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Assessment Guide for GCSE (9-1) Geography B

GCSE (9-1) Geography B

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Geography B (1GB0)

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Contents

Introduction

This guide is designed to support students and their teachers and to help them understand the examination requirements for GCSE Geography B.

It contains information and advice on:

1. The length of each examination and their weightings within the GCSE qualification as a whole.
2. The structure of each of the three question papers, and how this changes from one examination series to another.
3. Information on question styles, command words and marking
4. Some exemplar student responses to extended response questions from the published Specimen Papers, with commentaries and indicated mark scheme level.

1. The exam structure

- The GCSE Geography B course consists of three externally-examined papers.
- In Paper 1 all questions are compulsory. There are three 30-mark sections. Of the 94 raw marks available, up to 4 marks are awarded for SPaG.
- In Paper 2, there are two compulsory sections, each worth 27 marks followed by a third section comprising two 'mirror image' fieldwork sub-sections worth 18 marks each with students selecting either coastal or river fieldwork topics in one section and either urban or rural fieldwork in the other.
- Paper 3 is a decision-making exercise; all questions are compulsory but the number of marks allocated to the first three of its four sections will vary depending on the chosen theme. Up to 4 marks are awarded for SPaG.
- In Papers 1, 2 and 3 there will be a variety of multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, calculations and 8-mark writing questions; there will also be one 12-mark extended writing question at the end of Paper 3.
- The exam structure for the qualification is shown in Table 1 below:

GCSE Geography B exam structure	
Paper 1: Global Geographical Issues Total Marks: **94** Weighting: **37.5%** Optionality: **None** Exam time: **1 hour and 30 minutes**	**Section A: Hazardous Earth** Students answer all questions from Section A.
	Section B: Development dynamics Students answer all questions from Section B.
	Section C: Challenges of an urbanising world Students answer all questions from Section C.
Paper 2: UK Geographical Issues Total Marks: **94** Weighting: **37.5%** Optionality: **Section C** Exam time: **1 hour and 30 minutes**	**Section A: The UK's evolving physical landscapes** Students answer all questions from Section A.
	Section B: The UK's evolving human landscapes Students answer all questions from Section B.
	Section C1 – Geographical Investigations – Fieldwork in a Physical Environment Students answer either Question 8 (coastal fieldwork) or Question 9 (river fieldwork)
	Section C2 – Geographical Investigations – Fieldwork in a Human Environment Students answer either Question 10 (urban fieldwork) or Question 11 (rural fieldwork)

Paper 3: People and Environment Issues – Making Geographical Decisions Total Marks: **64** Weighting: **25%** Optionality: **None** Exam time: **1 hour and 30 minutes**	**Section A: People and the Biosphere** Students answer all questions from Section A
	Section B: Forests under threat Students answer all questions from Section A
	Section C: Consuming energy resources Students answer all questions from Section C.
	Section D: Making a geographical decision Students answer this single compulsory question.

Table 1

A variety of different question types will be used within all examinations both to assess a range of requirements across different AO's (Assessment Objectives) but also to facilitate differentiation.

The different questions types that are used are:

- **Multiple choice questions (MCQ)** where students are required to select the correct answer from a choice of four (A, B, C and D).
- **Short open response:** Ranging from a single word, up to a couple of sentences, for between one and three marks.
- **Open response:** Usually a few sentences or a very short paragraph for four marks.
- **Calculation:** These could both be short or long, and thus they vary in mark allocations.
- **Extended open response:** Where students are required to develop extended written arguments and to draw well-evidenced and informed conclusions about geographical questions and issues**.** Utilises a levels-based mark scheme.

There is ramped demand of questions within sections and papers with mark tariffs ranging from 1 – 12 marks. Table 2 on the next page provides an at a glance guide to where extended response questions will appear across the three exam papers. The final question of each section in Papers 1 and 2 and Sections A and B in Paper 3 will be an 8 mark extended response question. The final question of Section C in Paper 3 will be a 12 mark extended response question.

The mark tariff and AOs (Assessment Objectives) for extended response questions do vary across the three exam papers depending on the type of question and command word used. Later in this Guide (in Section 3), there is more detailed information about the AO's that are targeted by different question types and command words.

Mark tariffs to exam time ratio at a glance:

Please note that the time allocation for Paper 3 considers the need to read and absorb the information in the Resource Booklet.

Content	Total marks	Suggested time (mins)	Maximum mark tariff
Paper 1: Global Geographical Issues (1GB0/01)			
Section A: Hazardous Earth	30	30	1 x 8-mark questions
Section B: Development dynamics	34	30	1 x 8-mark question (+ 4 marks SPaG)
Section C: Challenges of an urbanising world	30	30	1 x 8-mark question
Paper 2: UK Geographical Issues (1GBO/02)			
Section A: The UK's evolving physical landscapes	31	30	1 x 8-mark question (+ 4 marks SPaG)
Section B: The UK's evolving human landscapes	27	30	1 x 8-mark question
Sections C1 and C2: Geographical Investigations	36	30	4 x 8-mark questions
Paper 3: People and the environment issues – Making Geographical Decisions (1GBO/03)			
Section A: People and the biosphere	8*	10	2 x 8-mark questions
Section B: Forests under threat	10*	20	
Section C: Consuming energy resources	30*	30	
Section D: Making a geographical decision	16	30	1 x 12-mark question (+ 4 marks SPaG)

Table 2

*Please note that the mark distribution for Paper 3 sub-sections will vary according to the chosen environment and issue

Table 3 (below) provides a description of the different types of extended open response questions in each paper and the skills students will be required to demonstrate.

