

## Edexcel B GCSE Geography:

### Fieldwork ideas and contexts for tasks for 2014 submission

This document provides a list of possible fieldwork and research ideas for the Edexcel B GCSE 2013-2014 tasks. These are intended as possible examples only – they do not form a ‘must do’ list, nor do they represent approved titles/fieldwork. Centres are free to ‘pick and mix’ from the list and to modify it as they see fit. Some ideas may work well in some contexts/locations; in other cases they may be impractical, for instance due to the size of the cohort.

Two or three of the questions/statements/ideas provided may be sufficient in terms of range and depth to address all the particular elements of the task. Please note that if the question states ‘landforms and processes’, for example, then both of these components must be studied at least in part, although the fieldwork may focus much more on one aspect than the other.

Students should be encouraged to think up their own ideas, supported by teachers, as part of the initial Task Contextualisation and Data Decisions for which there is a suggested time allocation of 3 hours.

*Please note that, as a result of specification change in the summer of 2012, there have been changes to both the format of the mark scheme criteria and the style of controlled assessment tasks. There is also a penalty for exceeding the new 2000-word limit. Please refer to the new specification for more details, especially pages 35-56.*

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**Coasts Task 1:** Investigate how two stretches of coastline can be very different in terms of their landforms.

*Comment:*

This particular investigation could be carried out at two locations, along one long(ish) region of coast or, perhaps more likely, at two closer contrasting stretches. Candidates should be encouraged to do early research on the variety of landforms that are found at their coastal location. Examples of landforms are provided in the specification (page 16) but centres can choose others if appropriate to their location. It makes sense to try and narrow the number of variables considered but geology (rock type, joints, faults) and orientation of coast will be important. Marine processes may also form part of the initial discussion. In some areas the physical geography of landforms may be overshadowed by management/human intervention - this may mean that landforms are the result of a number of more complex interactions.

'Different' may well refer to the morphology of the features (scale, profile, angularity etc.) as well as features that are actually different, that is, those found on concordant and discordant coastlines.

It may also be interesting to research some information about prevailing winds etc. as this will have an influence on processes and therefore landform formation.

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- An assessment of contrasting beach/shingle ridge profiles in two contrasting areas/locations.
- Exploring the link between sediment morphology (shape and size) and indicators of wave strength by looking at sediment characteristics in a beach/shingle ridge cross-section.
- A study of the importance of geology in controlling concordant and discordant stretches of coast and associated features/landforms. Is geology the main control?
- A study of wave frequency/strength and the resulting types of landforms, in two different areas/stretchers.
- To what extent does coastal orientation and geology influence landforms at two locations?
- How important is geology in determining cliff height, shape, profile and gradient?
- How does sediment transportation/transfer vary at two different locations and what is the influence on features and landforms?
- Using GIS/documentary evidence to determine historic rates of coastal erosion/deposition and linked landform change. A comparison of two different locations.
- An exploration of the possible relationship between beach gradient and wave type/strength.



**Coasts Task 2:** Investigate how different methods of coastal management can create both benefits and conflicts.

*Comment:*

Coastal management is a topical and sometimes controversial area of physical geography. Management strategies are normally expensive and made with compromises - see page 16 in the specification. Although there is a spectrum of hard to soft approaches, often hard engineering is favoured combined with various realignment options. Options frequently create challenges for different users and stakeholders - hence the idea of 'benefits' and 'conflicts' (but for whom?). This might possibly be explored as part of the Task Contextualisation, making links to a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), for instance. Fieldwork needs to be linked to assessing the type, effectiveness and quality of different defences, together with research into the views of different people/groups (e.g. local planners, local residents, visitors etc.). Some defences may be considered ineffective where they are not highly visible (hard vs. soft engineering?).

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- A study of contrasting hard engineering and sustainable coastal management approaches at two different reaches/stretches of coast.
- Who benefits from what? Attitudes towards different/contrasting coastal management schemes of different users (visitors, local residents etc.).
- Cost-benefit matrix to allow the analysis of contrasting coastal management schemes.
- How and why might geology influence the choice of coastal management in a particular area?
- An assessment of land use, erosion risk and degree of protection for contrasting types of coastline.
- Comparing relative land values against degree of protection in two different areas.
- An examination (interviews?) of the various stakeholders involved in coastal management. What are their particular views on the past, present and future?
- How has the rate of coastal erosion changed in a particular area? What factors influence this?
- A semi-quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of different approaches to coastal management.
- Photo-/video-based evidence showing coasts most at risk from erosion. What are the possible solutions?
- Putting forward some ideas for an SMP for a particular area (and possibly a second area).



