
AS

Geography

7036/2 Human geography and geography fieldwork investigation
Report on the Examination

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General

Students sitting this unit produced a wide range of performance generally improving on marks achieved on last year's paper. It was particularly pleasing to see considerable improvements in performance in section B (Fieldwork) with a higher proportion of students achieving Level 2 marks or above. Overall, although students continued to perform at a higher level on Section A (Changing Places) than on Section B there was a noticeable narrowing of the gap between the two. It is envisaged that, as centres become more familiar with the new specification and assessment objectives, further improvements, particularly in fieldwork investigation skills will be made.

The paper as a whole proved to be generally accessible to students across the ability range; whilst stretching and challenging the most able, it allowed those of seemingly moderate ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, particularly in relation to their studies of place and understanding fieldwork investigation processes. Students seemed to use their time effectively and there were very few who failed to complete the paper due to time constraints.

Marks awarded for the three different assessment objectives are relatively evenly spread throughout this paper and it is worth reminding centres again how these have impacted upon how the papers are marked.

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of places, environments, concepts, processes, interactions and change, at a variety of scales.

AO1 is a fairly traditional assessment objective and was worth 26 marks of the overall total on this paper. It tests knowledge in isolation and recall of specification content. Multiple choice questions and short tariff questions are all testing AO1. The bulk of the AO1 marks available are in Section A. Learned material as part of the course of study should be used to support answers. This includes the use of case studies, as required by the specification. AO1 also forms the basis of longer responses and should provide the knowledge and understanding of the specification content used to underpin the 9 mark and 20 mark questions.

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues.

This objective accounted for 25 marks of the overall total on this paper, (15 in Section A and 10 in section B). AO2 represents a significant departure from previous approaches to the way in which questions are set. It is the synoptic assessment objective. Previously, papers set generally broad and overarching questions, which allowed students the opportunity to bring in their own synoptic links. The key difference now is that links, which students are expected to respond to, are provided within the question by the question setter. Students are expected to respond to links made in the following ways:

- Elements not specified within specification units; i.e. 'novel' situations which students are required to apply their knowledge and understanding to. These types of question will always be accompanied by a resource.
- Links made by the question setter within specification units which are not signalled in the specification.
- Links made by the question setter across specification units which are not signalled in the specification

AO2 therefore encourages students to apply their knowledge to unseen material in the examination, exploring links within and across units and to novel situations.

Teachers should ensure that their students understand that learning subject knowledge from a course textbook, without considering a range of potential connections between different aspects of their study, will only secure a limited outcome in the examination. Between 30% and 40% of the AS level examination will be assessing this approach to synopticity.

Some students continue to be better prepared than others in responding to this element. Instead of applying their knowledge to the context of the question, many students simply repeated specification content and case study material with only limited analysis, meaning the majority of marks gained were for AO1 only. Answers commonly lacked application of knowledge to the context of the question and consequently were not awarded more than a few AO2 marks, especially on the longer 9 and 20 mark questions.

Centres should be aware that both the 9 and 20 mark questions will no longer have direct links to identified specification content. Students need to be prepared to utilise their knowledge and understanding of content, concepts and processes. This should then be applied to the context of both of the longer questions in section A, rather than a narrative approach of reciting learned materials, which the more limited responses demonstrated.

AO3 – Use a variety of relevant methods and techniques to:

- *investigate questions and issues*
- *interpret, analyse and evaluate data and resources*
- *communicate findings*

AO3 accounted for 29 marks on the paper and these skills were tested whenever a stimulus resource was used, predominantly in Section B. Optional questions 3 and 4 only assessed this objective.

Students demonstrated varied achievement when using these skills, for example performing generally well when analysing the multi-stimulus material in question 1.3, but less well when evaluating the fieldwork investigation with a similar array of information in questions 3.4 and 4.4. Interfacing with the stimulus material rather than applying their knowledge is still something that students need to focus their attention on to gain more AO3 credit.

Section A

The theoretical aspects of the Changing Places topic are certainly becoming embedded and it was particularly noticeable that the terminology associated with the theory was well used to support responses. Nearly 73% of students achieved Level 2 and higher on question 1.5 (9 mark question) and around 53% were credited with at least Level 3 marks on the 20 mark essay (1.6), though more modest proportions of the total reached the top level in each (17% and 10% respectively).

Some excellent essays were seen and many students achieved full marks by showing comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their 'distant' place and how the character of these places had been affected by flows of people and by other factors. However, more students must be prepared to deconstruct the questions, identifying the command words and the AO2 links they are required to make and thereby answer the question in a more purposeful manner.

