

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE B Geography 5GB04_01
Researching Geography
Controlled Assessment

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General Comments

May 2013 has witnessed the fourth cycle of moderation for controlled assessments (CA) in GCSE Geography. The Edexcel GCSE B Geography team saw the introduction of CA as an opportunity for removing some of the problems associated with coursework, e.g. 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 (geared towards only writing) etc.

Controlled assessment generally derives the following **benefits**:

- Shorter and more succinct pieces of work that were more tightly focused. Quicker and easier to mark and more manageable from a students' perspective.
- The more concise 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.
- The introduction of GIS and visualisation continues to create some innovative ways of working-with and displaying data. Hopefully this has made the CA experience more enjoyable and relevant to students. Makes them think like geographers!
- The planning phase at the beginning of the process has allowed candidates to research more fully what is being investigated (e.g. find out about models, places, the 'bigger picture' etc) and to take more responsibility for developing recording sheets, methodologies, site selection etc.

Particular comments from the moderating team in 2013:

Administration:

Administration as overall was better than in 2012 and most work arrived on time and carrying the correct documentation. Centres are however reminded that:

1. Moderators still found a number of errors in arithmetic in some work. It is essential that work is correctly added-up and those marks are accurately transferred to the OPTEMs / electronic sheets. If moderators find that work is not correct they will have to contact the Centre and request an adjustment. This creates additional burden for all those involved. Please note that the OPTEMs should only be used to record the raw candidate marks (out of 50), not a percentage or any other conversion.
2. 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, date of exam cycle and task title. On some occasions the title-space was left blank so moderators were unsure as to what the focus of the work might have been.

3. As with previous coursework, both the teacher and candidate must sign the coversheet – always. This is a requirement of submission and work cannot be moderated without correct authentication.
4. Highest and lowest work must be included, even if it doesn't form part of the original (*) sample. If there are multiple pieces of work with the same highest / lowest marks then please just send one example at that mark.

Comments on the quality of marking:

Marking was generally fair, reliable and accurate. Very much maintaining the standards set by last year's qualification. Some candidates, especially in the lower range of marks, seemed to be marked somewhat harshly. Equally there was evidence of some centres 'pushing-it', i.e. being too optimistic for candidates around the A and A* grades. Once again a thank you to all those centres who annotated the candidate mark sheet. This makes the moderation process easier; it also indicates internal moderation which larger centres should be carrying out.

Comments relating to particular sections:

- **Planning** – Sometimes pushing it a bit high; many lacked any conceptual background which is really needed for max marks; not sure lots of history and pictures deliver this. Secondary data not used as much as it could have been to give context.

Importantly there is a need to generate a local title from the task: 2 -3 key questions (not 6 or 7) to provide a focus. Do not try and answer the whole task in its entirety.

- **Method** – usually marked well. Moderators often report that tables work better than paragraphs, particularly with well focused column titles. Data collection amounts were usually realistic and appropriate, but needed to be more rigorous on sampling and questionnaire design.
- **Presentation** – generally marked soundly, but there is still an issue with 'range'. Some centres really only use Excel graphs and claim this to be a wide range because they have numerous (often inappropriate) graphs; this is not a range, all it shows is that data can be entered in a spreadsheet and a button pressed. Range needs to include maps, graphs, photos etc. Moderators are frustrated by students not labelling the y-axes of graphs!
- **Analysis** and **Conclusion** – mostly accurately marked with good use of the mark scheme.
- **Evaluation** – it is important to evaluate the whole investigation in relation to the original task. There were a lot of 5 and 6 marks given which really were not L3 as they were comments (often very detailed) on individual data collection methods and other individual aspects of the work. There were few that evaluated overall. A half page of SWOT analysis on its own is likely to get 5 or 6.

