

# Examiners' Report Summer 2010

GCE

## New GCSE 5GB04 Geography Coursework

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Summer 2010

Publications Code UG023976

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## Researching Geography - Principal Examiner's Report Summer 2010

### Transition from coursework to controlled assessment

May 2010 has witnessed the first cycle of moderation for the new controlled assessments in GCSE Geography. Many Centres were apprehensive about how to manage the transition between coursework to controlled assessment, in particular how they could deal with the challenge of levels of control. You will find a set of FAQs at the end of this report (Appendix 1) which tries to clarify many of these areas of concern.

The background to change is worth noting at this point. The (late) QCDA was required to make the legacy coursework both fairer and more manageable and so CA was the result. The GCSE B Geography team also saw the introduction of CA as an opportunity for removing some of the problems associated with coursework, eg too much writing/overlong work, lack of focus and clarity in some pieces of work, a 'top-down' managed experience, unequal opportunity, inflexible mark scheme etc.

On reflection many of the centres how have completed CA in 2010, whilst describing it as challenging, also found it on the whole a better experience for both themselves and the candidates. Informal feedback from some Centres has revealed the following **benefits**:

- Shorter pieces of work that are more tightly focused. They are quicker and easier to mark and more manageable from a candidate's perspective.
- A more succinct style has led, in some instances, to higher quality writing and more attention to detail.
- Doing the work over a more defined period of time (both low and high control) has resulted in students tending to work harder and more productively in those time slots when they are completing the CA. One Centre remarked "*it hasn't dragged on and on like the coursework used to*".
- The introduction of GIS and visualisation has led to some innovative ways of working-with and displaying data. This has hopefully made the CA experience more enjoyable and relevant to students.
- The planning phase at the beginning of the process has allowed candidates to research more fully what is being investigated (eg find out about models, places etc) and to take more responsibility for developing recording sheets, methodologies, site selection, etc.

#### Areas of concern raised by the moderating team:

In general, administration was good, but Centres are reminded of the following points:

##### Administration:

- Moderators found some errors in arithmetic in some work. It is essential that work is correctly added-up and those marks are accurately transferred to the OPTEMS.
- Candidates should firmly attach their work together (no plastic wallets or A4 folders/wallets please) and complete the correct cover sheet indicating: specification, candidate and centre names and numbers, data of exam cycle and title. As with previous coursework, both the teacher and candidate must sign the coversheet - always.
- The OPTEMS must also be signed by teacher and marks should be checked to avoid mistakes - it is the Centre's responsibility to correct any mistakes found by the moderator. Please write firmly on the OPTEMS as it is often difficult to read on the carbon copy.

