Your Guide to Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar in Edexcel GCSE Geography B (Evolving Planet)

For assessment from summer 2014 onwards
Why has SPaG been introduced?

In 2011, the Department for Education announced that SPaG would be introduced into the assessment of four GCSE qualifications: English Literature, History, Geography and Religious Studies. In each of these qualifications 5% of the total marks must be allocated to the assessment of candidates’ spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Therefore, for GCSE Geography B, with a total of 259 marks, 5% of the total is 15 marks for SPaG. (SPaG marks must be allocated in increments of 3 marks per question).

How has SPaG been applied?

In Edexcel’s GCSE Geography B, SPaG marks will be assessed in Sections B and C of Units 1 and 2, and the last question of Unit 3. SPaG is not assessed in Unit 4 (controlled assessment).

Marks for Quality of Written Communication (QWC) remain unchanged throughout the GCSE Geography B qualification.

How will SPaG be made clear on the exam paper?

There will be an instruction for candidates on the front cover of the exam paper and before any question that has SPaG marks available. Beneath the question we will indicate how many marks are available for SPaG for that question.

There are examples of how SPaG will be applied to the questions on pages 3-5 of this guide.

Sample exam question with SPaG assessment - Unit 1/Section B (Foundation Tier)

SECTION B: SMALL-SCALE DYNAMIC PLANET

Answer ONE question in this section

Topic 5: Coastal Change and Conflict

If you answer Question 5 put a cross in this box. ☒

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in *(c) (ii).

*(ii) Using a named coastline, explain how both hard and soft engineered works are used to manage it.

Named coastline

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) in GCSE Geography B (Evolving Planet)

The following exemplars provide examples of exam questions with SPaG, followed by the SPaG mark scheme.
Sample exam question with SPaG assessment - Unit 1/Section C (Foundation Tier)

**SECTION C: LARGE-SCALE DYNAMIC PLANET**

Answer ONE question in this section

Topic 7: Oceans on the Edge

If you answer Question 7 put a cross in this box. [x]

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in *(c) (ii).*

*(iii) Using named examples, explain how marine eco-systems can be managed sustainably.

(6)

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(Total for spelling, punctuation and grammar = 3 marks)

(Total for Question 7 = 15 marks)

SPaG mark scheme – Unit 1/2/3 (Foundation/Higher Tiers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPaG Level 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Errors severely hinder the meaning of the response or candidates do not spell, punctuate or use the rules of grammar within the context of the demands of the question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| SPaG Level 1 | 1    | **Threshold performance**
Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with reasonable accuracy in the context of the demands of the question. Any errors do not hinder meaning in the response. Where required, they use a limited range of specialist terms appropriately. |
| SPaG Level 2 | 2    | **Intermediate performance**
Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with considerable accuracy and general control of meaning in the context of the demands of the question. Where required, they use a good range of specialist terms with facility. |
| SPaG Level 3 | 3    | **High performance**
Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with consistent accuracy and effective control of meaning in the context of the demands of the question. Where required, they use a wide range of specialist terms adeptly and with precision. |

Sample exam question with SPaG assessment - Unit 2/Section B (Higher Tier)

**SECTION B: SMALL-SCALE PEOPLE AND THE PLANET**

Answer ONE question in this section.

Topic 5: The Changing Economy of the UK

If you answer Question 5 put a cross in this box. [x]

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in *(b).*

*(b) Using named examples, examine the costs and benefits of developing both brownfield and greenfield sites.

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(Total for spelling, punctuation and grammar = 3 marks)

(Total for Question 5 = 15 marks)
Teaching and learning advice

Teachers and candidates should note that SPaG is essentially made up of two strands:

a) Spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately

It is likely that many schools will have whole-school policies on literacy and on the marking of students’ work for SPaG. Students’ levels of ability in SPaG are likely to vary significantly from school to school and some teachers may also find that EMAS and SEN staff have resources and strategies to help certain students.

One aspect of grammar that examiners often comment on is the frequent use of ‘would of’ and ‘should of’. There are also occasional scripts with use of text messaging language and students should be made aware of the need to use formal language in examinations.

Where appropriate, SPaG can form a useful focus for starter or plenary sessions in lessons. Across all units there are key words; some focus on spelling. Straightforward activities for students with less-developed literacy of some students’ spelling. Straightforward exercises for students with less-developed literacy will benefit the assessment of key terms for students. Where appropriate, this could form a useful focus for starter or plenary

b) Specialist vocabulary

There are key words for each of the examination units so teachers might like to draw up a glossary of key terms for students. Where appropriate, this could form a useful focus for starter or plenary sessions in lessons. One straightforward activity could be students orally explaining key vocabulary without using the term whilst other students have to correctly write down the word.

Teachers and students should also note that using specialist vocabulary often saves candidates valuable time during the examination as well as demonstrating geographical understanding.

Note: Teachers and students should note that it is entirely possible that some candidates may achieve a Level 4 mark for their main response, yet only achieve Level 1 or below for SPaG. Similarly, a candidate marked at Level 1 for their main response could still gain full marks for SPaG.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why has the DfE decided that spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) are only to be assessed in English Literature, History, Geography and Religious Studies?

These four subjects have large entries and contain questions that require extended answers. This enables a learner to be assessed on these skills without the assessment of these skills overshadowing their subject knowledge.

How will SPaG be implemented for GCSEs in English Literature, History, Geography and Religious Studies?

The awarding of additional marks for SPaG will affect some externally assessed units taken from January 2013 for English Literature, History and Geography, and from June 2013 for Religious Studies. The additional marks for SPaG will be worth 5% of the total marks for the qualification.

How will question papers indicate to candidates which questions will involve the assessment of accurate SPaG?

There will be instructions above the relevant questions on the papers indicating to students that their spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in that question. They will also be able to see the number of marks available for SPaG for that question.

The assessment of SPaG will be indicated on the front cover of the exam paper, as a rubric and in the question. The number of marks available for SPaG will be indicated both on the front cover and in the question.

Why is a weighting of 5% for SPaG considered appropriate?

A weighting of 5% is considered appropriate as it signifies the importance of these skills but does not assign them so much value that they overshadow subject knowledge.

Further frequently asked questions will be added to the website www.edexcel.com/gcse2012geographyB
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