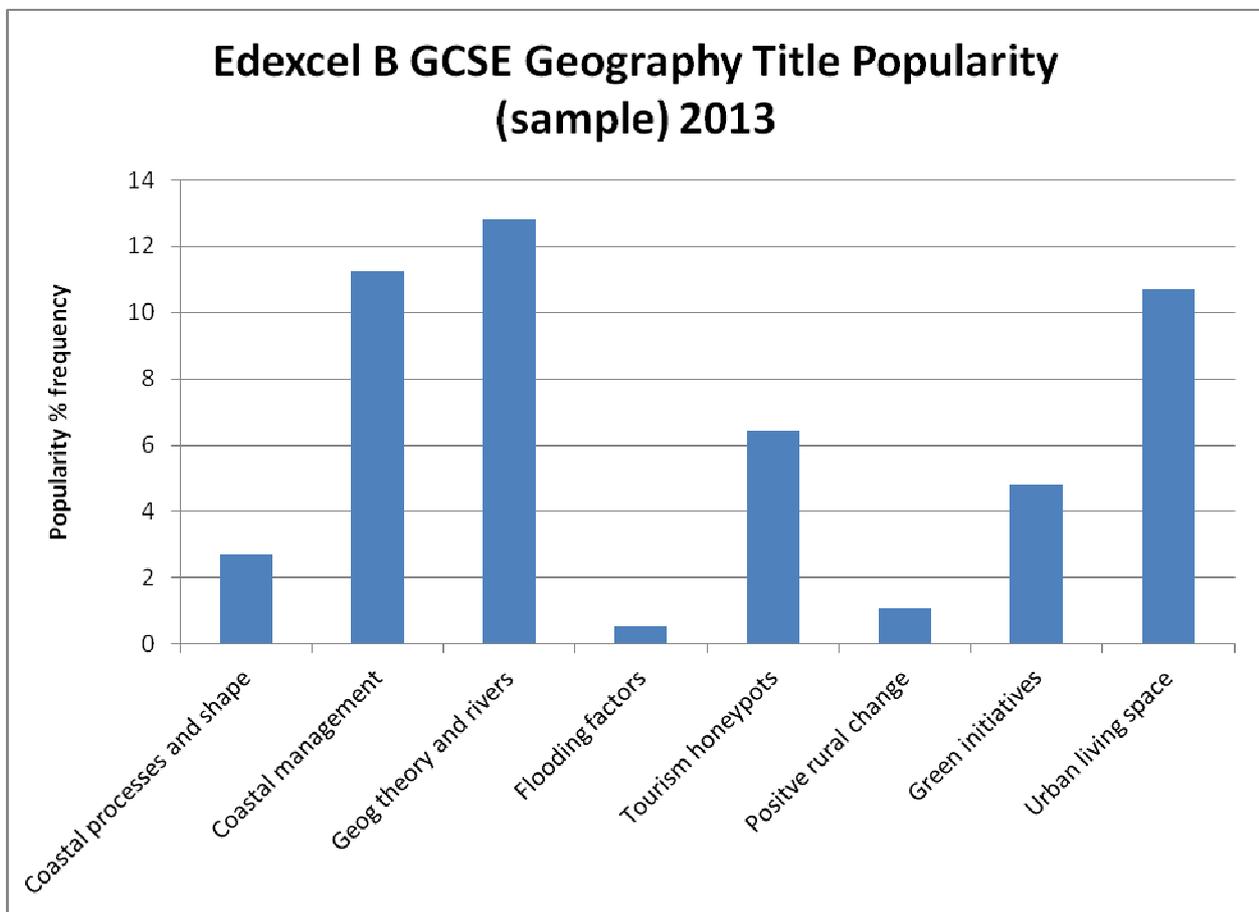
Use of GIS

Moderators reporting increasing take-up of more sophisticated GIS and visualisation techniques. A growing number of centres are using approaches that allowed students to plot their results on digital overlays using software such as Google Maps, Google Earth, ArcGIS Online and Aegis. It was also acknowledged, that for some centres, access to ICT remained a considerable challenge, but centres were reminded that GIS and visualisation remained an important part of the controlled assessment.

Edexcel has a support document concerning GIS which is available from their website. There are also GIS / Visualisation courses supporting the use of this technology being offered by Edexcel, The Geographical Association (GA) and the RGS.