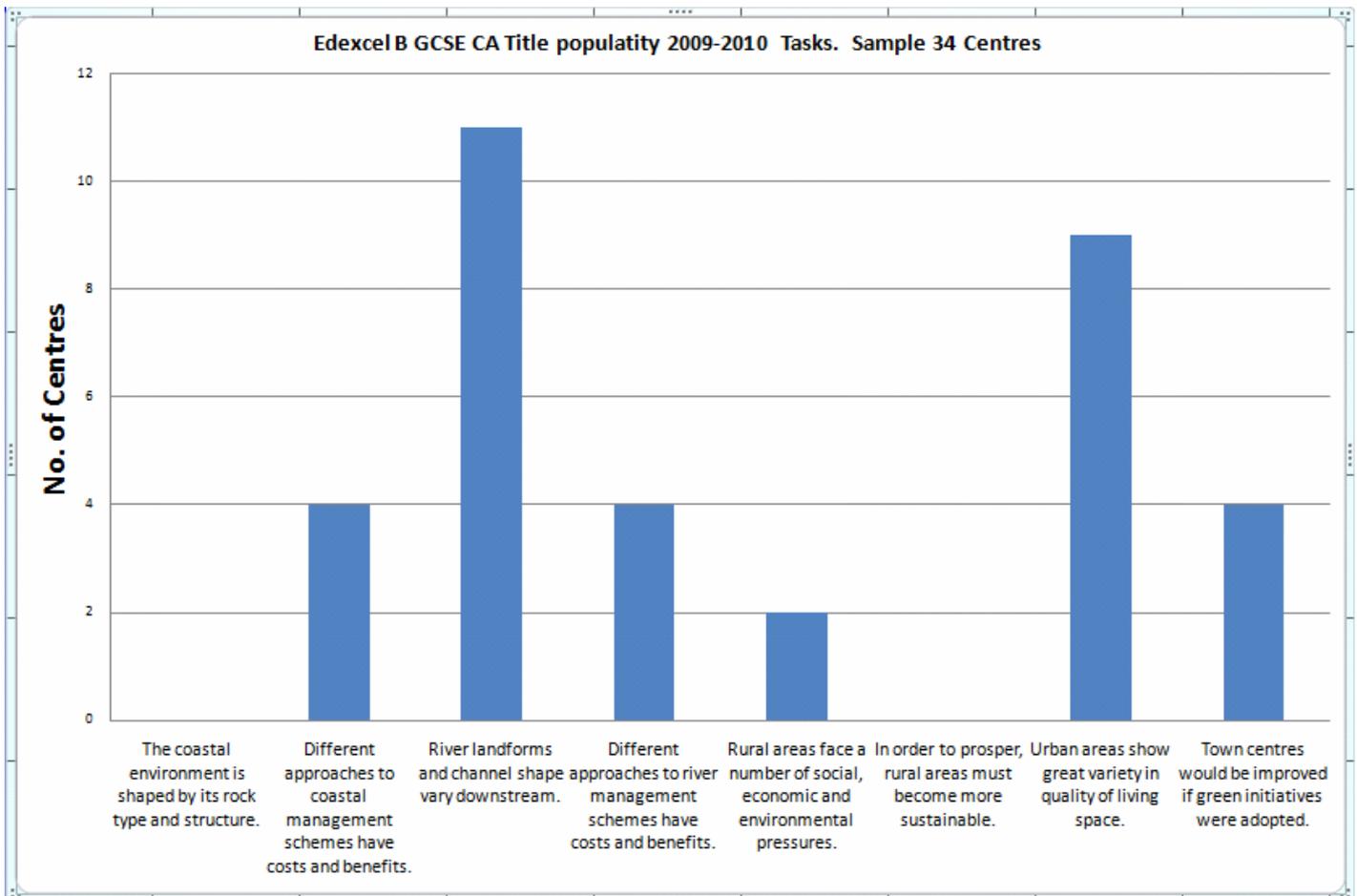
##### Comments on the quality of marking:

- Thank you to all those Centres who annotated the candidate mark sheet. This makes the moderation process easier; it may also indicate internal moderation which larger Centres should be carrying out.
- Whilst the marking by most Centres was accurate, some candidates, especially in the lower range of marks, seemed to be marked somewhat harshly.

- Some Centres were perhaps reluctant to use the full range of marks on offer - unwilling to move into a higher band, preferring to stick to the top of a lower band. This is perhaps to be expected as there is a new mark scheme to apply and not surprisingly a degree of unfamiliarity. However, it should be remembered that the generic mark scheme and descriptors are to be used as guidance only. **They aim to describe the likely characteristics of the work, rather than identifiers/descriptors of what the work must contain to get into that band.** For Centres moving from other GCSE specifications to Edexcel B for the first time this may be a change in the way in which marks are applied. Please remember to always reward good geography, even if it does quite 'fit' the mark scheme.

Popularity of Tasks:

2010 represents a small sample of the total cohort of candidates for the specification, however some patterns can be seen in this first outing. This graph is based on frequency of popularity from a small sample of 34 Centres.