**Rivers Task 1:** Investigate whether width, depth and velocity always increase downstream.

*Comment:*

This task can be easily linked to a model, such as the Bradshaw Model, to help assist in an understanding of changes along the course of a river. Students should, however, be selective in terms of the range of variables considered *in their write-up* and make sure that they remain 'on task', although other variables and features might well be looked at as part of the fieldwork. Examination of a greater number of characteristics in the field would clearly help with the delivery of knowledge and understanding of this topic

The study will most probably be a relatively straightforward measurement of changes in stream characteristics with distance from source. A greater number of sites (e.g. eight to ten) will make the results easier to link to a model, thereby increasing the validity of the outcome. An alternative (more sophisticated) approach is to look at the Schumm Model from which the Bradshaw Model is adapted. Alternatively, any other relevant theory can be used to make the task more accessible, as long as it links together the variables outlined.

A key focus must be the idea of 'always increase' and therefore it may be worth looking in particular at the extent to which the variables increase in a similar way along a stream. The assumption or models may only work well at a catchment-based scale. Often fieldwork involves looking at a limited number of sites over a relatively small area - this has an impact on the results and the model's validity.

Some students may also wish to reflect upon the importance of other factors (which may not have been directly measured) in controlling the hydraulic system. Local geology, for instance, can produce landforms which create disturbances in the pattern, such as knickpoints and small waterfalls.



**Rivers Task 2:** Investigate whether different methods of river management can offer longer-term solutions.

*Comment:*

In terms of river management, the specification (page 17) refers explicitly to hard engineering, sustainable and integrated approaches, so it would seem sensible that these form the core of any investigation. 'Different methods' could be interpreted as different types of hard engineering solutions, for instance, but perhaps more logically hard vs. soft engineering. This would allow further examination and assessment of the notion of 'longer term'. 'Solutions' could be considered from the point of view of different stakeholders, particularly in terms of aesthetic impacts and likely impacts downstream, for example for other towns and settlements.

Naturally, this type of enquiry will also be reliant on a high degree of research to accompany the fieldwork. See 2014 Edexcel B GCSE websites support Unit 4.doc, which provides suggestions for websites that could be used to support the work. Research may also involve looking at the characteristics of the catchment (relief, topography, drainage etc.), which would help inform the best solution in terms of flood management. There is also a good opportunity to support the work with GIS in terms of site selection and displaying data.

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- A visual impact survey (adapted environmental quality) of two different approaches to flood management, for example hard engineering vs. sustainable solutions.
- Creating a flood-risk map (based on land use) for different parts of a town.
- Using a GPS to plot the heights of land at risk.
- Creating a land-use map for an area, showing the proportions of different types of land use.
- Using GIS to explore catchment topography and past flood-risk maps (Environment Agency).
- An examination of the various stakeholders involved in flood management. What are the views on different approaches and their longevity?
- Which flood management solution(s) has the lowest environmental impact?
- An examination of how different flood schemes can have a variety of different impacts on people.
- Estimation of potential bankfull flood discharge in a particular area linked to managing the flood risk.
- Researching the flood regime of a river - how often do 'big' events occur and what is the best approach to management?



**Rural Task 1:** Investigate the problems facing areas such as National Parks, in managing their landscapes.

*Comment:*

An obvious area for fieldwork investigation would be to look at concentrations of tourism, either in towns or in the countryside. 'Honeypots' are frequently associated with having only negative effects. In fact, they are often designed to concentrate and focus tourism in one particular area, thereby reducing the impact on other more ecological sensitive and valuable locations. The 'problems' of honeypots are normally obvious - congestion, lack of car parking, unnatural landscape, noise, litter etc.

This task could also be interpreted through issues of rural unemployment and isolation, as well as second homes. These might well be legitimate topics to follow up if, for instance, a questionnaire was being used.

In the context of this study it might be a good idea, if possible, to contrast two areas, one that is a classic honeypot site, the other a more remote and ecologically important location but one that is still popular for visitors.

National Parks provide a good range of places to carry out studies, although other areas might include woodlands/amenity forests and Local and National Nature Reserves, as well as villages and small settlements that attract visitors. Note - the study area must have a rural context, although it could be a small town in a rural area.

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- An assessment of footpath erosion at two contrasting tourism hotspots/two areas within the same hotspot.
- Visitor profile surveys (age, catchment/sphere of influence, spend, visit duration, type of stay/accommodation) in different rural areas/honeypots.
- Views from different groups. Interviews to establish different opinions of the positive and negative impacts of visitors to an area(s).
- A study into the impacts of traffic/car-parking problems/solutions in contrasting tourism hotspots, in terms of landscape quality.
- Using different environmental quality surveys to assess recreational impact at visitor sites.
- A supporting desk study of a visitor hotspot/attraction in terms of employment and effects on the economy.
- A study of landscape quality in different natural areas, for example using the Abundant Common Frequent Occasional Rare (ACFOR) scale.
- Using a questionnaire survey to assess changes in attitudes towards visitors over time - views from different user groups.
- A cost-benefit analysis/model of visitor effects in two contrasting sites: honeypots and remote rural.



