



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary Level in Geography (WGE02)
Paper 01 Geographical Investigations

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Introduction

This report is about the July 2025 series for assessment of WGE02: Geographical Investigations. There were about 810 entries.

Most candidates completed all questions, but some wrote overlong answers for 1 or 2 mark questions. Some made mistakes on questions 3c and 3d and wrote about the incorrect part of the route to enquiry, but overall candidates lost marks this way. The quality of three of the four fieldwork questions showed a slight improvement compared to 2406. However, some did not know what 'secondary data' included for the 12 mark question and wrote about the wrong part of the route to enquiry, scoring few marks.

Sound answers were seen for all parts of the paper from many candidates, with many scoring 8 marks for 1b and 2b, out a maximum of 8. The modal mark for each of these questions was 6, whereas the modal marks for each was 5 in 2406.

Overall Q5 (Investigating Urban Problems, Planning and Regeneration) was considerably more popular than Q4 (Investigating Crowded Coasts), with approximately 500 candidates answering Q5 and 300 answering Q4. A few candidates answered both questions, which is not a good use of time in the examination.

Reports on Individual Questions

Question 1ai

Most candidates were able to identify two erosion processes occurring in the photograph shown in Figure 1. Most frequently stated were abrasion/corrasion, attrition, hydraulic action and corrosion/solution. Incorrect but frequently seen were sub-aerial weathering processes such as freeze-thaw or biological weathering or else mass movement processes, particularly cliff fall or landslides. Candidates need to be clear about these processes.

Question 1aii

Many candidates were able to score 2 marks here, with answers that said something accurate about destructive waves, and linked this to the effect this had on a beach profile. Commonly seen answers said these waves have a strong backwash, or a high wave height and short wave length which had the effect of removing or eroding material from the beach, or that it made the profile steeper. Comments saying they were frequent or caused erosion but failed to say how were not sufficiently clear to score a mark.

Question 1b

The two 8 mark essays are designed to be broad and allow for candidates to examine the themes and bring their own interpretations.

This essay title allowed for a straightforward essay structure which assessed the influence of geological structure and lithology on the rate of coastal recession. There were many strong essays seen which wrote paragraphs on these two factors and made links to how coastal recession was affected. Good answers made reference to different rock types and their resistance to erosion and recession, and the best were able to explain the reasons for this. Answers which discussed bedding planes, dip and faults and how these made coastlines more susceptible to recession showed the 'detail and development' needed for higher marks.

Some scored marks by discussing concordant and discordant coastlines, and the relative hardness and softness of rocks, which hints at some understanding of lithology. Such answers

often failed to explain much about geology although reference to examples of hard and soft rocks did help here.

As the question asked about 'influence', a legitimate approach was to argue that coastal management could reduce rates of recession, as long as there was also discussion of the roles of geological structure and lithology. This approach was often seen in answers which scored 5 marks or above. Other physical factors could also be discussed, such as fetch and wave energy and the role of vegetation, but fewer answers discussed these. Essays that failed to make reference to rates of recession missed out on the AO2 marks as they did not make logical connections to the question as a whole.

Many answers did not mention the word 'success' at all, which was a shame as this was an easy route to 'examine' and often provided a framework to open up access to higher level 2 or level 3 marks.

Question 2a

This question required candidates to study the graph to identify the trend of increasing house prices and then to identify two possible problems that this would cause. There was no mark for describing the trend itself.

Many said that people might not be able to afford housing (1) and they might have to live in informal housing (1) or move to the edge of the city or elsewhere (1). An increase in crime was not creditable, but an increase in protest was legitimate, as was a decrease in the workforce, and a growth in overcrowding as more people share housing. The two problems did not need to be explained, as the command word was 'identify'. The two ideas must be different, so lack of affordability and increased rents only scored 1 mark as they are too similar.

Note that there were only 2 marks available here, so a lengthy answer which repeats the question and explains the problems was a waste of time in this examination where some candidates find they experience pressure to complete the whole paper.

Question 2b

Most scored at least 1 mark on this question about one way that the informal economy affects inequalities.

Commonly seen answers discussed low wages and children having to work, but often did not develop the point for a second mark. Some were scored 2 by saying that workers in the informal economy often did not pay tax, so therefore the government was unable to invest in education or improvements in infrastructure such as housing, so inequalities continued. Another way to score 2 marks here was to explain about the conditions of work in the informal economy, for example working hours not being regulated, so therefore people were exploited by having to work long hours for low pay.