Component	Extended open response questions
Paper 1: **Global Geographical Issues**	One 8 mark extended writing question in Sections A, B and C. These questions are not based upon a resource. The 8 mark extended response questions will use the command word 'Assess' or 'Evaluate', which require students to make links between concepts within a topic or topics and apply their understanding to a geographical context. All three questions are addressing AO2 and AO3 in equal measure. In Section C an additional 4 marks will be available for SPaG in the extended response question.
Paper 2: **UK Geographical Issues**	There are a total four 8-mark questions on this paper. Questions 4 and 7 will use 'Assess' or 'Evaluate' as the command word but in this case involve the skill of extracting information from a resource or resources (AO4) and the application of their knowledge and understanding to interpret the information in the resource or resources (AO3). There are a further two 8-mark fieldwork questions in Section C that also use one of two command words – 'Assess' or 'Evaluate'. One of these essay questions will be about on unseen fieldwork data based on the same environment they've studied. These questions require students to extract information from the resource or resources (AO4) and the application of their knowledge and understanding to interpret the information in the resource or resources (AO3). The other 8-mark fieldwork question will be assessing their own fieldwork asking them to recall the skills and techniques they used in their own (familiar) fieldwork findings (AO4) and deconstructing that information to provide judgements (AO3).
Paper 3: **Making a geographical decision**	There are two 8-mark extended response questions on this paper. They are very similar to those that candidates answer in Section A and B on Paper 2. They use 'Assess' or 'Evaluate' as the command word and involve the skill of extracting information from a resource or resources (AO4) and the application of their knowledge and understanding to interpret the information in the resource or resources (AO3). There is also one summative and synoptic 12-mark essay question that will ask candidates to 'Select one option…' from three choices of strategy offered, and then ask them to 'Justify their choice'. They will be expected to draw upon the whole resource booklet and their own knowledge in their responses. An additional four marks will be available for SpaG.

Table 3

Paper 2 – Familiar and Unfamiliar fieldwork

Sections C1 and C2 on Paper 2 assess both the student's own experience (familiar context) and their ability to engage with a fieldwork scenario provided in the exam (unfamiliar context). This unfamiliar context will however reflect the focus of data collection methods prescribed in the specification and thus is familiar in the type of content involved. Each year, students will answer one set of short answer questions in each context, and one extended writing question in each context. There are two ways that questions might be structured to assess the familiar and unfamiliar context appropriately as shown in Table 4 below:

Structure 1:

Section	Focus for the multiple-choice, short open, open and calculation questions (10 marks)	Focus for the extended writing question (8 marks)
C1: Geographical investigations – physical: either question 8 (coasts) or question 9 (rivers)	Application of the students' own fieldwork experience to an **unfamiliar context**.	Assessment of the students' own fieldwork experience.
C2: Geographical investigations – human: either question 10 (urban) or question 11 (rural)	Assessment of the students' own fieldwork experience.	Application of the students' own fieldwork experience to an **unfamiliar context**.

Structure 2:

Section	Focus for the multiple-choice, short open, open and calculation questions (10 marks)	Focus for the extended writing question (8 marks)
C1: Geographical investigations – physical: either question 8 (coasts) or question 9 (rivers)	Assessment of the students' own fieldwork experience.	Application of the students' own fieldwork experience to an **unfamiliar context**.
C2: Geographical investigations – human: either question 10 (urban) or question 11 (rural)	Application of the students' own fieldwork experience to an **unfamiliar context**.	Assessment of the students' own fieldwork experience.

Table 4

N.B. These structures will not alternate year on year

2.   Question types and command words

Command words are used consistently in our exam papers to assess particular skills, making it clear the type of response that is required. Table 5 lists the command words that could be used in the examinations for this qualification and their definitions. Our command word definitions will stay the same for the lifetime of the qualification and, together with question styles, will enable students to focus on 'thinking geographically' rather than understanding the mechanics of individual question items.

Command Word	Definition
Identify/State/ Name	Recall or select one or more pieces of information.
Define	State the meaning of a term.
Calculate	Produce a numerical answer, showing relevant working.
Draw/plot	Create a graphical representation of geographical information.
Label	Add a label/labels to a given resource, graphic or image.
Describe	Give an account of the main characteristics of something or the steps in a process. Statements in the response should be developed but do not need to include a justification or reason.
Compare	Find the similarities and differences of two elements given in a question. Each response must relate to **both** elements and must include a statement of their similarity/difference.
Explain	Provide a reasoned explanation of how or why something occurs. An explanation requires a justification/exemplification of a point. Some questions will require the use of annotated diagrams to support explanation.
Suggest	Apply understanding to provide a reasoned explanation of how or why something may occur. A suggested explanation requires a justification/exemplification of a point.
Assess	Use evidence to determine the relative significance of something. Give consideration to all factors and identify which are the most important.
Evaluate	Measure the value or success of something and ultimately provide a substantiated judgement/conclusion. Review information and then bring it together to form a conclusion, drawing on evidence such as strengths, weaknesses, alternatives and relevant data.
Select one…Justify your choice	Select one option from those given (usually three or four) and justify the choice, drawing across the resources provided and applying knowledge/understanding. The justification should include consideration of the alternative options in order to provide a supported argument in favour of the chosen option.

Table 5

Our command words will be used consistently to assess particular skills and across mark tariffs. Table 6 shows the mark tariffs for different command words. The command words 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' are the two command words that could be used for the 8 mark extended response questions. The command word 'Justify' will only be used for the final part of the synoptic UK Challenges question in Paper 3, which will always be worth 12 marks. Section 3 of this guide provides guidance on the requirements of these different command words and question types.

	1	2	3	4	8	12
Identify/State/Name	*	*				
Define	*					
Calculate	*	*				
Label	*	*	*			
Draw/plot	*	*	*			
Compare		*	*			
Describe		*	*	*		
Explain		*	*	*		
Suggest		*	*	*		
Assess					*	
Evaluate					*	
Select one...Justify your choice						*

Table 6

Differences between command words

It is not uncommon for students to confuse the meanings and demands of different command words; in particular, the differences between the commands of 'Explain' and 'Suggest' or 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' are not always understood.

'Describe' and 'Explain'

- Description is not the recall of learnt knowledge but might be used to explore how a technique can be applied to a particular situation, often but not exclusively in a fieldwork situation. It might also be used in conjunction with resources.
- In both contexts some candidates find it very hard to resist adding explanatory reasons which cannot be credited and wastes time.

'Explain' and 'Suggest'

- 'Explain' is used when the student is required to provide a reasoned explanation of how or why something occurs by developing a point with some justification/exemplification. 'Explain' may target explanation of specification content (AO1 and AO2) or resource material (AO2 and AO3).
- 'Suggest' is only used when the question requires students to speculate beyond the learned content of the speculation and will link to a resource. In this type of question it is not expected that the candidate has any prior knowledge at all of a particular geographical context of location but can provide a reasoned explanation of how or why something may occur. As with the 'Explain' command, 'Suggest' requires the development of a point with some justification/exemplification.