**Rural Task 2:** Investigate the success of development schemes in creating growth in rural economies.

*Comment:*

Growth can be taken as positive change and implies a scheme (perhaps involving local communities or stakeholders) that is trying to address some of the issues of rural areas. These may include: cost of homes and housing, lack of services and amenities, poor transport infrastructure/declining services, closure of services (post office, pubs etc.). The 'scheme' aspect could be in relation to social, economic or environmental improvements. There would need to be a clear focus so that the task remains manageable in terms of context and scale.

The task really implies a study of two or more strategies or schemes, mostly likely contrasting solutions in different areas. Ideally, one of the solutions should be more successful/effective than the other.

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- An examination of how two different rural areas/attractions/development schemes have succeeded in attracting new tourists.
- Why do people go there? An assessment of the 'pull' factors for a particular location or honeypot site.
- Mapping contrasting spheres of influence for different attractions/rural destinations.
- Interviews with different stakeholders involved in developing/promoting rural area(s). How successful have they been?
- Investigating a local transport scheme which is community driven.
- Do initiatives to improve rural areas offer benefits for all? Who are the 'winners' and 'losers' in terms of groups and stakeholders? An assessment of the short- and longer-term benefits of the scheme.
- How and why are different schemes needed to improve the prosperity of rural areas inside and outside the National Parks?
- Are visitor numbers and tourist spending a reliable indicator of the success of rural initiatives?
- Is there a real case for opening a disused railway line/station and how might it lead to growth in an area?
- A cost-benefit analysis of the traffic management options for a particular village.
- Two contrasting studies of farm diversification/valorisation of the countryside.



**Urban Task 1:** Investigate how the demands for good living spaces are being managed.

*Comment:*

This is a broad task and therefore the focus will need to be refined so that the 'living spaces' idea becomes manageable. This would be a good starting point for group discussion. Bear in mind that people live in both Central Business Districts (CBDs) and residential districts. Therefore, it seems reasonable that study areas could be drawn from a wide range of different urban contexts.

'Managed' in the context of this task also needs careful consideration. It could include a wide range of strategies and schemes - recycling, green spaces, tree planting, car sharing - in fact, anything that is aimed at reducing an urban area's eco-footprint/environmental impact. Alternatively, it might refer to some kind of renewal/regeneration/improvement to either shopping areas or housing.

Some centres may find it appropriate to compare different areas, that is, the good and the 'not so good', to provide more depth and context.

It would make sense to link any fieldwork areas to defined boundaries of Census output areas so that the geodemographic data can be easily linked and compared. This will help with the 'demands' aspect, that is, areas of overcrowding and high population density etc. Figures looking at migration of people into and out of cities may help.

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- A comparison of the success and management of two contrasting urban regeneration/rebranding projects.
- Mapping new living space in an urban area. Are the places selected the best for environmental and/or economic reasons?
- To what extent does income/deprivation affect the management of urban areas?
- An assessment of new 'green' transport strategies in a town as a part of managing urban development.
- A study of the differences in management and profile of two shopping areas.
- Video/photographic evidence to show how different living spaces are being managed.
- A comparison of two very different housing areas in terms of energy efficiency.
- Mapping the green spaces in two contrasting areas and considering patterns of usage.
- Mapping (GIS?) the ways in which local authorities are encouraging individuals to manage their eco-footprints.



**Urban Task 2:** Investigate why urban areas show differences in terms of their levels of deprivation/quality of living spaces.

*Comment:*

How living space is valued or perceived varies with the individual. It is possible to undertake this task by doing a selection of small-scale studies in an urban area.

The task has a clear spatial dimension requiring some initial research to determine different, manageable areas. Definitions/models could be used to help with the understanding of the task but they should not dominate the overall focus.

Note that the task also has an emphasis on 'differences'. This requires candidates to investigate the assumption that urban areas have extreme differences in quality of living and deprivation.

As in the previous task, it would be a good idea to define the boundaries of the sampling areas according to Census output areas so that geodemographic data can be easily compared with primary field data. This would be very important in the context of multiple deprivation data, for instance.

Below are some focuses/lines of enquiry that can be looked at in the context of this task.

- Assessment of retail quality (range, diversity, types etc.).
- General environmental condition of the area (various environmental quality aspects).
- Resident versus visitor perceptions of parts of an urban area in terms of deprivation/quality.
- Aesthetic quality of the built environment, for example architecture and design aspects.
- Housing quality - size, upkeep etc.
- Quality of routeways and footpaths, including width and possibly accessibility for users who are partially sighted or in wheelchairs.
- Use of trees, plants, shrubbery/greenery to improve the visual and environmental quality of an area.
- Transport ease/variety/quality/frequency.



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