enquiry question(s). In some cases, examiners noted that candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about their data collection methods and the limitations they encountered.

Question 3(a)i

In this familiar fieldwork question, candidates were asked to state one risk they had considered before collecting their fieldwork data. Most candidates were able to state a suitable risk, which examiners stated was frequently 'getting lost' or 'cars'.

Question 3(a)ii

In this second part familiar question, candidates were asked to describe one way they had attempted to reduce the risk stated in question 3(a)(i). Most candidates were able to provide a suitable description for how they would reduce the risk and develop this for the second mark. Linking to risks of 'getting lost' and 'cars', most candidates responded with staying in groups as directed by their teacher or using pedestrian crossings and looking before crossing roads.

Question 3(b)

For this 'explain' 2-mark question, candidates were asked to give one limitation of a fieldwork method to record environmental quality. In a large number of responses read by examiners, it was noted that candidates achieved the first mark by referencing issues with 'subjectivity' or 'using their judgements' when conducting an EQS survey. When candidates did reach the second mark, this was from a development point linked to subjectivity and this was a limitation of the fieldwork method. Candidates were required not just to say it would make their data 'inaccurate' but explain why subjectivity was a limitation. Some candidates developed their point, referencing that it would impact the representativeness of the data collected.

Question 3(c)

The specification outlines that candidates should use at least two different secondary sources of data, including Census data, as indicated on page 29 of the specification. This question required candidates to explain how using Census data supported their investigation. Examiners noted a range of responses, with a proportion of the cohort demonstrating limited knowledge of Census data. In some cases, candidates wrote about other types of secondary data they had used to support their investigation. Candidates must have a basic understanding of Census data when conducting their fieldwork.

Question 3(d)

In this 'explain' question, candidates were asked to provide one conclusion they made about land use in their chosen urban area. The vast majority of candidates were able to offer a conclusion and develop this for 2 marks. It was the final double development point that some candidates found more challenging to achieve the 3rd mark. In this type of question, as in the previous series, candidates should develop an understanding of how to build their points using phrases such as 'this effectively means that,' 'this leads to,' 'this results in,' and 'this contributes towards.'

Question 3(e)

In the second of the 8-mark extended fieldwork question, candidates were required to use their knowledge and understanding obtained from their urban fieldwork investigation to evaluate the following statement.

‘The reduction in vehicles allowed into the city centre is a positive change for people and the environment.’

This style of question, as per the previous series, was attempted well, and most of the responses seen by examiners used the resources to achieve marks in Level 2 of the mark scheme. Where examiners noted strong performance, candidates effectively utilised the resources to formulate a balanced argument for and against reducing vehicles in the city centre, making explicit judgements on why this would be beneficial for people and the environment. In cases where candidates didn’t score well, it was usually because they failed to utilise the provided resource data and instead wrote their opinions based on their knowledge.

(e) Study Figure 3 in the Resource Booklet.

A group of students were investigating the quality of the environment in an urban area. Evaluate the following statement.

'The reduction in vehicles allowed into the city centre is a positive change for people and the environment.'

You **must** use evidence from Figure 3 in your answer.

(8)

I agree with the statement as reducing the quantity of vehicles that are allowed into the city centre will help impact people positively. For example with less cars inside the city centre there will be no traffic congestion this is beneficial to the area as the emissions of ~~fuel~~ burned fuel into the air would decrease by very large amounts. Causing the environment to stay healthy for a longer period of time.

Although ~~leaving cars outside~~ the majority of cars outside would be a good thing for the city environmentally there ^{has} ~~would~~ been a large amount of negatives that have effected people socially. For example in figure 3 someone states that now due to the new rule they have to walk in to the city centre and it increases their chances of being late and the time it takes to get to work. 70% of people aged 18-30 believe that the change was not positive as they are the ones who have ~~to~~ suffer majority as this ~~is~~ slows down the process of entering and leaving the city centre.

~~非~~ In conclusion I believe that the decrease in cars allowed through the city centre is a overall positive change as there is now less busy roads, lower chances of car accidents a lower rate of carbon emissions and most importantly the area now feels safe for people who live near the area.



This response scores 5 marks. This is a good example of a level 2 response with evidence of both AO3 and AO4. The candidate has extracted evidence from the resources to support the points made about the benefit of reducing the number of vehicles in the city centre. However, for the candidate to achieve the higher marks we would expect the points to be developed to explain why the reduction in vehicles is a positive or negative for people and the environment.