Some explained that the informal economy helped reduce inequalities by providing employment, even if low paid, so workers could earn an income through buying and selling or providing services. This was a creditable approach to the question. Answers that described inequality such as saying some were rich and some were poor, or that many were employed in the informal sector, did not answer the question or score a mark.

Question 2c

This question asked about the success of solutions used to reduce urban transport problems.

The question was answered reasonably well, with most achieving at least mid-marks. Many wrote generalised answers, which could still reach level 3 if a range of geographical knowledge and understanding was applied to find fully relevant connections or relationships, such as providing criteria by which success could be measured. Better answers were clear about which urban transport problems were being addressed, such as attempts to reduce car usage, or to reduce congestion or pollution, or the costs of transport.

Examples that were used effectively were bike rental, electric buses, park and ride schemes, taxes or congestion charges on car use. These examples were used to greater effect when specific place reference was included, and detailed examples were seen about the long distance electric tram in Dubai, and the closure to traffic of selected parallel streets in Barcelona. Specific locations allowed candidates to assess how effective the solutions were by referring to positive or negative impacts on people and businesses, and costs to government.

Some answers lacked a specifically urban focus, writing more generally about India or Greece, and these lacked the detailed and development needed, as well as the assessment, for a high level 2 or a level 3 answer. Others understood urban transport as being between cities, rather than within a city.

The mean mark was slightly higher on question 2c compared to question 1b.

Question 3 is the 'familiar fieldwork' section where candidates are asked to write about fieldwork they have carried out themselves. Each sub-question is likely to be taken from a different section of the 'Geographical investigation process', as outlined in Appendix 8 of the specification.

Question 3a

This year's opening question field work question asked candidates to explain the aims of their investigation. As usual, candidates were asked to provide the title for their investigation, and this year 1 mark could be scored for this, and for some candidates it provided a way for them to score a mark if the rest of the answer was too vague or undeveloped.

A commonly seen route to 3 marks was to state that the fieldwork aimed to investigate the success of a regeneration, which was extended through explaining how it aimed to find out how many people use the area, and who these people are i.e. whether they are tourists or locals. Another route was to explain that the investigation of pollution was achieved through visiting selected parts of the city (2 marks).

Question 3b

This question asked about how candidates managed one risk when fieldwork was collected. 1 mark was available for stating the risk itself, and a further 2 marks for explaining how this was managed. Many were able to gain at least 2 marks here.

Commonly seen risks and management approaches include:

- Getting lost in an unfamiliar place, so stay in a group and exchange phone numbers/wear high -visibility clothing (3)
- Risk of being hit by and injured, so work in pairs and always crossroads at official crossings (3)

- Risk of sun damage from UV rays on my skin, so apply sunscreen beforehand and carry an umbrella to be shielded from the sun (3).
- Risk of being cut off by the tide, so check the tide timetables before leaving and plan carefully to ensure you have a safe escape route (3).

Question 3c

The 6 marks question this year was about sampling strategies. Candidates were provided with support in the stem of the question as it said that data had been collected by students at different locations, sites and/or times. Candidates were asked to explain how this improved the reliability of their data. Candidates' answers varied in terms of their length and complexity. The mean mark was 3.83 which is higher than for this 6-mark question in the past.

Answers discuss the benefits of a larger sample which might provide a greater variety of answers and a fuller representation of the whole population, and how anomalies might be identified through a larger sample size. This could be in the context of questionnaires or measurements at a beach for example.

Other candidates were able to say that they contrasted morning, lunchtime and evening times of the day or to visit a coastline in both the summer and the autumn for contrasting pictures of sediment movement.

To reach level 3, candidates needed to address the idea of reliability specifically, for example by explaining why a wide range of locations or times of the day or week or year was needed. This would enable candidates to make statements about the representative picture obtained, or how equipment was properly calibrated to minimise errors. Another route would be to explain how by using random or stratified sampling, bias would be avoided and the target population would be represented as fully as possible in the samples collected.

Few candidates were able to explain stratified sampling accurately or to exemplify it with reference to their own data collected, however some did begin to show an understanding of why this might be done, for example by saying they interviewed 10 tourists and 10 local people to contrast opinions. Some candidates quickly slipped into describing their methodology or primary data collection, which was not relevant to this question unless they were able to focus on the location sites or times of the visits. Some candidates went round in circles and repeated themselves.

