

Version



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Geography

GEOG2

(Specification 2030)

Unit 2: Geographical Skills

Report on the Examination

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General

This was the eighth exam series of GEOG2 Geographical Skills examination paper. Papers follow a well-established format with plenty of exemplar material in the form of past papers now available for centres. Papers are marked out of 50; 25 marks are available for Geographical Skills and 25 marks for Fieldwork. Skills are examined in the core physical or human specification components – namely *Rivers* or *Population Change*. In this paper, Rivers was the theme in Section A and a range of skills were tested taken, as always, from page 16 of the Specification. As with all GEOG2 papers, there are 6 marks allocated to Assessment Objective 1 for this paper. This means that some subject knowledge and understanding is always examined in each skills paper.

The second part of the paper, Section B, was also worth 25 marks and comprised of a series of four linked fieldwork questions. It was very pleasing to see so many candidates having undertaken a wide variety of enquiries. River studies were very common. Centres also have to be aware that the fieldwork must come from some part of the Specification.

Candidates who were well-prepared generally scored well in the first section, although Questions 1 (a) and (c) were less well-answered than anticipated. Part (c) required candidates to assess the usefulness of the mapping technique and this proved challenging for many. The guidance on the front of the paper continues to make reference to the necessary equipment for the completion of this paper. For this paper, a calculator and a sharp pencil and ruler are essential. Candidates without this equipment are put at risk of losing credit. Bringing the correct equipment is essential for all GEOG2 examinations.

As is the case for all Geography examination papers, questions will vary in every examination series. If candidates have undertaken a full piece of fieldwork and experienced all aspects of the subsequent write-up, they will have every opportunity of being successful in the examination no matter what the questions are. The sampling in Question 2 (b) and (d) referred to further areas of research and this proved particularly difficult for some candidates who appeared to have only used past papers in preparation for this examination. Those who prepare using model answers run the significant risk of scoring badly when the answer prepared is not a response to the question asked. Candidates really need to focus on the question being asked and respond accordingly, referring to their own fieldwork experience, as appropriate.

Question 1

In referring to channel change, responses to part (a) could have pointed to increasing sinuosity or prevalence of meanders downstream. There was also some evidence of changing channel width in places and there were also islands present nearer to Bassenthwaite Lake which did not feature further downstream. For valley change, the rural-urban change was one way of accessing credit but more ideal responses considered changing valley width and steepness as well as the development of a floodplain around Cockermouth. Accurate and appropriate use of grid references, contour, spot heights and other map evidence gave candidates access to the full range of marks. This question was not particularly well-answered.

Part (b)(i) simply required candidate to use accurate plots. Those who paid attention to detail readily accessed 2 marks. For the best fit line, a relatively wide range was offered in the mark scheme to cater for a broad interpretation of the trend, but many failed to accurately reflect the trend in the lines they drew.

In part (b)(ii), 4 relatively straightforward marks were available for stating the positive correlation (albeit weak), stating the nature of the correlation, referring to the clustering and referring to the obvious outlier. Additional credit was available for exemplifying using accurate data. Many candidates failed to progress beyond the positive correlation idea.

Part (c) was probably the least well-answered question in this section. Many candidates failed to get beyond what the resource showed and used this to comment on the usefulness of the technique. These basic responses wrote in terms of the resource being useful as it showed rainfall patterns in the north of Britain. More critical responses considered the questionable key, the unequal ranges within the classes of data, the lack of actual rainfall data, the lack of place names, the sharp boundary

changes and the pixelated nature of the image which failed to accurately reflect the actual rainfall. These responses comfortably accessed Level 2.

A sharp pencil and ruler were needed to plot accurately in part (d)(i). No credit was lost for uneven width but a mark was lost for incorrect use of key or no key.

In part (d)(ii), candidates had to note the increasing number of the homes at risk between the two dates with the exception of Lorton. Also, the fact that Keswick and Cockermouth had the largest number of homes at risk in 2010, but also experienced the largest increases, was another perceptive point. Exemplification by using and manipulating data (e.g. by calculating percentage change) added to the quality of the description. Comment often considered likely cause, possible impact and management. As long as the suggestions were plausible and appropriate given the context, credit was awarded.

Question 2

Weaker responses in part (a) did little more than state the aim and hypothesis here. This was worthy of credit but only accessed Level 1. Those who went further often linked this to some theory they were investigating, though there needed to be some depth in relation to the description of the theory. Where this occurred, this strengthened such responses giving access to Level 2. Those who investigated local human issues easily accessed Level 2 with a brief description of the issue in the local context.

In part (b), sampling appeared to challenge many candidates and some appeared unprepared for it. A question on sampling had not previously featured explicitly in past papers. Candidates too often wrote in general about their method of data collection and not explicitly about the sampling process within that method. This should have included a rationale for the selection of sites, some reference to the sampling method (e.g. random, systematic or stratified) and approaches to ensure that data did not reflect bias and were representative of the total population being studied. Those who did this comfortably accessed Level 2.

In justifying the technique, responses to part (c) should have either outlined the advantages in relation to the data being analysed; or compared their chosen technique to another technique and justified in terms of the rejection of that technique. Those who did this scored well. Weak responses tried to describe the use of the technique and may have, by implication, stumbled upon some tentative justification. Others remained confused between presentation of data and analysis of data. Description of presentational technique scored no credit.

In part (d), candidates generally scored well on the first part of the question, i.e. summarising the main findings, though use of actual data from their own enquiry was patchy. In preparing for this paper, candidates need to retain some key data to support findings or exemplify anomalies. The second part of the question was generally less-well answered. Too many referred to a previous past paper which was about improvements and was not strictly the same question. This is significant drawback to those centres who prepare using model answers. This question was not strictly about improvements and some candidates lost credit by clearly writing about improvements and limitations. Those who linked further areas of research to the findings from their study scored highest marks, particularly where they revisited their aim and broadened this out to new lines of enquiry.