'Explain one…', 'Explain two…', 'Suggest one…', Suggest two…'

- Candidates should be careful not to offer more or less than is needed with these command phrases. If one explanation or suggestion is sought, then obviously only one is rewardable. The basic explanatory point will be worth one mark and candidates will need to extend or develop that basic point to pick up a further mark or marks.

'Assess' and 'Evaluate'

- 'Assess' is used for extended writing questions in which the student is required to use evidence from located examples and/or a case study to determine the relative significance of something. This is done by considering all the factors and identifying which are the most important; for example, the relative impact of two things or the extent to which something happens in different circumstances. 'Assess' does **not** require a conclusion although 'Assess the importance of…' or 'Assess the relative importance of…' might lead students to a clear conclusion.
- 'Evaluate' is used for extended writing questions in which the student must appraise things by measuring the value or success of something and ultimately **come to a definite judgement/conclusion**. This is done by analysing and reviewing information and then bringing it together to develop a conclusion, drawing on evidence such as advantages, disadvantages, strengths, weaknesses, alternatives and relevant data or details from located examples and/or a case study.

Annotation – a note

- Although not a command word, some 'Explain..' questions, especially if not exclusively in Section C1 and C2 of Paper 2, might also require candidates to provide an annotated diagram to support and develop their explanation. It is important to note that annotations are a form of explanatory labelling.

Analyse – a note

- Although not 'Analyse' isn't included in our list of command words, some 8-mark 'Assess' or 'Evaluate' questions ask candidates to 'Analyse' information which is in unfamiliar to them. This instruction to 'Analyse..' will be found in the preamble to both Questions 4 and 7 on Paper 2 and twice again in Section C1 and C2 on Paper 2 when candidates are asked to deconstruct a resource or resources from unfamiliar fieldwork, before being asked to 'Assess' or Evaluate' some aspect that fieldwork. Analysis is part of the AO4 element of the mark scheme and students will be required to carry out their analysis of the resource material (AO4) before they start their interpretation of that resource material (AO3).

3.   Tackling the extended response questions

Extended response questions are unstructured questions that are worth either 8 or 12 marks. These are generally reserved for exploration of an issue and/or the construction of an argument. As these questions are more open-ended, they are marked using levels-based mark schemes (see part 4 of this guide).

Different types of 8-mark extended response questions.
- The three 8-mark extended response questions on Paper 1 will not include any stimulus material and will be assessing a candidate's geographical understanding and their ability to apply this through either 'assessment' or 'evaluation'. These questions will have a weighting of four AO2 marks (for knowledge and understanding) and a further four marks for AO3 (for the successful application of this within the context of the question).
- Two further 8-mark extended responses questions also contain no stimulus material. Please note that candidates only answer **one** of these depending on their chosen option. These are to be found in either Section C1 or C2 in Paper 2 and are an examination of a candidate's ability to assess some aspect of their own **familiar** fieldwork. These have a weighting of four marks for AO4, based on the techniques used by the candidate to investigate questions and issues within their fieldwork and their ability to communicate those finds and a further 4 marks for the successful application of this within the context of the question, which are AO3 marks.
- Some 8–mark questions will have at least one resource linked to the question; again, there will be four marks available for AO3, but now there will be four marks available for AO4 rather than AO2; this is because students are being tested in their ability to select, adapt and use a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions and issues and communicate findings. These questions are found on Paper 2, both Question 4 and Question 7 and also two questions in either Section C1 or C2 based on **unfamiliar** fieldwork data. Please note that candidates only answer **one** of these questions depending on their chosen option. There are a further two such questions on Paper 3 in any part of Sections A, B and C, sometimes based on a single resource, sometimes more than one.

Table 7 on the next page shows the different command words that can be used for extended writing questions (using levels-based mark schemes) with the weightings of marks by assessment objective (further information about assessment objectives can be found on page 39 of the Specification).

These will remain the same for the lifetime of the specification to ensure consistency year-on-year when meeting the assessment objectives. This means you can also see the proportion of the different skills required of students in extended responses, so they can be clear what is required of them for each command word.

Extended writing questions and the assessment objectives

	Total marks*	AO2 (understanding)	AO3 (application of K and U)	AO4 (use of geographical skills)
Paper 1				
• **Sections A , B and C** Assess or Evaluate	8	4	4	
Paper 2				
• **Sections A and B**: Assess or Evaluate	8		4	4
• **Section C1 and C2 (familiar fieldwork)**	8		4	4
• **Section C1 and C2** • **(unfamiliar fieldwork)**	8		4	4
Paper 3				
• **Sections A, B or C**: Assess or Evaluate	8		4	4
• **Section D**: Select one…Justify	12	4	4	4

*not including any additional SPaG marks

Table 7

Understanding levels-based marking

All extended response questions are marked using a **levels-based mark scheme** (see below) rather than point-marking. These mark schemes have two sections:

It is important that students have looked at the **levels descriptors** in the SAMs, or Specimen Papers, and are familiar with their demands and the language used in them:

- The levels descriptors make it clear what is required to gain a particular mark band.
- Generic responses, not supported by place-based evidence and examples – or those which fail to make judgements and come to conclusions – may not be able to access the higher bands in the levels descriptors.

There are a number of misconceptions about levels-based marking that are useful for centres and their candidates to understand.

1. There are no 'hidden hurdles' or 'golden tickets' in levels-based mark schemes. Examiners select whichever levels descriptors best fit the answer in front of them. Answers may not meet all the criteria in one level but, nonetheless, be best placed in

that level. Similarly, an answer that, for example, contains material that satisfies one aspect of, for example, a Level 3 response will not automatically be placed in that level in other aspects of the response do not meet the other criteria.

2. Although the mark schemes divide marks between different AO's - (AO2 and AO3 or AO3 and AO4) these are not then point marked within the AO categories. In other words making 4 points is not the same as satisfying the level descriptor, which will remain constant for the life of the specification.

3. The Indicative content of each levels-based mark scheme is not a definitive list of everything that candidates might offer but simply an 'indication' of the material that they might offer. Some excellent responses may include little or nothing of the published indicative content. This element of the mark scheme is often amended during the pre-standardisation and standardisation meetings when actual candidate responses have been discussed. It is also important to note that the language used throughout the mark schemes will not necessarily be that expected from candidates.