The only negative comments to consider regarding assessment of the Changing Places topic are:

i) On this paper, questions asked specifically for references to be made to either 'local' or 'distant' places depending on the nature of the question. It is evident from responses seen that there is some 'interchangeability' in the use of 'local' and 'distant' places by students. Certainly, this goes against the 'intention' of the specification and students should be encouraged to apply their knowledge and understanding to the appropriate place set in the question. It is also evident that students may be self-penalising by selecting to use a distant place for local (and vice versa) as the depth and detail of knowledge of some aspects of place may not be as relevant and familiar in the context of the question.

ii) Relating to this, is the 'scale' of place studied. A significant minority of students were answering questions about 'place' at an inappropriately large scale. This is particularly true of questions relating to local place, but was also true of distant places. For example it is difficult to outline cultural characteristics, social inequalities, built environment changes and even the impact of flows of people with any depth or detail when considering these aspects for somewhere like London as a whole, or even Birmingham or Manchester. The better responses tended to narrow down to areas within these cities.

Question 1

1.1

Given that choropleth maps are listed in the cartographic skills list in the specification, it was disappointing to discover that over one third of students gave an incorrect response to this question.

1.2

Students fared slightly better with this multiple choice question with 72.50% making the correct choice.

1.3

In the main this question was addressed reasonably well with a named place followed by specific identification of either cultural characteristics or social inequalities. Over 50% of students achieved either 2/3 marks. However, given that these are two optional aspects of studying a place, it was surprising to see that many students either referred to both and did not distinguish between them or alternatively named one aspect but then addressed the other in their response.

For clarification, cultural characteristics were considered to be those focusing on how people live their lives and what is in their surroundings culturally including anything related to foods, customs, clothing, language, religious beliefs, ethnicity, associated buildings and architecture etc.

Social inequalities, on the other hand, should have focused on what people's lives are like with particular reference to access to health, education, etc. and overall quality of life including issues relating to housing, crime and deprivation. Some responses trying to address social inequalities mistakenly focused on economic inequalities and characteristics.

The more popular choice was cultural characteristics and those addressing this generally fared better by providing supporting facts such as census data on ethnicity. Credit was neither given for other demographic characteristics such as age (unless specifically related to culture) nor for

economic features such as income, types of jobs etc. A very small minority did not name a place, which meant that no credit was given.

1.4

This proved to be one of the most accessible questions on the paper with over 60% of students achieving Level 2 credit. Most were able to draw out some ideas from the three figures provided about the improvements and regeneration of Salford Quays.

Those remaining in level 1 tended to be mainly descriptive often taking each figure in turn in a piecemeal approach. However, the majority of students demonstrated a good understanding of the meaning of representation and, even when looking at each figure individually, were able to link similarities or contrasts between the different resources. Other ways of accessing Level 2 included the identification of recurring themes through the figures and connectivity, infrastructure and tourism in particular were referred to. Alternatively, many good responses demonstrated an understanding of the promotional nature of at least two of the figures, suggesting how and/or why there might be a possible/probable bias or lack of accuracy in the representation of Salford Quays.

1.5

The synoptic aspect of this question could have proven to be demanding as students were expected to link three things in their discussion. Firstly, the idea of either or both continuity and change and secondly, relating this idea to the built environment in their local place. Finally, how this continuity and/or change may have affected other people's and their own perception of the place. However, many students dealt with the synoptic demands reasonably well and 56% were given Level 2 credit, though only 17% reached Level 3.

This question in particular proved difficult to tackle if students opted to 'use' their distant place as a basis for their answer. A wide range of locations was seen, demonstrating that the majority of students used their local place study to respond, though some that seemed like textbook case studies were also seen. It was relatively uncommon for students to address all aspects of the question fully or in detail as many tended to focus either on built environment changes or otherwise covered very little on the built environment but instead concentrated on changing perceptions.

A large scope of features was accepted as built environment, including managed parkland and transport infrastructure as well as appearance such as changing retail outlets (even if buildings remained the same). Some students' local place seemed to have not lent itself well to the question because of limited change but they could, and some did, make more of the effect of continuity in the built environment. Alternatively, providing there was some discussion of the role of the built environment, students were credited for consideration of other factors (continuous or changed) that may have had an impact on perceptions of a place.

Perceptions were generally clearly understood and covered well. Citing fieldwork with examples of the responses of locals helped to give some authenticity to the responses. However, many answers drifted into contemporary urban environmental issues such as the conflicts surrounding urban development and the differing views on these projects, rather than being focused on perceptions of a place. These types of responses were credited to an extent as they still had some relevance to the notion of changing built environments and perceptions of what might be, rather than what actually exists.

1.6

The synoptic links being sought were those of flows of people (which could include tourists and commuters as well as migrants) and their importance in developing the character of the distant place they had studied. A wide range of characteristics was used and accepted as ‘character’ including social, economic and political aspects as well as the built environment but the most commonly explored were demographic and cultural characteristics.