Good Practice and suggestions for improvement:

As expected there was considerable variation in the quality and approach to CA by Centres. It was sometimes worrying to see Centres, for instance, who seemed to have partially ignored the Task set and carried on doing the same fieldwork and write-up as they had done for coursework. In this case there could only ever be a limited linkage to the Task set. **Some Centres were also unaware of the need to localise and contextualise the Task** - this is necessary since many of the Tasks are simply too big / unmanageable to be tackled in their raw state. The Tasks are deliberately set in this way so that Centres can have flexibility in terms of choice of location and fieldwork focus. See Appendix 2.

Section	Good Practice	Less good practice
<p><u>Planning Phase</u> The time is important to contextualise the study and to engage / enthuse the candidates so that they feel they have ownership.</p> <p>The planning stage is more important in controlled assessment than with coursework in the past given that students are 'on their own' in the high control phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using this time to get the students to work in groups, develop their own research.</li> <li>• Candidates also working on Key Qs / hypotheses etc.</li> <li>• Finding out about the background of places; researching any relevant models.</li> <li>• Planning mapped into the investigative process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignoring the 5hrs so no planning phase provided.</li> <li>• Telling the students what they will be doing ('top-down').</li> <li>• Not giving enough direction / support / training on how to start an investigation or enquiry.</li> </ul>
<p><u>(1) Introduction</u></p> <p><b>A key section often causes problems later-on when done poorly. Aims / questions / hypotheses need to be manageable and focused.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a clear, focused statement of the aims, purpose and location, of the issue being studied and include appropriate maps (including basic GIS / spatial visualisation).</li> <li>• Justify the choice /context of study in the introduction (this may be linked to a theory or model or geographical process).</li> <li>• Link the choice made in (b) to the Task set by Edexcel.</li> <li>• Uses <i>selected</i> additional secondary data and research to add depth to the study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many questions / hypotheses, not well linked to focus of Task. Some Centres using &gt;7.</li> <li>• Poor quality maps, barely GIS (no scales etc). Don't locate the study within region.</li> <li>• No reference to models or relevant background information.</li> <li>• Selection issues - too much irrelevant info (lift-offs).</li> <li>• No reasons as to why the study is important, e.g. wider geographical significance.</li> <li>• Model or theory may be absent or not well linked to the aims.</li> </ul>

<p><u>(2) Methodology</u></p> <p>Time and effort should be put aside to ensure that fieldwork and research techniques adopted link convincingly to the refocused or contextualised Task.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well designed planning phase with a selected range of techniques linked to the aims and focus.</li> <li>• Detailed understanding of techniques; may refer to sampling and justify number of sites, surveys etc.</li> <li>• Discussion of issues, problems &amp; solutions to</li> <li>• Innovative use of maps, photos, questionnaires etc going beyond standard lift offs. Able to customise so that it is fit for purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many techniques used with no real understand of how or why each technique might be relevant. Too much ‘Scattergun’ approach (more <i>is not always better</i>).</li> <li>• Little or no sampling and appreciation of methods, e.g. why number of questionnaires was chosen.</li> <li>• Tables may be used which are too simplistic and don’t allow any ‘stretch’ through the poorly chosen headings.</li> <li>• No real evidence of any digital maps (GIS) being attempted.</li> </ul>
<p><u>(3a) Data Presentation</u></p> <p>Keep this manageable - there is no need to produce lots of graphs nor do they have to be ‘complex’. Just fit for purpose and appropriate.</p> <p><u>(3b) Report Production</u></p> <p>Work needs to be well organised and following the enquiry sequence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A limited, but well selected and appropriate number of graphs and other techniques to showcase results.</li> <li>• Imaginative and intelligent use of GIS / web visualisation.</li> <li>• Work carefully presented - neat and clear with axes, titles etc.</li> <li>• Correctly organised and paginated - follows a logical sequence.</li> <li>• Good use of geographical terminology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little variety - only simple graphs (‘pies and bars’ and photos which are not well selected and lack geographical context.</li> <li>• Work presented with little attention to detail or care, e.g. missing units, titles etc.</li> <li>• Geographical terminology absent or incorrectly used.</li> <li>• Work may be poorly ordered, or in worst cases, incomplete.</li> </ul>
<p><u>(4) Analysis + Conclusions</u></p> <p>As this is under high control candidates must already be ‘skilled-up’ in the process of carrying out and analysis and evaluation. Work can be supported with Department handbooks that give detailed guidance (but not writing frames). For many students this level of support is vital as no formal feedback and support can be provided at this stage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writes logical and organised descriptions, and precise explanations; concise and succinct style.</li> <li>• Patterns and trends are identified; may use analytical tools (see below) to help with data</li> <li>• Work shows and understanding of the ‘bigger picture’ and can make links and connections.</li> <li>• Links theory / concepts etc to help explain results; may be able to critically evaluate.</li> <li>• Links back to original Task and focus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation is poorly sequenced and structured.</li> <li>• No overall patterns recognised</li> <li>• Very descriptive in style; doesn’t use figures to support.</li> <li>• Poor quality hypotheses / Qs lead to a lack of focus, particularly away from the original task set.</li> <li>• Poor time management under high control - rushed at the end.</li> </ul>
<p><u>(5) Evaluation</u></p> <p>Again a section under high level control so candidates will have to be given support and advice prior to the writing-up phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to comment on the reliability of results, and how sure we are that these results are ‘true’ and have not just happened by accident.</li> <li>• Reviews and evaluates the fieldwork process (may include reference to secondary information).</li> <li>• Ties the localised Task back to the one set by Edexcel.</li> <li>• May look for wider significance about why the study was important.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of excuses as to work the results ‘didn’t work’.</li> <li>• No linkage to original Task.</li> <li>• Always more data = better results (‘if I had more time’).</li> <li>• Bad weather was of major concern....as was the role of other members of the group.</li> <li>• Poor equipment let them down.</li> </ul>

