

# Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
in Geography B (5GB04)

Unit 4: Investigating Geography

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Publications Code UG041631\*

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## Summary comments

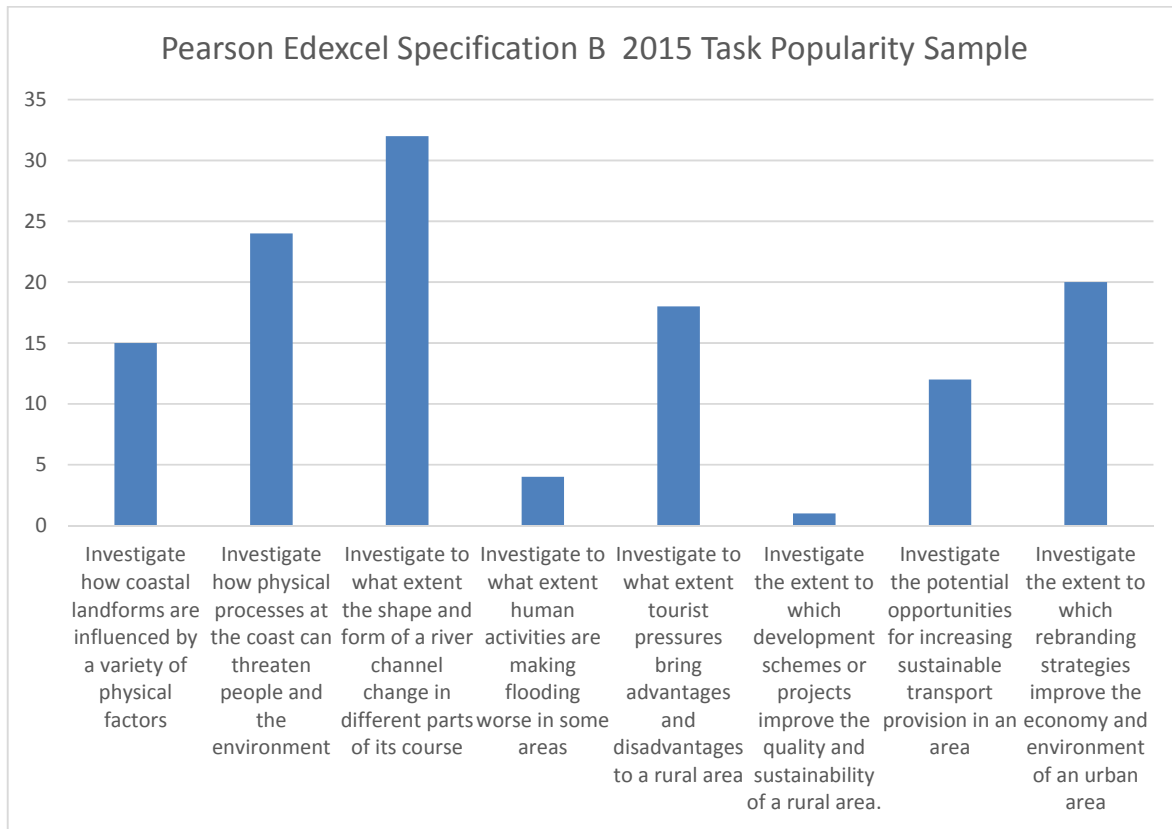
May 2015 has witnessed the fifth cycle of moderation for controlled assessments (CA) in GCSE Geography. Candidates are required to produce a piece of work over about 20 hours under both limited and high control. Specification revision for assessment in 2014 introduced a stricter enforcement of a 2000 maximum word length. For 2015 the rules have been modified slightly: words included in tables, graphs, quotations and references do not need to be included in the word total (but tables must not be used for extended writing as a method of exceeding the word limit) - p 40 of the Specification (Issue 5).

As in previous series, the work is based around one of eight tasks set by Pearson / Edexcel (four broadly physical and four broadly human in nature) and must include both fieldwork and research. Centres choose their own topic(s). The vast majority of Centres use only one task, but a few offer students a choice through different fieldwork experiences.

In this the fifth year, a key issue remains the appropriate contextualisation of the task so that the controlled assessment is both manageable and still closely linked to the main focus. A worrying proportion of Centres are still replicating exactly the same fieldwork that they have done for many years and failing to adapt to a different task, despite being given previous advice to modify their approach. The "how and why" components of tasks were rarely considered. The 2015 entry witnessed more of a rebalancing between physical and human tasks compared to the 2014 series (see Figure 1). Overall however the human tasks seem less popular. This may be down to the fact that the human titles seem less "obvious" or it may be due to staffing choice, wanting to "do the river". There is now much evidence that a majority of Centres are reluctant to change their choice (and sometimes approach) to task delivery. Whilst this is perfectly acceptable within the Regulatory framework, from an educational perspective there may be numerous benefits to consider changing tasks more often, not least to refresh the fieldwork.