Question 3d

Most candidates were able to write something about how secondary data was of value in their geographical investigation. Support was provided to candidates through support saying that both the planning and analysis stages of the investigation were likely to have involved secondary data, and some candidates used this approach to structure their 12-mark essays.

For example, candidates wrote about how Google Maps was useful in helping in understanding what an area looked like and planning the choice of route and sample locations. This enabled distance to be calculated so that a suitable number of locations could be planned according to the time available.

Another route was to discuss the use of previous investigations by students in the past to give ideas about data collection methods. Such studies could enable candidates to compare how a place had changed over time, since the regeneration took place for example. Many mentioned the use of past photos for comparison.

Candidates scored higher marks if they were able to explain in detail how the locations were chosen, for example saying that Google Maps showed where metro stations were in relation to major arterial roads, so candidates were able to select appropriate streets to measure noise levels. Such answers were more successful than those who merely listed ideas, as they were not explaining the use of the secondary data sources.

Evaluation was seen in answers which discussed how some data might be biased if it was from a local council, as they might put forward a more positive viewpoint than local people themselves. Some candidates were able to compare the value of one secondary data source against another, for example by saying that the times of high tide obtained from a tide timetable and an accurate weather forecast were the most useful secondary sources used, because they enabled the students to stay safe.

Candidates could refer to primary data if it was in the context of secondary comparisons for example looking at past data sets of the amount of litter found on a beach with present day information collected by the students themselves.

It was pleasing to note that this year, most candidates appeared to know what secondary data was, meaning that level 2 marks were obtained by most candidates. However, there were a few seen where answers were entirely about how the data was collected or why it was suitable, which failed to refer to secondary data. Other candidates wrote about graphs they used and explained what they learned from them, so this was also irrelevant, unless they were able to discuss the use of maps for example to locate divided bar graphs to compare data collected at different locations.

Questions 4ai and 5ai

Question 4ai and 5ai asked for an advantage (2 marks) and disadvantage (2 marks) of using a mobile phone to record data. A mark was earned for a suitable idea, and if extended scored a second mark in each case.

Some answers were too vague for a mark, such as being easy to use, as this needed to say more about in what way, or compared to what? For example, (1) was scored for saying a phone was easy and less time-consuming to record data. 2 marks were scored for saying a phone was easier to use than paper (1) which could disintegrate when wet or be blown away (1).

1 mark was also scored for answers that identified ways the phone might be used, such as to take located photos, or for recording noise pollution in decibels. The latter was extended by saying that sound recordings could be kept and listened to in a quiet environment to enable more accurate comparisons to be made.

Disadvantages seen included the phone battery dying (1) so data cannot be recorded at the later stages of the field work, affecting the completeness of the data and its overall validity (1). Others said sand might get in the charger port (1) so no further data could be recorded (1). Or that recording data on a phone, such as slope angle, wind speed, photos or decibel levels was poor (1) compared to the use of specialist equipment which would provide more precise measurements, especially when different phones were used across groups (1).

Ideas that applied equally to paper were not allowed, such as losing the phone or being portable. The risk of theft of the phone was allowed.

Questions 4aii and 5aii

The majority were able to describe the relationship shown on the graph between the percentage of bare ground/noise levels and distance. Most scored marks for saying levels decreased with distance (1) and that there was an exception at 300m (1). Some said this was a negative relationship or that there was a direct correlation. Some said as distance increases, so bare ground/noise decreases. As long as two different ideas were stated, both marks were scored.

Questions 4aiii and 5aiii

Most achieved a full 2 marks on this question. The candidates needed to read the maximum and minimum levels from the graph and subtract them to provide the range. A number read the numbers correctly but made an error in the subtraction. Candidates are advised to check these maths questions twice as a mark is easily lost.

Questions 4aiv/5aiv

Only about 50% were able to make the right selection on this multiple choice question. Candidates were asked which sampling approach was used. As the points were evenly spaced, the correct answer was 'systematic'.

Questions 4b/5b

This question required candidates explain why a conclusion based on a single photo was unreliable. Most were able to score 2 or more marks here, with comments about there being only one photo so there was nothing to compare it with, or that it might be biased and not show the complete picture of the location. Another approach was to explain why the location shown might not be sustainable in terms of the suitability of the replanting scheme for 4b or the availability of public transport or high levels of pollution because of the many roads in 5b. Either approach or a combination of the two was acceptable.