The five basic types of extended response questions

1. 'Assess' (Paper 1, 8 mark questions)

When answering this type of question, which does not have resources, the more successful candidates will use evidence (e.g. applying knowledge from a case study or located example, which is AO3) to determine the relative significance of something.

For example, in question 3e on Specimen Paper 1;

> (e) Assess whether economic development always leads to urban growth.
>
> (8)

Candidates would receive credit for information about one or more impacts of economic development (AO2) with knowledge and understanding drawn from the specification. However, to demonstrate the AO3 level descriptors, the candidate must consider a wide range of possible outcomes and explain why some may not lead to urban growth. Therefore, the AO2 marks come from an understanding of the different ways in which economic growth might lead to urban growth, and the AO3 marks come from the application of this information to different contexts and the reasoning as to why the pattern of this growth is very uneven including deindustrialisation.

2. 'Assess' (Paper 2 Sections C1 and C2, 8 mark 'familiar' fieldwork questions)

These questions will appear in either C1 or C2 and have no resource but examine the students' recall and understanding of their own fieldwork (AO4) and their ability to apply that understanding to deconstruct that information and provide connections between the various concepts (AO3). Obviously, the nature of those connections depends on the fieldwork that the student has undertaken. So, for example, question 8b on Specimen Paper 2 is set up in the following way;

(b) You have carried out your own fieldwork investigating the impact of coastal management on coastal processes and communities.

Name your coastal environment fieldwork location:

....

Using the conclusions from your geographical investigation, assess the accuracy and reliability of your results.

(8)

The AO4 level will be determined by the clarity of recall of the conclusions to their fieldwork using the appropriate geographical language. Whilst the AO3 level will be assessed by judging the effectiveness in which this information is used in assessing the accuracy and reliability of those conclusions.

3. 'Assess' (Paper 2 Questions 4 and 7 and Sections C1 and C2 unfamiliar 8-mark fieldwork questions and Paper 3 Sections A-C, Resource Booklet based 8-mark questions)

When answering this type of question, the more successful candidates will use the information drawn from the resources to establish patterns, inferences and connections (all AO4) before embarking on a deconstruction of that information in order to answer the question posed (AO3).

For example, in question 7 on Specimen Paper 2;

Assess the causes of variations in average weekly earnings in the UK.

(8)

Candidates will receive credit up to 4 marks for making the point that there is a very close relationship between weekly wages and job availability and/or that cities generally have higher wages than surrounding rural areas. However to access the AO3 marks available they would need to offer plausible reasons for these relationships offering evidence for these judgements. Therefore, the AO4 marks come from interpretation of the resource or resources whilst the AO3 marks come from the utilisation of that information to address the 'causes' of the variations.

4. 'Evaluate' variations on Type 1 and Type 2 above
When answering this type of question, successful candidates will use evidence (e.g. applying knowledge from a case study or located example, which is AO3) to measure the value or success of something and ultimately **provide a substantiated judgement/conclusion** – which can be a final paragraph or something that can be integrated throughout the response.

5. 'Select one... and 'Justify your choice' question on Paper 3 (AO2, AO3 and AO4)

- There is only one 'Select one and Justify' question – and it appears at the end of Paper 3 and is worth 12 marks (4 x AO2, 4 x AO3 and 4 x AO4) plus a further 4 marks for SPaG.
- Like the other types of extended response question, 'Justify' questions are marked using a levels-based mark scheme.
- The question will assess students' ability to develop extended written arguments and to use a range of stimulus material from the Resource Booklet and their own knowledge and understanding from the rest of the course to drawn substantiated conclusions about one or more of the themes from Topics 7, 8 and 9 of the specification.

Centres familiar with Pearson Edexcel GCSE Geography B will be familiar with this type of summative question in the Decision Making Exercise (DME). When answering this type of question, successful candidates will explore the strengths and weaknesses of different sides of an issue or argument and, more specifically the merits and demerits of three alternative options in tackling the issue raised.

There will always be multiple resources linked to this question, hence the 4 x AO4 marks, but candidates will also be required the describe and apply their knowledge and understanding from the taught detailed content from the People and Environment Issues section of the specification.

Successful responses will be able to investigate an issue/challenge in depth by providing a range of detailed reasons and be able to formulate strong arguments both for and against the three options in order to justify a choice of one of these options.

A booklet of examiner marked exemplars for Paper 3, including the 12 mark 'Justify' question, is available to download from our website.

Reasons for disappointment

There are several reasons why candidates under-perform in examinations and amongst the most frustrating, both for them, their teachers and examiners are errors made in deconstructing questions during the examination itself.

The points below are the most frequent encountered:

1. Confusion of command words (see Section 2 of this guide).

2. Failure to read the stem of questions – this is the material, often above a resource, which often gives important information about that resource.

3. Lack of familiarity with key terms from the specification – examples of this are 'demographic', 'function', 'drainage basin' and 'land-use' but there many others.

4. Overlooking small but often critical words or short phrases that establish the focus of a question. A common example is 'rapid' as in 'rapid increase in foreign direct investment'; another is 'always' as in; 'Assess whether economic development always leads to urban growth.' Others include 'For a UK city that you have studied, explain why regeneration has had both positive and negative effects on people' where 'on people' gets lost. A variant on this problem is the habit of morphing together two quite distinct ideas into one as in 'Using the conclusions from your geographical investigation, assess the accuracy and reliability of your results.' Students needed to distinguish between accuracy and reliability in their answers rather than leaving them as apparent synonyms in their answers as in; '…this affected the accuracy and reliability of my results'.

5. The unnecessary narrowing of the focus of a question – a good example of this is 'development' as opposed to 'economic development'. Faced with the former many students offer responses that are only concerned with economic development.

6. In the new specifications there are occasions when candidates will be asked to critique a resource or resources. This may occur in any one of the papers, but the most important examples are to be found in the 8-mark **unfamiliar** fieldwork questions found in Sections C1 and C2 of Paper 2. These questions usually present candidates with some aspect of a geographical investigation undertaken by 'students'. The scenarios are obviously based on possible and legitimate fieldwork exercises but the questions that follow will ask for a 'view' about some aspect of this fieldwork. In other words, there will be flaws to uncover and improvements to offer. Candidates should be encouraged to engage critically with the resources and not regard them as 'perfect' because they are found on an examination paper (please see Section 5).