### More on 'analytical tools'

Data can be analysed using different tools which don't have to be statistically based. This might include: good quality annotations of photos, lines of best fit / anomalies, Wordle Word Clouds (<http://www.wordle.net/>), spider diagrams + mind maps, conflict matrices / CBS, highlighting of prose and text, summary tables and matrices, flow diagrams etc. These techniques are especially appropriate where the data has a more qualitative focus.

If candidates have sufficient either group or individual numerical data then some simple statistics may be worth using. At this level mode, mean, median might be appropriate, along with ranges, quartiles and standard deviation.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of a good analysis is using the correct language and style. Again work should be succinct and written in a report style.

## Appendix 1 - Edexcel B GCSE Geography Controlled Assessment FAQs.

- Can candidates carry out work at home (unsupervised) as part of the limited control? The regulations allow candidates to work in a variety of locations whilst not directly supervised. This **may include work completed at home for research purposes**, but when the work is finally incorporated assessment it **must be re-worked from the original source**. It should also be **fully referenced and sourced**. In effect, the research aspect is an activity to help deepen their understanding of a topic. Remember the ethos of the CA process is that there should be minimal intervention from outside school, eg support from parents.
- Can we give candidates writing frames under high level of control? **It is not permitted** to provide candidates with a model answer or writing frame that will serve as an exact template into which a candidate's responses can be written. So you should not use *detailed* writing frames to support work either the high level or limited control. Remember that are trying to assess individual ability and want to encourage stretch wherever possible. However I would recommend that you provide written support in terms of broad structures and guidance (ie a series of staged questions, etc). Teachers may need to consider how best to cater for students of different levels of ability and for whom some more structured support may be needed. This may involve a reworking of an existing coursework guidance booklet. You may find that the Edexcel GCSE B CA workbook is useful in this respect.
- How much customisation of the task are centres/teachers allowed to do? Already produced is guidance on 'How to unpack the task' (sometimes called 'localising' the task). This document can be downloaded from the Edexcel Geography pages. In a summary, however, you are free to re-work the task for a location close to you and to re-focus (eg using either aims, hypotheses, questions, etc) so that it is manageable for a particular cohort. The document also provides ideas on how can the tasks be differentiated.
- What is involved in the transition from coursework to controlled assessment? This is quite important so that we can apply the mark scheme correctly. Perhaps one of the biggest differences will be one of length. The CA finished product should be more tightly focused in terms of its geographical content, and it will also be shorter compared to a piece of old (legacy) coursework. Quality needs to be maintained - so a shorter piece of work should be more coherent and more focused. You should be prepared to reward a full range of marks to a more refined piece of work. The initial Edexcel sample CA's provide a useful starting point. Training and feedback on marking will also be available both as face-to-face training and online.
- How 'technical' does the GIS have to be? This is entirely up to the Centre, staff and its candidates. For some centres digital maps will be sufficient, for others they will be able