A range of different case studies of distant places were included in responses though some proved to be more commonly used, notably: Brick Lane/Spitalfields, Stratford (East London) and Detroit. With these well-rehearsed case studies, the need for more practice in linking their content and details to the command of the question became evident, in order to prevent case study regurgitation. Weaker responses relied heavily upon this learned place-study detail, without always clearly linking such material to the terms of the question. These responses were predominantly descriptive and narrative, gaining mainly AO1 credit but little, if any, AO2.

The command phrase was to ‘assess the extent’ of the importance of flows of people, which meant that students could have assessed the relative importance of other factors (where relevant) in developing the character. In most places, people flows have played at least some role in developing their character. In some cases, however, the contribution of the flows of people may not have been the most important factor, alternatively, the flows may have been triggered by other factors and thus become an inherent effect of the character rather than a cause. (For example, flows have been extremely important in the development of the character of Detroit. However, of at least equal importance were the economic boom in the early 20th century that triggered the flows in the first place and the more recent economic decline resulting from global competition that has contributed to the city’s decline in more recent times.) Unfortunately, many students struggled with this idea and may have, by implication, mentioned a range of other important factors that contribute to character in their discussion but failed to clearly address these as part of their assessment.

Those essays achieving Level 3 and Level 4 credit were typified by evaluative conclusions that considered the relative importance of a number of factors, including flows of people, and were well supported by the main content of the essay.

Section B

Students appeared to be generally better prepared for Section B than they were last year and most of the questions proved accessible with reasonable marks gained on the point marked questions in this section. However, many students still struggled with the level marked questions relating to their own fieldwork, with only one in three students accessing Level 2 on question 2.4 and although the majority (51%) were able to access at least Level 2 on 2.5 only 11% were credited at Level 3. Generally, there seems to be an underlying inability to be clear and specific when explaining various aspects of their own fieldwork. Indeed, students performed considerably better in general on the other level marked questions in the section (3.4 and 4.4) when evaluating previously unseen fieldwork.

In preparation for section B, students are required to carry out fieldwork that is clearly linked to the specification. More centres seem to be undertaking local fieldwork either rooted in the Changing Places or Contemporary Urban Environments topics; clone town surveys and ‘Great Place’ assessments were a recurring theme. However, some centres seem to be relying on fieldwork that has no clear links with the current specification and is more associated with GCSE or legacy

specifications. Centres should ensure that AS fieldwork meets the specification requirements to enable their students to access the questions in Section B more assuredly.

Both topics for the optional questions 3 and 4 were contained in the Contemporary Urban Environments topic in the specification, with urban climate having a more physical geography inclination. Centres should be advised and assured that students could not be credited with any prior knowledge or understanding (AO1) of either urban forms or urban heat islands. Credit was only given for responses that focus on AO3 skills used in the interface with the resources named in each question. In the main this did not prove to be an issue except for a minority of responses to 3.1/4.1. Nearly two thirds of students opted for question 3.

Throughout this paper, students needed to engage with the resources and in future they should be encouraged to practise this throughout their AS course.

Question 2

2.1

This question was generally well answered with nearly 90% of students earning some credit. A range of valid responses was accepted, the most common of which were consent, confidentiality and anonymity when undertaking surveys, and permission of access and protection of the natural environment and property when undertaking physical geography fieldwork. As only one consideration could be credited, development point marks were given for explaining why it is a consideration, how the consideration is addressed or for giving examples.

Other ideas were seen including respecting people's culture and religious beliefs. Occasionally it was clear that there was some confusion of the term ethical with 'ethnic'. Other students were also confused by this term and discussed the validity or reliability of data collection instead of ethical considerations.

2.2

This question proved to be one of the most challenging and least accessible on the paper with nearly 25% of students gaining no credit at all. Again, atlas maps are listed in the cartographic skills in the specification and there was an expectation here that the map would be used to suggest fieldwork investigations that might be considered in the area. A further expectation was that both physical and human geography enquiries might be identified. Development marks were available but students had to cover **both** physical and human fieldwork for full marks.

Unfortunately, many students talked about the features they could see on the map without linking them to any type of specific fieldwork enquiry that they could investigate. The majority who did engage successfully with the question made a range of valid suggestions about both human geography (mainly centred on Norwich and its surrounding villages or the airport) and physical geography, often referring to coastal defences or longshore drift and the spit in the north, or to river studies on the River Bure.

2.3

Nearly 84% of students were able to identify at least one limitation of using the map. The most common responses related to the difficulty presented by the scale of the map, the lack of contours and information about topography of the area or the fact that only main roads were shown, and so knowing about available access to potential fieldwork sites was difficult. Many other valid suggestions were made, though a minority of students clearly missed the requirement of the question that two **different** limitations were given and tried to develop just one idea, for which there was no additional credit available.