A note on SPaG marks

SpaG marks are not insignificant and candidates should be made aware of this significance given that SPaG marks (12 marks in total across the three papers) represent 5% of the total marks available. Candidates should be made aware that;

1. It is only on one question on each paper that there spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed.
2. Therefore, they should pay particular attention to these three questions giving themselves at least a minute or two at the end of the examination to proof-read these answers.
3. Remember that SPaG is not just spelling – using a variety of punctuation, correct capitalisation and getting tenses right is very helpful.

Above all no answer or a completely incorrect response scoring 0 can never be awarded SPaG marks. Very short responses, given the shortage of evidence, will usually be capped at 1 SPaG marks.

Five strategies that students might use when answering questions

1. **De-coding or deconstructing the question** (**BUG** or **CUBE** the question)
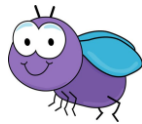
BUG the question

Box the command word

Underline the focus of the question

Glance back at the question as you write the answer

CUBE the question

Circle the command word

Underline the key geographical words that

Box any figures you must refer to

Explain the question in your own words

2. **Use of reflective language**
   A useful strategy to help students can get to grips with the demands of 'Assess', 'Evaluate' and 'Justify' questions is to use evaluative language in answers; when a student does this, it shows that they are considering different perspectives, arguments and positions:

3. Constructing an argument

The 'Justify' extended response question requires candidates to weigh-up several different sides of a debate, argument or contention and make a judgement; for example:

Students should approach this type of question by:

- Committing to a view. Make it clear what your main argument is from the outset.
- Accept, and offer evidence that all three options will have some strengths but also some weaknesses.
- Remember that there is no 'right' answer. All three options are defensible and all three will have some weaknesses.
- Recognise, and offer evidence, that the costs and benefits of any option will fall unevenly both geographically and over time. There will, in other words, be 'winners' and losers' and the most successful answers will focus on that.
- See that all decisions are ultimately made by governments so understand the varied relationship between governments, people and the environment.

4. PEEL

To avoid the problem of students merely writing everything they know in the form of a description, they need to practise explanatory sentences, supporting their statements with evidence and linking back to the question.

PEEL (Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link) sentence starters are a useful way to focus students and structure their responses to extended writing questions more effectively:

Point	Evidence	Explanation	Link
It has been suggested that…	Figure X clearly shows …	The trend in Figure X goes up because ….	With this in mind, it is evident that …
It is believed that…	This is supported by …	This shows us that …	Therefore, it is evident that …
Some people argue that…	This is demonstrated by …	It is clear from this that ….	All of this evidence demonstrates …
Many people believe that…	Figure X tells us that …	This evidence explains that …	This also links to the idea that …
One argument that…	Figure X suggests that …	This means that …	This is what I expected because …
One school of thought is that …	The evidence provided from Figure X suggests ….	This supports my argument because …	It is clear that …
One of the main causes/advantages …	The pattern on Figure X suggests …	This demonstrates that …	Therefore, I can conclude that …

5. Moving on from clichés – qualification and complexity

Clichés have their place – for example tectonic hazards do tend to kill more people in the developing world than they do in the developed world but;

1. These clichés can be qualified because there are exceptional events that kill many people in the developed world (e.g. the Japanese tsunami event (Tohuko) of 2011) and a large-scale event in southern Italy or Yellowstone National Park in the USA would result in very considerable loss of life.
2. A further layer of complexity can be added to this by pointing out that poor people, women and the elderly are more likely to die in tectonic disasters than other groups.

Recognising these qualifications and adding complexity is a very useful route to improving extended answers.

4. Marking the extended response questions

Guidance on interpreting the level descriptors.

Each level descriptor is linked to an Assessment Objective (see page 39 of the Specification).

Table 8 below suggests some practical ways of helping candidates interpret the levels descriptors:

Assessment Objective	How could a Level 2 student demonstrate this?	How might a Level 3 student demonstrate this?
AO2: Demonstrates geographical understanding of concepts and inter-relationships between how they are used in relation to places, environments and processes.	• Some use of appropriate geographical terminology. • Several ideas have been clearly described. • Some basic reasons have been given, but these are undeveloped. • Candidates might use 'hard to develop' rather than 'expensive to develop'. • Partial explanations don't burrow very deeply as in 'the tropical climate with its heavy rain makes deforestation more serious' – we are not told why this is the case. • Lacks the use of examples to support their answer and exemplification used is generalised e.g. 'Top down developments such as big dams often displace people'.	• Accurate use of geographical terminology. • Developed explanations showing accurate understanding of relevant processes and concepts e.g. • E.g. 'Some areas are remote so expensive to reach which makes them less connected so usually poorer' is Level 3 • E.g. 'Heavy rainfall removes the topsoil after deforestation which makes areas infertile because the source of nutrients has been removed' • Use of detailed and accurate place knowledge (located examples or case studies) to support their answer e.g. 'The Three Gorges Dam is believed to have led to 1.5 million people leaving their homes by 2012, disrupting their economic and social lives very significantly'.

Assessment Objective	How could a Level 2 student demonstrate this?	How might a Level 3 student demonstrate this?
AO3: Applies knowledge and understanding to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues to make judgements	• An imbalanced response, for example may focus mainly on the advantages, strengths and/or success of something, without considering the other side of the argument. • For 'Evaluate' questions, conclusions/judgements may be made but these are not wholly based upon evidence. • Some use of relevant located examples/case studies to support arguments. • E.g. a largely uncritical review of bottom-up development is contrasted with a number of critiques of top-down development such as their reliance on central planning, lack of sustainability (often left unexamined but just stated although that is sufficient in itself) and expense.	• A balanced, well-developed argument that recognises the complexity of an issue and considers a range of factors linked to both sides of the argument. • For 'Evaluate' questions, different perspectives are weighted up and a conclusions is reached that is supported by evidence. • Effective use of located examples or case studies to support evidence used to formulate a conclusion or judgement. • E.g. Bottom-up development cannot, for example, provide the infrastructure of road, rail lines and telecommunications so critical for development whilst bottom up projects such as the Grameen bank have been criticised by some as doing something for poverty relief but nothing for wealth creation.
AO4: Selects, adapts and uses a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions and issues, and communicate findings.	• Some evidence of use of the resource(s) or the enquiry process that the student has been asked to study. • Some evidence from the resource(s) or from their own fieldwork has been extracted and included in their answer. • Answer is supported by the use of geographical skills and has communicated fieldwork findings or resource evidence with some clarity using relevant geographical terminology occasionally. • E.g. 'We interviewed lots of people but we didn't have enough time' or 'Figure 7 shows that the south of the UK is much better paid than the north'.	• Evidence from the resource(s) and their own fieldwork has been 'lifted', but also manipulated and/or analysed to investigate the issue or concept. • Frequently uses evidence from the resource(s) and their own fieldwork to add depth to explanations and make links between geographical theory and the context used in the question. • Addressed all relevant aspects of the enquiry process and their answer is supported by the use of geographical skills. Communicated enquiry-specific fieldwork findings with clarity, and uses relevant