to produce some more sophisticated work using Google Earth or Aegis. Refer to the published GIS document from the Edexcel website.

- Do we have to annotate the controlled assessment during marking? **No**, but would be beneficial to justify decisions on the mark scheme, e.g. use of underlying + comments, etc on the mark sheet. This will help with both internal cross-moderation and external moderation.
- Can I give feedback to candidates about the quality of their work? **Yes**, but only under limited control. The feedback can be oral only. It is not permitted to provide written feedback on any draft of a candidate's work. There is no feedback allowed under high level control. Some Centre's have suggested the use of self-evaluation-frameworks (as used in the Edexcel CA Workbook <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Edexcel-Geography-Controlled-Assessment-Workbook/dp/1846906962> ). A candidate can then revise and review their work before the final submission, but it must be at the appropriate level of control.
- Can candidates work in groups? **Yes** this is fine under limited control. Collaboration may be a good approach particularly when doing the research aspect - ideas can then be pooled. Individuals should then select the materials which are suitable for the particular enquiry (they should also be encouraged to re-work to provide an element of individuality). Careful selection is going to be important, so that the work and resources always remain focused on the individual aims or hypotheses. It is essential, however, that any of this group data used by a candidate is clearly identified as his/her own contribution to the work, ie 'an individual response'.
- Is a candidate able to choose his/her own title for an enquiry? **Yes** - it is a good idea to allow candidates to have ownership over their work and the enquiry process, especially in terms of a particular focus. Alternatively candidates can be separated (differentiated) into groups to work on shared titles / aims / hypotheses. There is no requirement to do individual titles / aims, but a Centre may choose to do so. This may allow greater stretch and differentiation amongst the cohort. Of course, all written up work must be completed on an individual basis.
- How many hypotheses etc? The expectation for an enquiry is that the students focus on a (manageable) single hypothesis, aim or issue. This is partly to ensure that the work can be done within the time limit and word count and that work is not done simply to show that a different hypothesis or issue can be studied to the same standard. It may, however, be appropriate as part of the introduction or methodology, to sub-divide the starting hypothesis into a set of small questions, each of which can be researched using different field study techniques.
- Is the use of ICT optional for data presentation? **Yes**. ICT is only required to demonstrate GIS / digital maps. Obviously ICT will be an advantage for some types of data presentation, but may not be as suitable for other types. There is no need to turn off the spelling and grammar check as you would with an exam, even under high control.
- Candidates can be given different amounts of time to complete tasks? **Yes**, but within realistic boundaries. These are included to provide a strong steer as to the amount of work that students are expected to produce. If the section of work is suggested to take 4 hours then some candidates may complete in 3 hours other may need 5 or so. Again, we would expect you to use your professional judgment here. Work must be fit for purpose and it would be unfair (and a breach of regulations) if Centres disregard the time limits.
- Candidates are allowed a practice with an assessment task? **Yes**, this might be a good idea, especially for those schools working on a 3yr GCSE. The task, however must be different to the one that is going to be used for assessment. It can however share similar fieldwork techniques or be at a similar (or the same) location. The focus and outcomes must be different.
- Are candidates allowed to write more than the recommended number of words? 2000 words (or equivalent) is recommended. This does not have to be rigidly applied, and there is no formal penalty for overlong work. Indeed it would be very difficult to apply word counts on different modes of work, eg videos, presentations etc. However, it should be stressed that work should be an appropriate length and fit for purpose. External moderation will certainly check for discrepancies in length (or time taken) to ensure fairness across Centres. Grossly overlong work would imply that the regulations of controlled assessment are not being correctly applied.

