

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE B Geography 5GB04_01
Researching Geography
Controlled Assessment

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General Comments

May 2012 has witnessed the third cycle of moderation for the new controlled assessments (CA) in GCSE Geography. Once again the background to change is again worth considering at this point. QCDA was charged with making the legacy coursework both fairer and more manageable and controlled assessment was the end result. The GCSE B Geography team also 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.

On reflection, controlled assessment has exposed 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.
- 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 2012

Administration:

Administration as overall was better than in 2011, and most work arrived on time and carrying the correct documentation. Centres are however reminded that:

1. Moderators 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 and 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. 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 does not 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.

The FAQs in Appendix 1 may provide some useful reminders.

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. Thank you to all those centres who annotated the candidate mark sheet. This makes the moderation

process easier; it may also indicate internal moderation which larger centres should be carrying out.

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. 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 student's 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:

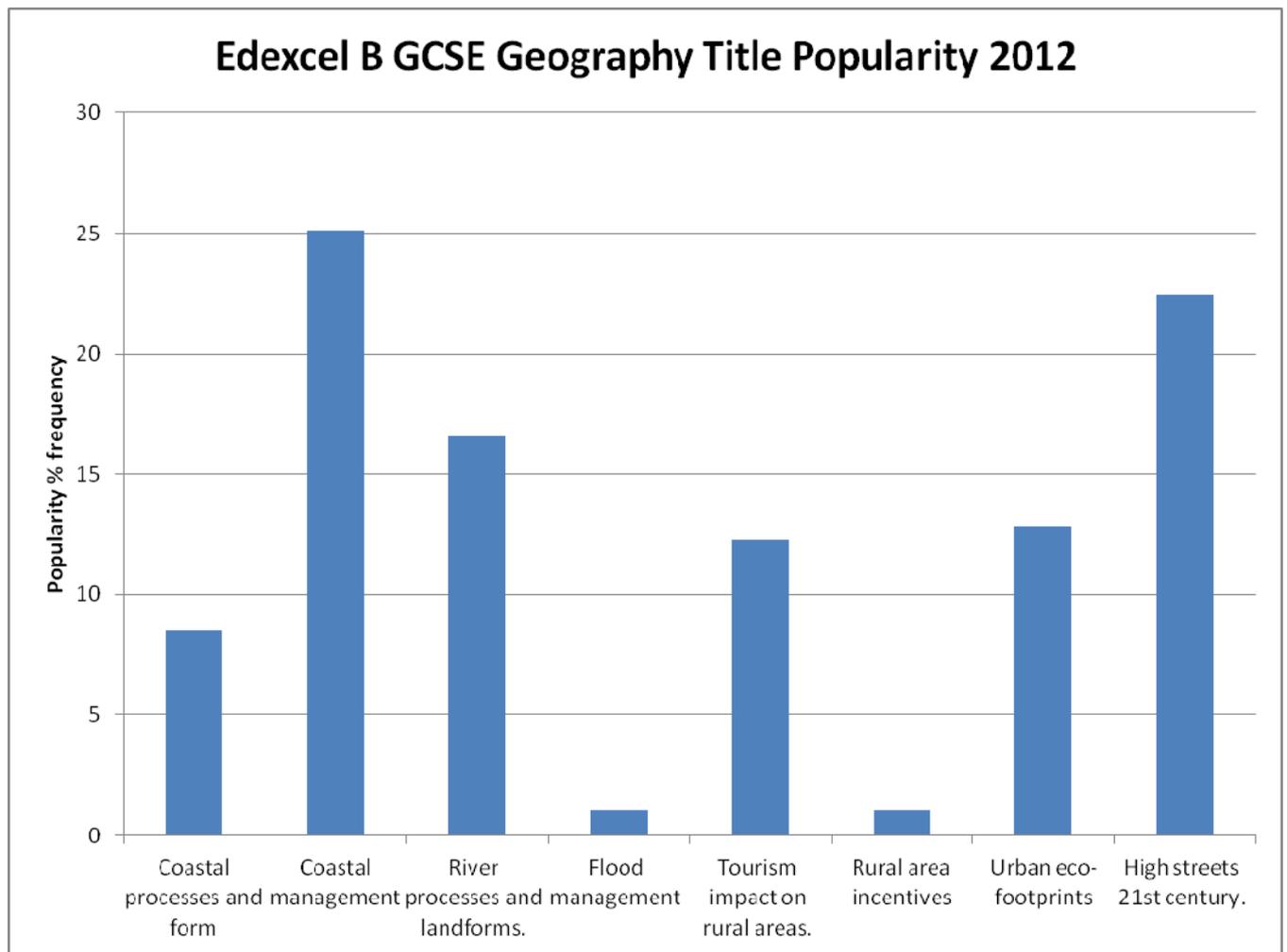
Moderators reporting increasing take-up of more sophisticated GIS and visualisation techniques. A growing number of centres are using approaches that allowed students' to plot their results on digital overlays using software such as Google Maps, Google Earth and Aegis. It was also acknowledged, that 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 large sample of the cohort.