2.4

The first question assessing the student's own fieldwork differentiated clearly between students and their level of understanding of fieldwork investigation processes. There was a reasonable spread of marks with 31% accessing Level 2 credit. Those with more, or more recent, fieldwork experience probably fared better as they were able to provide answers outlining exactly which data was analysed, accurately explaining how they had analysed this data and then going on to clearly justify why their approach was appropriate for the aims of the study (though limitations were also acknowledged).

Weaker responses saw students mainly just naming a technique used but the clarity of explanation and/or the link to their aims and objectives was tenuous, or identifying what data was actually used in their analysis was unclear to the examiner. These types of responses were usually credited at different points in Level 1 depending on the degree of explanation they provided.

A significant number either started with or drifted into data collection as part of their response and, while this was a journey that some students took before going on to explain their process of data analysis, others were apparently confused by the idea of analysis, considering only data collection and sampling methods in their responses. These responses contributed to bringing down the average marks on this question to 2.5.

2.5

The use of secondary sources of data is a clear requirement of the fieldwork investigation in the specification. However, it was disappointing to see the lack of importance given to secondary data in contributing to the conclusions of fieldwork investigations. Even more disappointing was the small but noticeable number of students who stated that they had not collected or used any secondary data at all as part of their enquiry. Generally, the contribution of secondary sources to an investigation seems to be at least underplayed, forgotten about or in some cases completely misunderstood as a valuable source of data to support analysis, or to explain anomalies and conclusions.

Many responses did not identify the secondary data they used and more basic answers mentioned the use of internet (again, not always clearly identifying a specific source) or maps. It was difficult for students to access Level 2 if they could not clearly identify the sources they had used.

The command in the question was to assess the contribution of secondary sources in their fieldwork investigation. Many responses that focused on this were able to compare and contrast the usefulness or importance of secondary data with their primary data in coming to a conclusion. A common assessment was that secondary data played only a supporting role, many often citing that their primary data was not only more important, but it was also more reliable. There were some very good answers that discussed how secondary sources such as census data, deprivation

indexes, crime statistics and house price information could be used effectively and in some cases such data was seen as essential or even critical in contributing to their conclusions.

Questions 3 and 4

Option 3 proved to be the more popular choice among students but there was very little variation between the optional questions in terms of quality. Option 4.4 scored on average higher than 3.4 on the 9 mark evaluation question, while 3.1 scored a little higher than 4.1 on the introductory question. Questions 3.2/4.2 and 3.3/4.3 proved to be equally accessible to students with students scoring an average of between 1.2 and 1.3 out of two marks on each.

3.1/4.1

Question 3.1/4.1 addressed the preparation and planning stage of any fieldwork investigation process. Students performed reasonably well given that they may have had minimal experience of doing this for themselves in the past. A wide range of relevant ideas for background reading and research were seen but students had to relate to Figure 4 or Figure 8 in some way to gain credit. No marks were given for prior knowledge of either urban forms or urban heat islands so that no unfair advantage was provided for those studying the urban environment topic in the specification.

3.2/4.2

Nearly half the students gained both marks on each of these questions. Many recognised the transect line as a form of systematic sampling and saw that it prevented bias while others understood that it offered a representative sample of housing quality/temperatures across Blackburn. Other common answers to both alternatives included that the sites were spread right across the city from rural-urban fringe through suburbs to the CBD to provide a good contrast of sample sites. A significant minority incorrectly identified the transect line as stratified sampling but many still gained one or two marks by making additional valid points.

3.3/4.3

This was a very accessible question for which the majority of students gained credit. Only one risk could be identified for a mark and the development point was only given for explaining why it was a risk. The most commonly identified risk was the traffic on the main road network through the town but a few mentioned the railway and river/canal crossings. Many responded by suggesting in a general way that care be taken because of the risk but no credit was given for mitigation measures.

3.4/4.4

Students with less experience of fieldwork seemed to find it challenging to synthesise all 4 resources and to see an overview of the fieldwork process, from geographical model through to planning of data collection. Consequently many using all 4 figures tended just to describe in a very general way what each figure was doing as part of the process and any evaluation was basic and intrinsic to these descriptive answers. In both 3.4 and 4.4 a small minority of students confused the models shown in Figures 3 and 7 as the data already collected for Blackburn.

Many responses focused on just one of the figures, most often Figures 6/10 the data collection outline, and provided a good clear evaluation of limitations of the methods shown. These questions proved challenging and therefore it was rare to see an answer that was able to evaluate in detail whilst also considering a number of the figures and thus to access Level 3.

It is apparent that many students still struggle with the interpretation and analysis of resources and how they need to use them in the examination. Having said this, nearly two thirds of students managed to access level 2 or above by providing some clear evaluation based on at least one aspect of the investigation. The better responses were those finding links between the different resources and seeing the investigation as one piece of work, thus giving a more holistic evaluation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.