Popularity of Tasks:

This graph is based on frequency of popularity from a sample of the cohort.



Good Practice and suggestions for improvement:

There remains considerable variation in the quality and approach to CA by centres. It was sometimes worrying to still see centres, for instance, who seemed to have partially ignored the task set and *carried on doing the same fieldwork and write-up style as they had done for legacy coursework or previous years*. 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

original state. The tasks are deliberately set in this way so that centres can have flexibility in terms of choice of location and fieldwork focus. Another issue is choosing appropriate aims to link to the task brief as many students struggled to link the two. Many did loosely related aims e.g. Bradshaw's model or struggled to relate quality surveys such as clone town to the question. There is more support available on the Edexcel website. One Moderator also commented that in some instances teachers had sacrificed individualism and flair for getting the marks for most students and so all the low control aspects of the work read too similarly. Face-to-face training and online events are planned for in 2013-2014 which will look in more detail at some of these aspects.

There were a large number of centres who has used the Edexcel CA exemplars as a model to follow; other schools also supported their students with the *Edexcel Controlled Assessment Workbook* (a newly revised edition is available as a free download from the Edexcel geography website). Also look out for additional support in Autumn 2013, including managing the new word limits and mark scheme.

The table below provides examples of good practice and suggestions for improvement in the different stages of the enquiry process.

Note that this table is based on the 2013 mark-scheme. A revised mark-scheme should be used for 2014 entry, however this table still remains relevant.

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

<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"> • Well designed planning phase with a selected range of techniques linked to the aims and focus. • Detailed understanding of techniques; may refer to sampling and justify number of sites, surveys etc. • Discussion of issues, problems & solutions to • Innovative use of maps, photos, questionnaires etc going beyond standard lift offs. Able to customise so that it is fit for purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>). • Little or no sampling and appreciation of methods, e.g. why number of questionnaires was chosen. • Tables may be used which are too simplistic and don't allow any 'stretch' through the poorly chosen headings. • No real evidence of any digital maps (GIS) being attempted.
<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"> • A limited, but well selected and appropriate number of graphs and other techniques to showcase results. • Imaginative and intelligent use of GIS / web visualisation. • Work carefully presented – neat and clear with axes, titles etc. • Correctly organised and paginated – follows a logical sequence. • Good use of geographical terminology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little variety – only simple graphs ('pies and bars' and photos which are not well selected and lack geographical context. • Work presented with little attention to detail or care, e.g. missing units, titles etc. • Geographical terminology absent or incorrectly used. • Work may be poorly ordered, or in worst cases, incomplete.
<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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes logical and organised descriptions, and precise explanations; concise and succinct style. • Patterns and trends are identified; may use analytical tools (see below) to help with data • Work shows and understanding of the 'bigger picture' and can make links and connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation is poorly sequenced and structured. • No overall patterns recognised • Very descriptive in style; doesn't use figures to support. • Poor quality hypotheses / Qs lead to a lack of focus, particularly away from the original task set. • Poor time management

<p>of support is vital as no formal feedback and support can be provided at this stage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links theory / concepts etc to help explain results; may be able to critically evaluate. • Links back to original Task and focus. 	<p>under high control – rushed at the end.</p>
<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"> • 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. • Reviews and evaluates the fieldwork process (may include reference to secondary information). • Ties the localised Task back to the one set by Edexcel. • May look for wider significance about why the study was important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of excuses as to work the results 'didn't work'. • No linkage to original Task. • Always more data = better results ('if I had more time'). • Bad weather was of major concern....as was the role of other members of the group. • Poor equipment let them down.

Additional notes on submission of work:

Please note that candidates' work can be submitted in PDF format and on CD / DVD rather than as a hard copy if this is preferable. This may save on printing costs. Other formats such as videos and PowerPoints can also be submitted electronically for moderation. This may also extend to specific digital maps (i.e. hyperlinks to work) or particular 'kml' files. If you are unsure about the acceptability of work for submission, then please contact the Geography Advisor or use Edexcel's free Ask the Expert Service.

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