AS in last series, it is pleasing to report that for the majority, the newly revised mark scheme (2014) did not present too many challenges. But again, Moderators reported that many, if not most, higher ability candidates did in fact exceed the word limit (or totally disregard it). This was largely because their introductions contained poorly connected and often unnecessary theory or background information. In this respect, teachers have only partially adapted to the new mark scheme as the two sections which were sometimes over-marked, were data presentation (lack of complex techniques) and evaluation (still of the "wish I had tried harder" variety, even in 2015).

Figure 1



### Particular comments from the Moderating Team in 2015

#### Administration:

Administration was similar to 2014 and a good proportion of work arrived on time (15<sup>th</sup> May 2015) 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, data 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. Both the teacher and candidate must sign the coversheet - always. This is a requirement of submission and work cannot be moderated without correct

authentication. There seems to have been some confusion in 2015 regarding correct coversheets. Issue 5 of the Specification (late 2014) has an updated Declaration Sheet (Appendix 4, p 72). This should be used for 2015 and beyond. The correct version can now be downloaded from the Pearson / Edexcel website, under "Forms and Guidance".

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:

Moderators commented that marking was generally fair, reliable and accurate. Very much maintaining the standards set by last year's qualification.

Once again, some candidates, especially in the lower range of marks, seemed to be marked somewhat harshly. Equally there was evidence of some centres being too optimistic for candidates around the A and A\* grades (37-45 range especially). 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:

- ***Purpose of investigation*** -many lacked any conceptual background which is really needed for maximum marks -history and pictures generally don't deliver this. There is room for this section to be much tighter, more focused and better linked to the task. Secondary / research data not used as much as it could have been to give context. Sometimes models and theories are irrelevant to the topic being studied. For example, this years rivers task ("shape and form") was often accompanied by the Bradshaw's Model. This wouldn't be particularly useful since the model is too broad in its context and doesn't wholly focus on shape and form.
- ***Methods of collecting data*** - 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 for example. For some studies, e.g. coastal work it is essential to collect enough data at enough across all sites and at individual ones. This improves both the reliability and ability to work up some statistical processing. It's a shame that students rarely comment on the distribution of their sites or acknowledge the idea of spread or clustering in data (an how that might influence outcomes).
- ***Methods of presenting data*** - generally marked soundly, but there is still an issue with range and sophistication. 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 student's not labelling the y-axes of graphs! Presentation was often scrappy and rarely truly sophisticated, sketching and colouring skills were very weak once again.

### Sophistication

Sophistication may often combine two techniques, process or operations, e.g. scatter and best fit, proportional symbols or well annotated photos / and or maps, e.g. to show location with inset photos. Other examples may include:

Dispersion diagrams

Box and whisker plot to show the spread of data

Kite diagrams for a vegetation transect

Isoline maps, e.g. isochrone for travel times, isovels for velocity etc.

Choropleth maps / density shading

Gain / loss bar charts

Compound, divided, percentage and proportional bar charts

Flow lines and proportional arrows / symbols

Located and / or proportional pies / bars etc

Radar plots

Base maps with some annotation /details.

High quality sketch with annotations that explain OR positives and negatives

Beach / river profiles with accurate scales

- ***Analysis*** and ***conclusions***- mostly accurately marked with good use of the mark scheme. But as with the previous series, there was often a lack of any meaningful rigour in terms of handling data. At best descriptive, often not making any real geographical sense of what they had found. Analysis is not simply a blow-by-blow description of individual graphs and maps. It remains vital there is real and meaningful explanation for the higher marks. There is significant opportunity for improvement here by many schools and it's an area that should be addressed, especially in preparation for 2016 and the new GCSE specifications.
- ***Evaluation*** - there were comments (often very detailed) on individual data collection methods and other individual aspects of the work. There were few that evaluated overall, i.e. all sections of their report. Some found it difficult to separate their evaluations from conclusions. For the top of the band students should be strongly encouraged to reflect on their findings in relation to the original task set by Pearson / Edexcel. This was often forgotten or ignored.

### 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.

Pearson / 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 The Geographical Association (GA), FSC and the RGS.

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 of CA. 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 aim(s) 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 Pearson / 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. Training and support is planned for events are planned for in 2015-2016 which will look in more detail at some of these aspects.

At the centre of a successful piece of CA is well designed and well thought-out fieldwork which is relevant, rigorous and fit-for purpose.

## **Grade Boundaries**

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