Good Practice and suggestions for improvement:

As expected there was considerable variation in the quality and approach to CA by centres. It was sometimes worrying to 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. See Appendix 2. There is also 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 events are planned for autumn 2012 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*. Look out for additional support in Autumn 2012.

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

Section	Good Practice	Poor practice
<p><u>Planning Phase</u></p> <p>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>	<p>Using this time to get the students to work in groups, develop their own research.</p> <p>Candidates also working on Key Qs / hypotheses etc.</p> <p>Finding out about the background of places; researching any relevant models and theory</p> <p>Planning mapped into the investigative process.</p>	<p>Ignoring the 5hrs so no planning phase provided.</p> <p>Telling the students what they will be doing ('top-down').</p> <p>Not giving enough direction / support / training on how to start an investigation or enquiry.</p>
<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>	<p>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).</p> <p>Justify the choice /context of study in the introduction (this may be linked to a theory or model or geographical process).</p> <p>Link the choice made in (b) to the Task set by Edexcel.</p> <p>Uses <i>selected</i> additional secondary data and research to add depth to the study.</p>	<p>Too many questions / hypotheses, not well linked to focus of Task. Some Centres using >7.</p> <p>Poor quality maps, barely GIS (no scales etc). Don't locate the study within region.</p> <p>No reference to models or relevant background information.</p> <p>Selection issues – too much irrelevant info (lift-offs).</p> <p>No reasons as to why the study is important, e.g. wider geographical significance.</p> <p>Model or theory may be absent or not well linked to the aims.</p>

<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>	<p>Well designed planning phase with a selected range of techniques linked to the aims and focus.</p> <p>Detailed understanding of techniques; may refer to sampling and justify number of sites, surveys etc.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Too many techniques used with no real understand of how or why each technique might be relevant. Too much 'Scattergun' approach (<i>more is not always better</i>).</p> <p>Little or no sampling and appreciation of methods, e.g. why number of questionnaires was chosen.</p> <p>Tables may be used which are too simplistic and don't allow any 'stretch' through the poorly chosen headings.</p> <p>No real evidence of any digital maps (GIS) being attempted.</p>
<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>	<p>A limited, but well selected and appropriate number of graphs and other techniques to showcase results.</p> <p>Imaginative and intelligent use of GIS / web visualisation.</p> <p>Work carefully presented – neat and clear with axes, titles etc.</p> <p>Correctly organised and paginated – follows a logical sequence.</p> <p>Good use of geographical terminology.</p>	<p>Little variety – only simple graphs ('pies and bars' and photos which are not well selected and lack geographical context.</p> <p>Work presented with little attention to detail or care, e.g. missing units, titles etc.</p> <p>Geographical terminology absent or incorrectly used.</p> <p>Work may be poorly ordered, or in worst cases, incomplete.</p>
<p><u>(4) Analysis + Conclusions</u></p> <p>As this is under high control candidates must already be</p>	<p>Writes logical and organised descriptions, and precise explanations; concise and succinct style.</p>	<p>Interpretation is poorly sequenced and structured.</p> <p>No overall patterns recognised</p> <p>Very descriptive in style;</p>

<p>'skilled-up' in the process of carrying out and analysis and evaluation. Work can be supported with Department handbooks that give detailed guidance (but not writing frames). For many students this level of support is vital as no formal feedback and support can be provided at this stage.</p>	<p>Patterns and trends are identified; may use analytical tools (see below) to help with data</p> <p>Work shows and understanding of the 'bigger picture' and can make links and connections.</p> <p>Links theory / concepts etc to help explain results; may be able to critically evaluate.</p> <p>Links back to original Task and focus.</p>	<p>doesn't use figures to support.</p> <p>Poor quality hypotheses / Qs lead to a lack of focus, particularly away from the original task set.</p> <p>Poor time management 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>	<p>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.</p> <p>Reviews and evaluates the fieldwork process (may include reference to secondary information).</p> <p>Ties the localised Task back to the one set by Edexcel.</p> <p>May look for wider significance about why the study was important.</p>	<p>List of excuses as to work the results 'didn't work'.</p> <p>No linkage to original Task.</p> <p>Always more data = better results ('if I had more time').</p> <p>Bad weather was of major concern....as was the role of other members of the group.</p> <p>Poor equipment let them down.</p>

Additional notes on 'analytical tools':

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

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

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

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.