Question 4(a)i

In this familiar fieldwork question, candidates were asked to state one risk they had considered before collecting their fieldwork data. Most candidates were able to state a suitable risk, which examiners stated was frequently 'getting lost' or 'cars'.

4 (a) You have studied a rural settlement as part of your own fieldwork.

(i) State **one** risk you considered before collecting your fieldwork data.

(1)

..... *getting lost*



This response scored 1 mark. The candidate has stated a suitable risk they considered before collecting fieldwork data.

Question 4(a)ii

In this second part familiar question, candidates were asked to describe one way they had attempted to reduce the risk stated in question 4(a)(i). Most candidates were able to provide a suitable description for how they would reduce the risk and develop this for the second mark. Linking to risks of 'getting lost' and 'cars', most candidates responded with staying in groups as directed by their teacher or using pedestrian crossings and looking before crossing roads.

(ii) Describe **one** way you attempted to reduce this risk.

(2)

Everyone wore appropriate footwear to decrease the slipping risk (e.g. wellies).



This response scores 2 marks. The candidate has identified an example of how they reduced the risk through 'appropriate footwear' for the first mark and developed this 'decrease the slipping risk' for the second mark.

Question 4(b)

For this 'explain' 2-mark question, candidates were asked to give one limitation of a fieldwork method to record environmental quality. In a large number of responses read by examiners, it was noted that candidates achieved the first mark by referencing issues with 'subjectivity' or 'using their judgements' when conducting an EQS survey. When candidates reached the second mark, it was due to a development point linked to subjectivity, which was a limitation of the fieldwork method. Candidates were required not just to say it would make their data 'inaccurate' but explain why subjectivity was a limitation. Some candidates developed their point, referencing that it would impact the representativeness of the data collected.

Question 4(c)

The specification outlines that candidates should use at least two different secondary sources of data, including Census data, as indicated on page 29 of the specification. This question required candidates to explain how using Census data supported their investigation. Examiners noted a range of responses, with a proportion of the cohort demonstrating limited knowledge of Census data. In some cases, candidates wrote about other types of secondary data they had used to support their investigation. Candidates must have a basic understanding of Census data when conducting their fieldwork.

Question 4(d)

In this 'explain' question, candidates were asked to provide one conclusion they made about land use in their chosen urban area. The vast majority of candidates were able to offer a conclusion and develop this for 2 marks. It was the final double development point that some candidates found more challenging to achieve the 3rd mark. In this type of question, as in the previous series, candidates should develop an understanding of how to build their points using phrases such as 'this effectively means that,' 'this leads to,' 'this results in,' and 'this contributes towards.'

(d) Explain **one** conclusion that you made about the flows of people within your rural settlement. ^{movement}
Traffic count

(3)

one conclusion that we made about flows of people within Brookerhurst was that most people ^{who were entering} were ~~from~~ tourist due to campervans entering the town and not leaving that day, this is also solidified due to the campsite in Brookerhurst which would attract campervans to stay in the town.



This response scored 3 marks. The candidate has provided a conclusion about the flows of people for their rural investigation were predominantly 'tourists' and double developed this point to explain why they believe this happened linked to an increase in campervans attracted to the campsite.

Question 4(e)

In the second of the 8-mark extended fieldwork question, candidates were required to use their knowledge and understanding obtained from their urban fieldwork investigation to evaluate the following statement.

‘The new farm shop in the village is a positive change for people and the environment.’

This style of question, as per the previous series, was attempted well, and most of the responses seen by examiners used the resources to achieve marks in Level 2 of the mark scheme. Where examiners noted strong performance, candidates effectively utilised the resources to formulate a balanced argument for and against reducing the new farm shop, making explicit judgements on why this would be beneficial for people and the environment. In cases where candidates didn’t score well, it was usually because they failed to utilise the provided resource data and instead wrote their opinions based on their knowledge.

Question 5(a)ii

In this 2-mark describe question, candidates were asked to identify the trend in UK GHG emissions from 1990 to 2022 using data in their answer. Examiners reported that the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the decreasing pattern for 1 mark and then successfully extract data to support this trend for the development mark.

(ii) Describe the trend in UK GHG emissions from 1990 to 2022.

You **must** use data in your answer.

(2)

The trend in UK GHG emissions from 1990 to 2022 decreased over the years we see this from the data in square 5a



This response scores 1 mark. The candidate has identified the decreasing trend for the first mark but there is no evidence of data to support the point for the development mark.