		geographical terminology consistently.
		• E.g. 'We interviewed 40 people although some were probably interviewed twice. Interviews were rushed as we only had 40 minutes in the town centre' or 'Figure 7 shows that south east England has by far the highest wages although even here there are pockets of low wages as in East Kent'.

Table 8

5. Examiner marked exemplars with commentaries

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Each of the exemplars are responses to questions on the Specimen Papers that can be accessed on the Pearson qualifications [website](#).

- The responses were written in a variety of situations in a variety of centres, both as end of topic tests and as a part of longer 'mock' examinations.

- In the case of those answers being a part of a 'mock' paper it is not known if the student's time management allowed them to complete the paper.

- Although initially marked internally, the marks have been subsequently amended or agreed by senior examiners.

- Obviously enough, none of the students had completed the GCSE course when producing these answers; some were in Year 10 at the time of writing.

- All responses have been typed from original hand-written responses – spelling has been corrected and grammar adjusted to clarify meaning where necessary. Thus, where applicable SPaG marks have not been assessed.

- Although no 'Evaluate…' question is included here the general guidance is only distinguished by the need to 'come to a view' in 'Evaluate…' questions whereas that is not a necessity is 'Assess…' questions.

Exemplar answer 1

Specimen Paper 1: Question 3 (e)
This question has not resource and has 4 mark for AO2 and 4 marks for A

(e) Assess whether economic development always leads to urban growth.

(8)

Urbanisation goes together with economic development because like Rostow said there will be a take-off when industry grows quickly. He wrote an economic theory that explained why countries developed. What happens is that industries grow in concentrated places and to get people to work in them they are taken from the countryside. This happened in Birmingham where metal industries grew and at the same time farming was changing over to a more mechanised form so less workers were needed. This meant that Birmingham grew and village around it didn't grow and even shrank. Birmingham grew at over 20% every 10 years in the 19th century. However, deindustrialisation set-in in the late 20th century as many industries closed or moved away so population declined. At the same time more people owned cars so that they could commute from the surrounding area so the villages started growing again – this is called counterurbanisation. Whether this always happens is a bit controversial. If deindustrialisation is part of economic development then obviously this doesn't lead to urbanisation at all but the opposite. At the same time there are different types of economic development that don't have to happen in cities like research and development that can happen in rural areas, like the Cambridge Science Park and Silicon Valley in America. Rostow didn't have a stage Age of High Mass Consumption but he could have done. But either way the answer is no, not always.

Examiner commentary

This is a Level 3 answer and was awarded 8 marks in total (4 x AO2 + 4 x AO3).
Level 3 answers 'demonstrate accurate understanding of concepts and the interrelationship between places environments and processes' (AO2) which allows the student to 'apply understanding to deconstruct information and provide logical connections between concepts throughout. A balanced, well developed argument that synthesises relevant understanding coherently leading to judgements that are supported by evidence throughout'.

- There is a good range of evidence / reference to the urban case-study with some data (AO2).
- There is good understanding of the processes of economic development derived from the Rostow model (AO2).
- The student addresses 'always' directly and also tries to provide contrary evidence about different types of development and different types of industry (AO3).
- Although lacking paragraphs there is a structure to the answer with a very clear conclusion (AO3).
- The language used verges on the colloquial but is clear enough.

Exemplar answer 2

Paper 2: Question 7
This Question has a resource and has 4 marks for AO3 and 4 marks for AO4.

Analyse the data in Figure 7 which shows average weekly earnings in the UK in two different ways.

Assess the causes of variations in average weekly earnings in the UK.

(8)

When looking at Figure 7 it is obvious that the highest wages in the country are found where the most jobs are found. That is in London which is obviously really important with huge numbers of jobs but also the M4 corridor which shows up on the map on the right especially. The map on the left is a bit deceptive because when you look at the low wage areas (coloured dark blue) where wages are only £267-£359 a week they look important but they tend to be on the edge of the country, like Cornwall which has very few jobs when you look how shrunk it is on the right hand map. There are a couple on anomalies on the map – one of them is in the north of England and one is in Scotland, maybe Edinburgh. Coastal areas tend to have low wages.

The reasons for these variations is basically London which is super-dominant in the UK with huge numbers of jobs in banking and law and such like with high wages from TNCs who have their top offices there (e.g. BP). This is even true with Brexit coming. Government is also based there and there are huge numbers of jobs working for them. And then the multiplier creates more jobs because all of these people buy food and such like so shops have lots of jobs. Meanwhile coastal areas like Cornwall have few jobs except badly paid jobs in tourism which is seasonal and unskilled so pays not much. Edinburgh is a capital city so there are probably better jobs there explaining that anomaly.

Examiner commentary

This a Level 3 answer and was awarded 8 marks in total (4 x AO3 + 4 x AO4):

- The answer is divided into two paragraphs with AO4 dominating the first paragraph preceding a second paragraph which is largely AO3, as it often will in student answers.
- The student makes several useful points about the message of maps.
- The second paragraph includes a sophisticated interpretation of the map information, it is worth remembering that it is the ideas that matter and not so much the quality of the English - this is strong AO3.
- Other answers would interlace AO4 descriptions from the resource with AO3 explanations – in this case probably the better route.
- It is also worth remarking that although the answer has geographical errors the 'logic' is consistent e.g. Edinburgh.
- As is often the case in stronger responses the student is able to extend interpretation by using relatively straightforward economic ideas such as the multiplier which are useful AO3 attempts at synthesis.