Appendix 1 – Edexcel B GCSE Geography Controlled Assessment FAQs.

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

a shorter piece of work should be more coherent and more focused. You should be prepared to reward a full range of marks to a more refined piece of work. The initial Edexcel sample CA's provide a useful starting point. Training and feedback on marking is also available both as face-to-face training and online.

- How 'technical' does the GIS have to be? This is entirely up to the Centre, staff and its students. For some schools digital maps will be sufficient, for others they will be able to produce some more sophisticated work using Google Earth or Aegis. Refer to the published GIS document from the Edexcel website and Communities Forum.
- Do we have to annotate the controlled assessment during marking? **No**, but would be beneficial to justify decisions on the mark scheme, e.g. use of underlying + comments etc on the mark sheet. This will help with both internal cross-moderation and external moderation.
- Can I give feedback to students about the quality of their work? **Yes**, but only under **limited control**. The feedback can be oral only. It is not permitted to provide written feedback on any draft of a student's work. There is no feedback allowed under high level control. Some Centres have suggested the use of self-evaluation- frameworks (as used in the Edexcel CA Workbook <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Edexcel-Geography-Controlled-Assessment-Workbook/dp/1846906962>).

A student can then revise and review their work before the final submission, but it must be at the appropriate level of control.

- Can students work in groups? **Yes** this is fine under limited control. Collaboration may be a good approach particularly when doing the research aspect – ideas can then be pooled. Individuals should then **select the materials** which are suitable for the particular enquiry (they should also be encouraged to re-work to provide an element of individuality). Careful selection is going to be important, so that the work and resources always remain focused on the individual aims or hypotheses. It is essential, however, that any of this group data used by a student is clearly identified as his/her own contribution to the work, i.e. 'an individual response'.
- Is a student is able to choose his/her own title for an enquiry? **Yes** – it is a good idea to allow candidates to have ownership over their work and the enquiry process, especially in terms of a particular focus. Alternatively candidates can be separated (differentiated) into groups to work on shared titles / aims / hypotheses. There is no requirement to do individual titles / aims, but a Centre may choose to do so.

This may allow greater stretch and differentiation amongst the cohort. Of course, all written up work must be completed on an individual basis.