(ii) Describe the trend in UK GHG emissions from 1990 to 2022.

You **must** use data in your answer.

(2)

The total GHG emissions have decreased significantly from 800 million tonnes in 1990 to 420 million tonnes in 2020.



This response scores 2 marks. The candidate has identified the decreasing trend for the first mark and then used accurate data to support this point for the development mark.

Question 5(b)

For this 4-mark 'explain' question, candidates were asked to give two benefits of regenerating brownfield sites. Most candidates could provide two benefits of regenerating brownfield sites, which examiners cited were commonly linked to 'utilities already being installed' and 'improving the aesthetics of the local area'. Some candidates found it more challenging to articulate why their point was beneficial.

(b) Define the term **sustainability**.

(1)

Sustainability is the demand for things without affecting future generations.



This response scores 1 mark. The candidate has provided a suitable definition of sustainability.

Question 5(d)

For this 4-mark 'explain' question, candidates were asked to give two benefits of regenerating brownfield sites. Most candidates could provide two benefits of regenerating brownfield sites, which examiners cited were commonly linked to 'utilities already being installed' and 'improving the aesthetics of the local area'. Some candidates found it more challenging to articulate why their point was beneficial.

- (d) The increasing UK population has led to a debate about the use of brownfield and greenfield sites.

Explain **two** benefits of regenerating brownfield sites.

(4)

1. It is easy to get planning permission.
The government are encouraging using brownfield areas as it recycles old land and prevents urban sprawl so they do not hesitate to give permission to build on them.
2. Infrastructure is already there such as gas and electricity. This means it is cheaper as this infrastructure does not need installing and therefore the project can be built faster.



This response scored 4 marks. The candidate has identified two benefits of regenerating brownfield sites with both benefits developed to say why they are a benefit.



In this 4-mark explain question, candidates should consider the WHAT and WHY to achieve full marks. What is a benefit of regenerating brownfield sites? Why is this a benefit of regenerating brownfield sites? Candidates should be encouraged to use explain phrases such as 'this means that', 'this is a benefit because'.

Question 5(e)

In this 3-mark 'explain' question, candidates were required to give one reason why building on a greenfield site was beneficial. Most candidates were able to provide a benefit and develop this to achieve 2 marks. However, examiners noted that some candidates provided a benefit linked to sites being 'cheaper', but this was in isolation with limited development as to why building on the sites might have lower initial costs.

Question 5(f)

In this 12-mark extended writing question, candidates were asked to discuss the following statement.

'The development of sustainable transport is the best option to improve environmental sustainability in the UK.'

Building on the previous series, candidate responses continued to demonstrate the improvements seen in how they tackle the range of resources provided. Examiners reported that the vast majority of candidates used several resources in their argument to support the points made. This provided sufficient evidence for AO4. Sustainable transport was often examined and discussed in detail, with further knowledge of schemes in their local areas or case studies; however, for some, this focus failed to consider alternative options to improve the environmental sustainability of heating and the UK's energy mix, resulting in a one-sided argument. For candidates to achieve higher marks in this question, they must demonstrate evidence of wider geographical knowledge for AO2.

The question also had 4 marks allocated for the assessment of spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology. Most candidates achieved either 2 or 3 marks.

Candidates were not awarded any of these marks if they did not answer the question or their response did not achieve any marks for the main content being assessed. Also, where a response was limited to less than half a page, this provided limited evidence for 'a good range of specialist terms as appropriate'.

Paper Summary

Based on the performance of candidates for this series, centres are offered the following advice:

- Ensure that candidates have a clear understanding of Census data and their other secondary source of data as outlined by the specification on pages 28 and 29. Candidates should have knowledge of and understand how their secondary data supported / contributed towards their investigation.
- In the familiar fieldwork questions, candidates should provide 'fieldwork colour' providing context for the investigations they conducted linked to the question asked.
- Candidates would benefit from additional practice with graph questions and where questions require data to support their answer to ensure that all marks available are accessed. When candidates are asked to provide data to support their response this could be through extracting data and indicating change over time based on the resource, or manipulating data to indicate the change over a period of time.
- For the 12-mark discuss question, candidates must demonstrate evidence of their wider geographical knowledge for AO2 from their GCSE studies. It would benefit candidates to practise how to provide this within their responses so that they provide a balanced response to the statement asked.

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