Exemplar answer 3

Specimen Paper 2: Question 8(b)

This question and its parallel question (9b) are both an examination of students' ability to apply AO3 skills to their own investigation (i.e. familiar) which is AO4 thus although they have no resource, they have their own skills and techniques used in their geographical investigation and the way in which they communicated those findings.

(b) You have carried out your own fieldwork investigating the impact of coastal management on coastal processes and communities.

Name your coastal environment fieldwork location:

_____

Using the conclusions from your geographical investigation, assess the accuracy and reliability of your results.

(8)

Named coastal environment – Dorset coast

We studied two beaches in Dorset so that we could compare the way in which they were managed and whether this affected the rate of erosion on those beaches. One beach was at Swanage and the other was in Studland – one of them has much more hard engineering that the other one. We had a hypothesis that was mostly about Swanage, that the size of beach material would vary less along this managed beach than it would at Studland. So, we sampled beach sediment size on both beaches in six different locations along the beach to test this idea. What we found out was the sediment was much finer at Studland and it didn't vary much along the beach but at Swanage is was generally larger diameter and it varied much more. This was not what we had thought to be true.

Our original idea was that because of the groynes at Swanage trapping sediment there would be less variety in sediment size but actually that wasn't the case. Some of our samples were a bit rubbish because we took them back to school in plastic bags but one or two might have got muddled up because they weren't labelled properly, or the labels washed off. We weren't very careful about out site selection either along the beaches with some groups being much closer to the cliffs. So there were accuracy problems but a big reliability issue was that there had been quite a big storm two or three days before went and some of the cliff at Swanage had collapsed which would have made a difference, Basically however the hypothesis was wrong because when we looked at the geology maps later it was obvious that Studland would only really have fine sand because that was the only rock there, so nothing much to do with groynes and sea-walls!

Examiner commentary

This a Level 3 answer and was awarded 8 marks in total (4 x AO3+ 4 x AO4):

- This is a long answer which may well have impacted on the performance elsewhere in the examination but it is both carefully and colourfully presented.
- There is detailed place-specific AO4 information about the chosen location(s) throughout and a competent description of the processes and the conclusions built around a hypothesis, also AO4.
- In the AO3 analysis of these conclusions in terms of the question asked, both accuracy and reliability are addressed and at least three comments made suggesting that the conclusions might be flawed both by poor design (rock type variations) and poor execution.

Exemplar answer 4

Paper 2 - Question 10 (c)

A group of 20 students carried out questionnaires in two contrasting inner city areas on a Thursday afternoon.
They asked 40 randomly selected residents about the area they lived in (Area A or Area B).
They gave them three statements about their area.

Statement 1 (S1) – 'Crime is a major problem in your area.'
Statement 2 (S2) – 'Noise is a major problem in your area.'
Statement 3 (S3) – 'Litter and graffiti are major problems in your area.'

The residents were asked to either:
strongly agree
agree
disagree
or strongly disagree with these three statements.

The results are shown below on Figure 10, presented as divided (compound) bar graphs
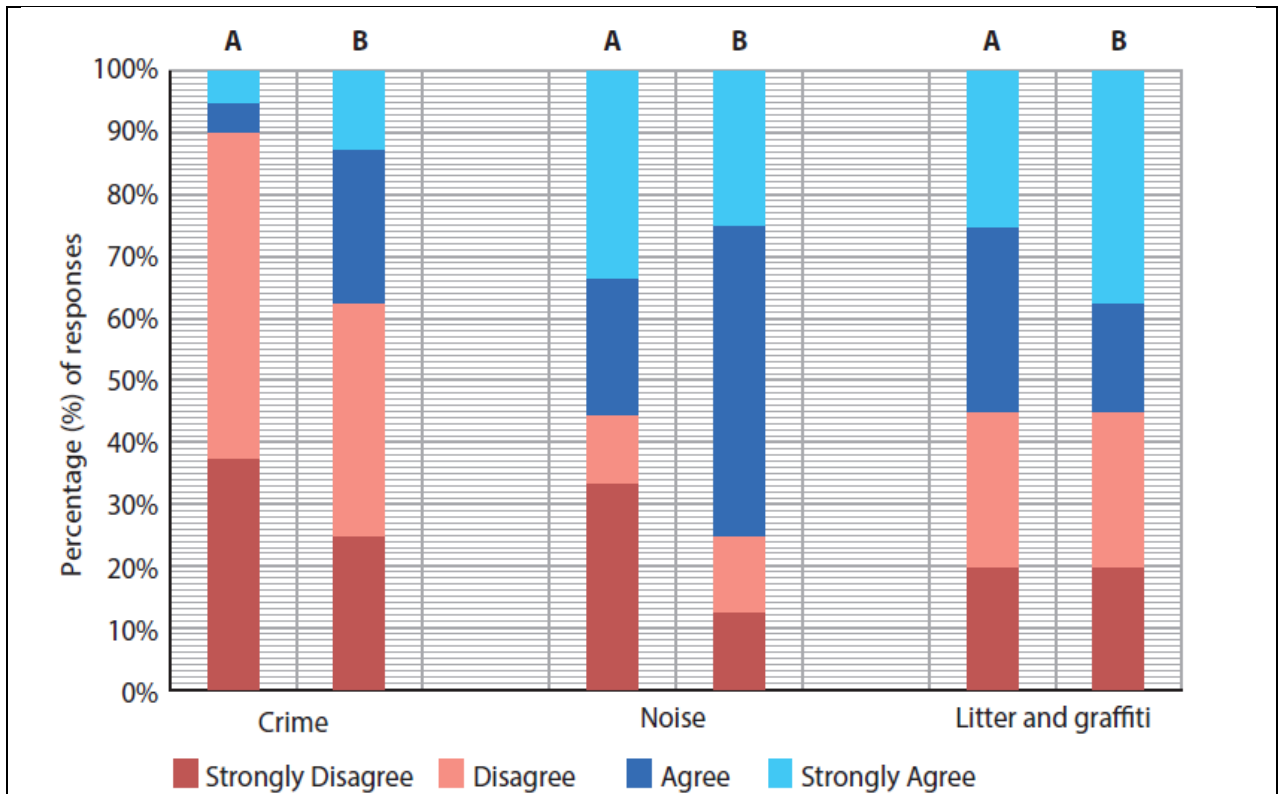
Figure 10

The students concluded that urban Area A had a better environment than urban Area B.

