
GCSE

GEOGRAPHY

Paper 3 Geographical applications
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It was clear that in the majority of cases students appeared to have been effectively prepared for the examination and were comfortable with the pre-release material. A significant proportion of students completed the examination paper and time did not appear to be a major issue. However a small number of students did not complete the paper or left gaps and of these a very small number did virtually nothing. Application of skills and fieldwork experiences appeared to be variable and a significant number of students did not identify their fieldwork titles appropriately. The inclusion of a number of evaluative questions did not appear to create major issues and it was evident that the majority of students were reasonably comfortable with this type of approach to examination questions.

Section A Issue Evaluation

01.1 – This question presented few problems and virtually all students selected the correct response.

01.2 – There were a wide variety of appropriate responses to this question. In many cases students used the resources effectively to identify issues of over-abstraction and environmental pressures. A significant number of students brought in other ideas, often relating to problems of water shortage, the need for water management or pressures on agriculture or manufacturing as a result of water shortages.

01.3 – The quality of responses was generally related to how effectively students used the resources. Those students who identified regional differences in supply (rainfall) and demand and then went on to suggest how water transfer schemes can help to manage this generally produced sound answers. Many students took this further by considering how other factors, such as regional population change and the longer term reliability of rainfall might also make water transfer schemes essential. Some students took a different approach by suggesting that conservation measures might reduce the need for large scale water transfer schemes. A number of students simply selected points from the resources with limited explanation or development. Whilst selecting appropriate information was creditworthy, the lack of explanation tended to be self-limiting. A very small number of students ‘hijacked’ the question and talked about climate change. Where this was linked in some way to the question students gained some credit; where there was simply a global context and no obvious link to the question it was not appropriate.

01.4 – A significant number of students found this question quite challenging and did not easily appreciate that long term plans are required in order to manage changing patterns of supply and demand and are a significant part of any sustainable water strategy. In most cases students either identified factors that might make planning important or brought in ideas about the need to respond to drought conditions. In a small number of cases they identified the requirement to work with the Environmental Agency. These approaches often gave sufficient understanding to move into Level 2, but were generally somewhat disjointed and lacked the coherence required for a detailed (Level 3) response. Those students who did provide a more holistic and evaluative response and brought in points about the need for planning in relation to the time and investment required to enact longer term strategies often produced thoughtful and perceptive answers.

02.1 – Responses to this question were variable and it was evident that for a significant number of students calculating area was quite challenging. A small number of students failed to attempt this question.

02.2 – A significant proportion of students did not appear to understand the word ‘relief’ and consequently described anything that happened to be in the area of the proposed reservoir. In most cases the identified points showed that students had selected the correct area. Those students who did understand the terminology generally scored full marks by identifying that the land was relatively flat and low lying or using the contours/spot heights to develop their ideas.

02.3 – The majority of students showed a good understanding of the basic geology expressed in the resources by expressing how clay is largely impermeable. A significant number of students used technical terminology while others simply suggested that it does not easily allow water to pass through.

03.1 – Virtually all students showed some understanding of the question and were able to use the resources in order to offer an appreciation of how the physical environment provides both social and economic opportunities. Given that there was an instruction to use the resources, the overwhelming majority of responses focused on the development of water based resources, although a small number of students also mentioned other types of physical environment, including coastal areas and highland areas. In general terms the quality of the answers was determined by the extent to which students fully addressed the command and instruction highlighted in the question. Those who clearly picked up on both social and economic opportunities generally scored highly, particularly if they were able to draw out specific links or consider multiplier possibilities. In general terms students who simply identified social (recreational) opportunities, often copied from Figure 3, achieved Level 1 marks. Those who developed this idea further by making some links to economic opportunities moved to Level 2 and those who offered more detail, drawing out specific links, for example, how recreational water sport opportunities might encourage the development of water sports centres, cafes and shops selling specialist water sports equipment, moved to Level 3.

03.2 – Very few students failed to attempt this question or scored zero marks. It was evident that the majority of students had been well prepared for this part of the examination and virtually all students showed that they understood the issue being considered. The quality of answers was largely determined by how effectively the points within the resources had been developed or linked in order to construct a discussion which supported the chosen position. Level 1 responses tended to be characterised by students who simply identified and largely copied points from the resources, in some cases virtually word for word. While the selection and copying of appropriate evidence was clearly creditworthy it did not generally convey any degree of evaluation or sense of the relative importance of different points within the resources. Those students who took this further by developing some of the evidenced points or offering a degree of evaluative thinking moved into Level 2. A more thorough and clearly evidenced and evaluative use of the resources to support the decision moved students into Level 3. These answers were often accompanied by a short conclusion which often brought the debate back to the original decision very effectively. A significant number of students offered impressively sophisticated ideas, for example observations about the distinction between short term costs and long term gains or observations about the debate between local and national interests. In a number of cases students made a particular decision and then proceeded to identify a far greater amount of evidence which opposed their original decision. While the idea of cost-benefit analysis is clearly an appropriate decision making tool and when used effectively can be very useful it is perhaps more logical when it supports the chosen decision.

Section B

04.1 – A number of students failed to attempt this question. For those that did attempt it, the question appeared to present few difficulties, although it was noticeable that a considerable number of students did not appear to use a ruler. In a small number of cases this led to a level of inaccuracy outside of the expected tolerance for this type of question. This is considered to be a basic skill, and as such there is an expectation that it should be completed to a high standard. Students should be encouraged to use rulers and practice using the shading in surrounding areas in order to reach a high level of accuracy and neatness.