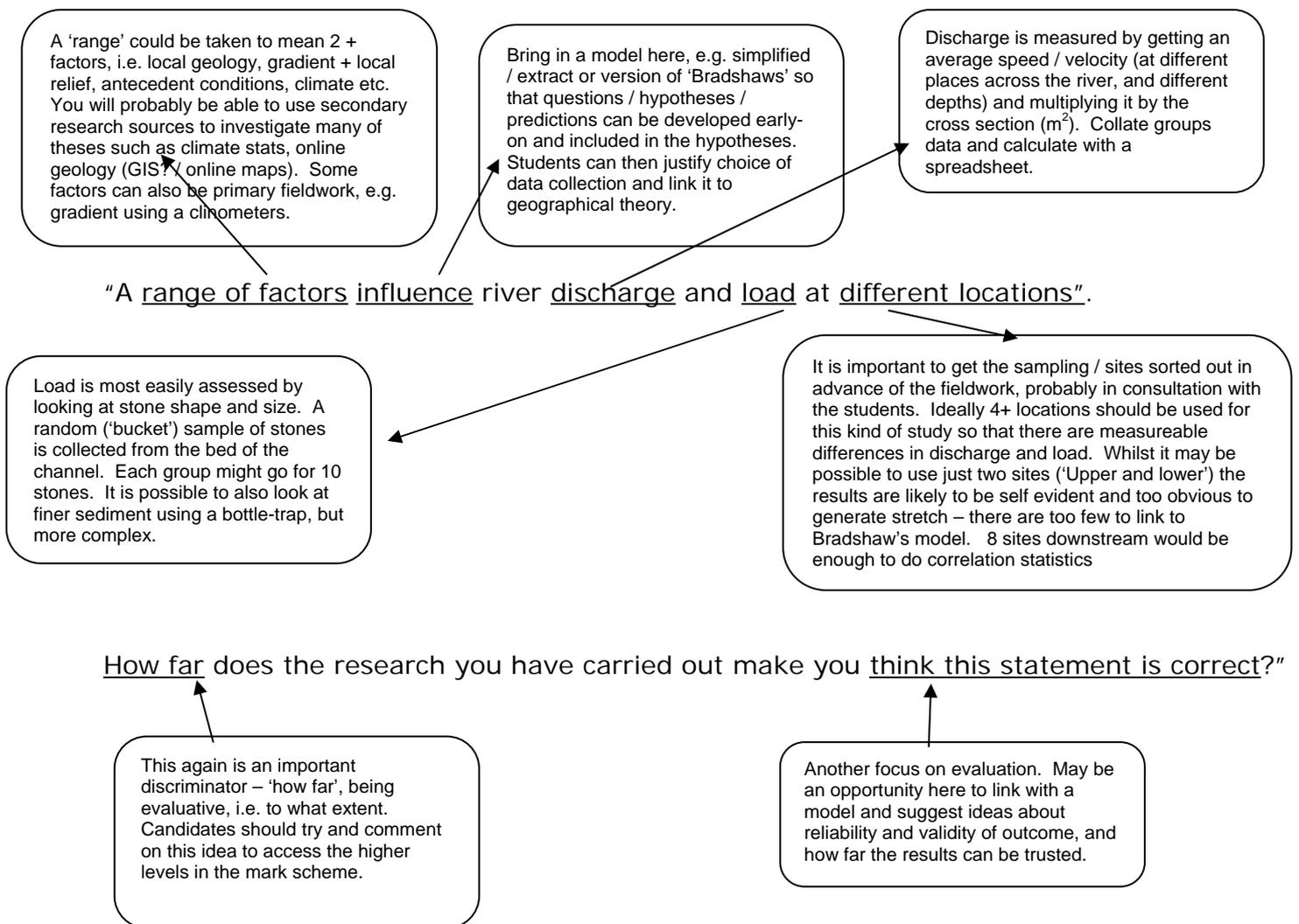
- How many hypotheses etc? The expectation for an enquiry is that the students **focus on a (manageable) single hypothesis, aim or issue**. This is partly to ensure that the work can be done within the time limit and word count and that work is not done simply to show that a different hypothesis or issue can be studied to the same standard. It may, however, be appropriate as part of the introduction or methodology, to sub-divide the starting hypothesis into a set of small questions, each of which can be researched using different field study techniques.
- Is the use of ICT optional for data presentation? **Yes**. ICT is only required to demonstrate GIS / digital maps. Obviously ICT will be an advantage for some types of data presentation, but may not be as suitable for other types. **There is no need to turn off the spelling and grammar check** as you would with an exam, even under high control.
- Students can be given different amounts of time to complete tasks? Yes, but **within realistic boundaries**. These are included to provide a strong steer as to the amount of work that students are expected to produce. If the section of work is suggested to take 4 hours then some candidates may complete in 3 hours other may need 5 or so. Again, we would expect you to use your professional judgment here. Work must be fit for purpose and it would be unfair (and a breach of regulations) if Centres disregard the time limits.
- Students are allowed a practice with an assessment task? **Yes**, this might be a good idea, especially for those schools working on a 3yr GCSE. The task, however **must be different** to the one that is going to be used for assessment. It can however share similar fieldwork techniques or be at a similar (or the same) location. The focus and outcomes must be different.
- Are students are allowed to write more than the recommended number of words? 2000 words (or equivalent) is recommended. This does not have to be rigidly applied, and there is **no formal penalty** for overlong work. Indeed it would be very difficult to apply word counts on different modes of work, e.g. videos, presentations etc. However, it should be stressed that work should be **an appropriate length** and fit for purpose. External moderation will certainly check for discrepancies in length (or time taken) to ensure fairness across Centres. Grossly overlong work would imply that the regulations of controlled assessment are not being correctly applied.

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

Appendix 2 – Contextualising the Task.

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

The example below shows how a physical theme might be interpreted and 'unpacked'.



Possible focus titles for the Task.

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

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

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

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