- Can candidates can review and revise previous work done in limited control? **Candidates can revise and re-write work which was done under limited control whilst under high level of control.** This may be a good process to encourage at high control to carry out a check. They are not permitted to change or introduce new materials into the high control.
- The supervision must be by the candidate's subject teacher? **No**, the regulations say it can be any (responsible) adult. Some centres are suggesting bringing in invigilators/cover teachers to do this; other centres have mentioned.

## Appendix 2 - Contextualising the Task

The Task is set in such a way that it has a deliberately wide context and semi-flexible interpretation. This is so that a range of locations, situations and environments can be used by schools and centres when completing the fieldwork for the controlled assessment. The example below shows how a physical theme might be interpreted and 'unpacked'.

"A range of factors influence river discharge and load at different locations".

A 'range' could be taken to mean 2 + factors, ie local geology, gradient + local relief, antecedent conditions, climate etc. You will probably be able to use secondary research sources to investigate many of these such as climate stats, online geology (GIS? / online maps). Some factors can also be primary fieldwork, eg gradient using a clinometers.

Bring in a model here, eg simplified / extract or version of 'Bradshaws' so that questions / hypotheses / predictions can be developed early-on and included in the hypotheses. Students can then justify choice of

Discharge is measured by getting an average speed / velocity (at different places across the river, and different depths) and multiplying it by the cross section ( $m^2$ ). Collate groups data and calculate with a spreadsheet.

Load is most easily assessed by looking at stone shape and size. A random ('bucket') sample of stones is collected from the bed of the channel. Each group might go for 10 stones. It is possible to also look at finer sediment using a bottle-trap, but more complex.

It is important to get the sampling / sites sorted out in advance of the fieldwork, probably in consultation with the students. Ideally 4+ locations should be used for this kind of study so that there are measurable differences in discharge and load. Whilst it may be possible to use just two sites ('Upper and lower') the results are likely to be self evident and too obvious to generate stretch - there are too few to link to Bradshaw's model. 8 sites downstream would be enough to do correlation

How far does the research you have carried out make you think this statement is correct?

This again is an important discriminator - 'how far', being evaluative, i.e. to what extent. Candidates should try and comment on this idea to access the higher levels in the mark scheme.

Another focus on evaluation. May be an opportunity here to link with a model and suggest ideas about reliability and validity of outcome, and how far the results can be trusted

### Possible focus titles for the Task.

Tasks can be distilled into a number of other smaller focuses. It may be possible to study one or more of these sub-focuses, based on the background and characteristics of the group and the nature of fieldwork locations. Using the Task above for example, there are a number of possible titles and sub-focuses that could be expressed in the form of aims (A), predictions/hypotheses (P/H) and questions (Q) - see examples below:

Re-focused Task (A range of factors influence river discharge and load at different locations)	Type
To investigate the nature of the differences in load and discharge between stretch A and stretch B.	(A)
River X shows a change in load and discharge as predicted by the model.	(P/H)
To what extent are there differences in: load and discharge at four sites along the River T	(Q)
Is gradient the dominant factor controlling changes in load and discharge in River Z?	(Q)
To examine the field-based evidence for contrasting discharge and load between several sites along the River Q.	(A)

Candidates may choose one or more sub-focuses to complete the task. These can be provided by the teacher, or perhaps more usefully, generated by the students themselves working in small groups (under limited control). Clearly any refocusing of the Task must be (i) *linked strongly to the original Task set by Edexcel* and (ii) *manageable and achievable* for the students who will be undertaking the work. It is also possible to just focus one aspect of the Task, so in the example above, a candidate could just look at quality of transport provision for people in wheelchairs for instance OR a study of quality of green-spaces in two areas. Both of these are clearly an aspect of the quality of living space.

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grades	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	050	38	34	31	26	21	17	13

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