Assess the evidence for this conclusion.

This question and its parallel question (10c) are both an examination of students' ability to apply AO3 skills to an unfamiliar geographical investigation which will offer some detail about investigation in the form of a resource with an accompanying explanatory commentary. (please refer to the resource and commentary on Page 28 on the Paper 2 Specimen Paper)

The first thing to say is that crime, noise and litter are not the only things that might matter about an environment. When we did our urban work we also measured traffic, and also asked people about things like the shops and the schools. So, this survey isn't the be all and end all; it isn't very broad. We also have no idea about who they asked – Thursday afternoon is not a great time to ask school kids or people with an actual job so they are likely to be old or unemployed or bunking off. That makes it a bit dodgy to draw conclusions and 20 isn't many supposing that it quite a big place. Actually, even the results given are not too clear. The results are pretty much a draw for litter and graffiti and although the other two are a bit on the side of Area A we would need to know a bit more about these interviews before we could be sure that they were fair. When we did our fieldwork some of our group just made up their results because they couldn't be bothered to actually do it so it wasn't at all reliable. It only takes one of two results to be different to turn this all around. So maybe we shouldn't accept the conclusion.

Examiner commentary:

This a Level 3 answer and was awarded 8 marks in total (4 x AO3 + 4 x AO4):

- This is a relatively brief answer (214 words) but with a mark a minute as the basic rule on these papers, it is about right given the need to interpret the resource rather than to write from memory.
- The AO4 analysis is excellent with a very good recognition of what the fieldwork does say but also what it doesn't say. It lacks data which would be useful but compensates in terms of its recognition of the general design of the fieldwork.
- In the AO3 analysis of the students' conclusion both the (dubious) accuracy and reliability are addressed and several comments made suggesting that the results might be flawed both by poor design and poor execution with many of the comments apparently based on the student's own fieldwork experiences.
- This is a very good example of the need for students to 'read' these questions with great care. For example, this answer makes a point of questioning the 'Thursday afternoon' timing for data collection – many other students from the same centre either didn't 'see' this or failed to see it as being significant. Every word counts! Be critical! Think geographically!

Exemplar answer 5

Specimen Paper 3: Question 4

*4 Study the **three** options below for how the tar sands should be developed in Alberta.

> **Option 1:** Expand development of the tar sands beyond the existing mining area. Build further pipelines to the USA to support the economy of both Alberta and Canada. Invest in new technology to permit the development of deeper mines.

> **Option 2:** Continue to mine within the current area. Only allow strictly controlled exploitation in new areas if TNCs guarantee to clean up after mining. Replant trees to provide new timber resources and recreational areas.

> **Option 3:** Stop mining the Athabascan Tar Sands. Convert both existing and former mines to wilderness areas to be run by First Nation peoples. Develop strategies for diversification of Alberta's economy. Provide more green renewable energy for Canada.

Select the option that you think would be the best long term plan for both Alberta and Canada as a whole.

Justify your choice.

Use information from the Resource Booklet and knowledge and understanding from the rest of your geography course of study to support your answer.

(12)

Chosen option: _____

Chosen option: Option1

We are not able to guess the future and we have never run out of a resource yet. If we can help mankind by developing tar-sands then we should do it. Esther Boserup argues that human progress is actually a result of getting close to running out of resources because it makes us inventive so perhaps global warming is not such a threat after all – there are lots of geo-engineering ideas about cooling the planet that will balance out any problems from burning fossil fuels.

As the booklet shows both Alberta and Canada have become quite dependent on tar-sands and it would seem that it is mostly Canadian companies involved so the money might stay at home which doesn't always happen with TNCs. In any case TNCs are not so bad because loads of pensions and insurance companies need them to do well so if they do Ok, we all do OK. Locals get jobs and because Alberta is getting lots of tax revenue perhaps education and health care are better. Of course, the price of oil can go up and down but with cheap oil running out the long-term is most likely to be an increase making tar-sands more profitable. Over 800,000 jobs are reliant on it and Canada isn't a huge country, so this is pretty important, and this number is likely to increase as oil runs out

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elsewhere. Critics might say that this doesn't help the environment but if we can make enough money out of tar-sands we can help restore that environment. As the Finance Minister says they need to diversify and they can do this will oil money. In any case no-one worried about this environmental stuff in the industrial revolution.

The other two options might seem better but are not. Option 2 is just a compromise that makes no sense. If the resource is worth exploiting, then go for broke – if not then stop altogether. This way no-one gets what they want and political discontent would spread. A few people might think that this helps but they haven't got a moral case. You either do it or not – doing it a little but is just silly.

Option 3 might please a few environmentalists which are usually quite rich anyhow and some of the Indians seem in favour although others clearly get jobs in the industry so there would be tensions there. In any case they can have hugely better living conditions if the money form oil goes to their communities. No-one really wants to stay in these really harsh climates. Option 3 is like stopping progress and putting the clock back to some time when everyone knew their place. All in all the environmentalists want to stop progress and progress is more likely to solve problems than create them
So option1 is best for both the local people and the whole of Canada.

Examiner commentary

This a Level 3 answer and was awarded 12 marks in total (4x AO2 + 4 x AO3 + 4 x AO4):

- This is a relatively long answer at just under 500 words (which may well have impacted on the performance elsewhere in the examination) but, based on the legacy specification, it is not that unusual. Students should spend somewhere between 20 and 30 minutes on this question, so 400-500 words is at the upper end but not beyond expectations.

- The answer is explicit about its choice of option from the start and whilst recognising the potential counter-arguments they use AO2 material (on TNCs for example) AO4 material (see comments drawn from the introduction, Figure 6 and Figure 10) and constant AO3 deconstruction of that material.

- The answer engages in argument and counter-argument, recognises that there are winners and losers although not always explicitly so.

- Strongest perhaps in its AO2 critical appreciation of the issue (cheap oil, Boserup etc.) it also satisfies the other level descriptors for an excellent Level 3 response.