04.2 – In most cases this question presented few difficulties and the majority of students were able to give some sense of ‘pattern’ by identifying areas with higher/lower percentages, in many cases using the actual percentages to emphasise the point. Using data to support observations is a very useful technique since it often helps to make the marks secure. A small number of students took a more ‘distance-decay’ approach and within this identified Wales as an anomaly. This approach often produced excellent answers, many of which went beyond the requirements of a two mark question. It was evident that a small number of students did not understand the idea of ‘pattern’ and some of these students simply named all of the regions with their data, effectively copying out Figure 4. Describing patterns from maps is a commonly assessed skill which really needs to be understood and practiced.

04.3 (a) The overwhelming majority of students suggested a reasonable and appropriate question in relation to the idea of conducting a visitor survey. The more commonly used examples focused on: reasons for visiting; length of stay; previous visits; would you return and age related questions.

04.3 (b) Responses to this question were variable and were often dictated by how the question in (a) was expressed. A number of students tended to virtually repeat the original question, for example asking the question “why did you visit” and then saying “it showed why people visited”. This approach was generally not very successful because it did not offer any real development. Those students who did develop their original idea, for example by saying “it showed how many visited for holidays or business”, generally produced more effective responses. Where a question has two linked parts (a) and (b) it is helpful to encourage students to look at both parts before they attempt the question so that they select an initial answer which will allow them to develop it effectively in the second part of the question.

04.4 (a) This question presented few problems and the overwhelming majority of students identified a bar chart/graph as an appropriate alternative presentation method.

04.4 (b) A significant number of students gave generic reasons such as, “it is clearer” or “easier to understand” which did not clearly relate to the specific reason for selecting a more appropriate method in relation to the given data and was consequently not considered creditworthy. Those students who did consider the nature of discrete data or made a point about accuracy in relation to monthly data gained credit.

04.5 - This question presented few problems and the overwhelming majority of students calculated the correct answer.

04.6 – The majority of students were able to identify appropriate advantages and disadvantages in relation to the environmental quality survey. The most popular advantages were; ease of data collection or calculation and the range of environmental factors considered. The major disadvantage considered was the subjective nature of the data.

04.7 - This question presented few problems and the overwhelming majority of students were able to plot the data in the correct position. A very small minority of students made an error by plotting the depth at 24cm.

04.8 – A minority of students either did not attempt the question or completed the line of best fit outside of the accepted tolerance. It appeared that a number of students did not understand the concept of ‘a line of best fit’. Plotting data and using a line of best fit to consider the relationship between data sets is a skill that students are expected to be familiar with at this level. Consequently it needs to be understood and practiced.

04.9 – The majority of students were able to identify that the relationship between distance and depth was positive for both rivers and a significant proportion went on to consider that the strength of the relationship varied between the rivers. This idea was often developed further by using comparative data or identifying anomalies in relation to River B.

Fieldwork

There were a number of fundamental issues with regard to the responses to the fieldwork questions. A number of students failed to identify the title of their fieldwork enquiry or simply wrote one word, in many cases simply the name of a place. In either case this made it very difficult for examiners to firstly consider the appropriateness of the enquiry in relation to the ‘physical’ or ‘human’ command and secondly to consider the response in relation to the aim of the enquiry. A small number of students selected an inappropriate fieldwork enquiry to reference (physical/human), consequently limiting the number of marks that could be achieved on those questions. Given the nature of the examination and the limited time available fieldwork based questions may ask students for one example, ie ‘one primary data collection method’ or ‘one data presentation technique’. Students should be encouraged not to go beyond the requirement of **one** example when expressed in a question since this often wastes time and answers can become a list with limited development. Also, students should be encouraged to think about the range of possibilities at their command and select the example that best fits the question and gives them the most to say.

05.1- The majority of students were able to identify why the location of their enquiry was suitable. In most cases students mentioned two factors, the more usual being ‘ease of access’ and ‘safety’. Some students linked the idea of suitability to the nature of the enquiry. This approach achieved variable success. For example, “we went to a beach because we were studying a beach” was not really creditworthy, whereas “we were studying the effects of coastal management so the location was appropriate because it had a number of different management strategies in place” does offer some reasoning for the specific choice of location.

05.2 – Virtually all students were able to identify a primary data collection method, but a significant number did not appear to understand the command ‘justify’ and simply went on to describe the method, consequently not addressing the aim of the question. Those students who did understand the need to justify the method generally produced sound answers with clearly identified links to the original title of the fieldwork enquiry. A small number of students ignored the instruction ‘**one**’ and listed a number of methods with limited justification. This approach was generally self-limiting.

05.3 – A significant majority of students failed to address the instruction ‘data presentation technique’ and moved into discussions about a data collection technique, which was clearly inappropriate. In many cases these responses offered considerable detail and insight into their identified data collection technique but was unfortunately not at all creditworthy since they did not address the question at any point. Those students who did address the instruction as required

often produced quite superficial responses, generally not getting beyond quite basic observations about how the method made the data 'clearer' or 'easier to understand', without offering any specific reasoning linked to how the method may have aided interpretation. A relatively small proportion of students did fully address the question by considering how the presentation method may have given a clearer picture of the data or helped to identify links between data or anomalies.

05.4 – The majority of students were able to consider how their data collection methods could be extended in order to gather more data or improved in order to ensure a higher degree of accuracy in their data collection. These observations often produced the basis for a sound answer but frequently developed into a description of limitations rather than an assessment of how it may have limited results and therefore affected the overall conclusion of the fieldwork enquiry. Consequently this type of response did not fully address the question and was slightly self-limiting. Those students who clearly understood the pathway through the enquiry and made clear observations about how the data collection methods could be extended or improved and how this might reflect on more reliable conclusions often produced thoughtfully perceptive answers. A very small number of students took the view that their methods were totally sound and consequently their conclusion was reliable and could not easily be improved. Where the description of their methods and explanation was thorough these responses were generally very impressive.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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