



## **General Certificate of Secondary Education**

# **Geography Full Courses and Geography Short Courses**

*Specifications A, B & C*

**Coursework 3031/C, 3032/C and 3033/C**

**Coursework 3036/C, 3037/C and 3038/C**

## **Report on the Examination**

*2008 examination - June series*

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*Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.*

## **Centre-Assessed Coursework – 3031/3032/3033/C**

### **General**

The quality of the geographical investigations produced by a large number of candidates was very high this year. The vast majority of the work was appropriate and related to the taught specification. The full range of marks was seen and most centres were able to allow clear differentiation to take place. There were relatively few studies produced where the candidates did not use ICT. Standards of presentation and organisation continue to improve and many outstanding examples of coursework were moderated.

As in previous years, teacher directed enquiries were the most common types of study seen. There were relatively few examples where candidates from centres produced totally individual coursework investigations. Once again a problem that arose was the degree of commonality between studies with the same text appearing in more than one study. This is not acceptable and teachers need to monitor the work produced by students to eliminate the problem.

The most popular topics were urban based, testing hypotheses or investigating aims relating to land use zones, shopping centres or urban change. The most popular physical studies involved aspects of rivers or coasts. There were also a large number of studies investigating National Parks or other tourist sites.

Many centres are able to apply the marking criteria consistently and successfully with all scripts sampled being within tolerance. These centres have a clear understanding of the ‘triggers’ required to move from Level 1 to Level 2, and then make the significant step up to meet the Level 3 requirements. Not all centres, however, are so successful and there remains a minority of such centres where the marking is erratic and there is no evidence that any form of standardisation has taken place. The most common trend with such centres is to over-mark at the top end of the mark range, with Level 3 marks being credited inappropriately. In such cases the mark differences were, at times, very large. In an attempt to access Level 3 marks, some centres are encouraging candidates to produce exceptionally long studies in the expectation that more work will result in more marks. There were many studies seen in excess of 100 pages and one seen that approached 40 000 words. There is no need for candidates to produce so much material and the tendency is for work at Level 2 to be repeated many times over so the candidate gains little or no reward for their efforts.

### **Administration**

The Candidate Record Form should be attached to the relevant pieces of work. They should be filled in correctly, making sure that the candidate numbers are placed in the relevant boxes and that both the teacher and the candidate have signed the document (for the first time this year failure of the candidate to sign the CRF form will result in zero marks being awarded for the coursework). As well as totalling up the marks awarded on the reverse side of the CRF, the total mark is also required to be placed in the box provided on the front of the CRF. This allows moderators to place the work from a centre in rank order without having to open every plastic wallet in order to access the total mark. The majority of centres continue to ignore these boxes or simply choose to place a tick in the relevant box. In one or two cases, centres continue to use out of date CRF forms and, as a result, do not provide all the information required, for example summative statements and teacher signatures. The incorrect addition of marks on the CRF forms and the inaccurate transfer of the total mark to the Centre Mark Sheet remain a common problem. A significant number of centres continue to fail to supply the Centre Declaration Sheet with the sample.

A significant amount of coursework continues to be sent with each page inside a plastic sleeve and this causes problems especially if the work is not secured properly. It would be appreciated if individual sheets could be removed from any plastic envelope; this would save time. Also, if the pages were numbered this would facilitate cross-referencing particularly when it came to the summative comments on the CRF.

The work should be securely packaged using the Board's sacks. If the work could be placed in the sacks in rank order, resisting the temptation to cram far too many enquiries into one sack so that it breaks in the post, it would be appreciated. Equally, there is no need to send the work registered post as this requires the moderator to sign for the package, and inevitably this leads to delays, particularly if the moderator has to visit the local sorting office.

A number of candidates were given zero marks for their enquiry. If the candidate has submitted some work but it has been found to be worthless then 0 (zero marks) should be encoded in the 'Total Mark' box on the CMS. If the candidate has produced some evidence relating to the enquiry, no matter how basic, it would be extremely unlikely to be worthless. Centres need to examine the work of their lowest ability candidates carefully before giving zero, as experience has shown that, in a number of these cases, there are elements that have been found to be creditworthy. If a candidate failed to submit work or has withdrawn then 'X' should be encoded. Leaving a blank box next to a candidate's name on the CMS is not an option.

The quality and quantity of teacher comments/annotation varied enormously. It was often excellent on the CRFs but less impressive in the body of the work as teachers did not always relate comments to levels. There was ample evidence that comments were obviously provided by experienced specialist Geography teachers being detailed, informative and showing evidence of a clear understanding of the application of the marking criteria. A minority of centres continue to provide only limited evidence that internal assessment has taken place. Examples of poor practice included: just marks on the CRF; a number of ticks in the body of the work or a few unhelpful comments scattered throughout the work that bare no relation to the content or the mark scheme. Centres will hopefully realise that far from being an unnecessary chore, annotation helps their candidates by focusing their marking and making it more likely that moderation will confirm the centre's marks.

It is the responsibility of the centre to make sure that the sample of work and accompanying paperwork is correct. It is vital that time and resources are allocated to this part of the moderation process. In a few centres, this has not been given priority and moderators are spending more time dealing with the problems associated with administration than they are on assessing the quality of the Geography. It is also important that the internal standardisation process carried out by the centre is rigorous. If there are problems with the marking, it is sometimes the result of one teacher's marking not being in line with the rest of the department. In these cases, the ramifications are felt across the whole centre.

## **Marking Criteria**

The assessment objectives each consist of three levels with each level statement containing a number of different criteria. Candidates must fulfil the requirements for a particular level before they can be awarded marks in a higher level. It is not possible to award Level 3 marks before the candidate has met the requirements for Levels 1 and 2. They might, however, produce evidence that contributes towards the requirements of the higher level criteria, but it is only when the lower level requirements have been fulfilled that the higher level evidence is considered and credited. The application of the marking criteria, therefore, is not a 'best-fit'

model, it requires evidence of progression through the level statements of the assessment objectives.

There is a difference in the quality of the evidence required to access a level and that required to be secure at the top of the same level. A problem seen by moderators is where centres automatically credit a candidate at the top of a level when the evidence suggests that the candidate has only just accessed that particular level. When this approach is used across all of the sections of the marking criteria, it will lead to the centre marks being outside the tolerance set by the Board.

## **Applied Understanding**

In the majority of cases, enquiries were well organised, based on a single clear and manageable hypothesis, underpinned by established geographical concepts that related to the taught Specification, and were approached in an investigative manner. Location evidence, whether in map form or through description, was usually very good. Some centres, however, used the location evidence as the primary justification for the awarding of marks in this section and, as a result, were too generous in their marking. The location evidence should be used to 'fine tune' the marking within a Level, it should not be used to move a candidate into or out of a level.

To be successful in Applied Understanding, the application of the geographical concepts underpinning the work must be thorough and that it is used accurately throughout the enquiry. It was not uncommon to see Level 3 Applied Understanding marks being credited as early as the first paragraph of a study. In many cases the candidate justifiably earned Level 3 marks later in the body of the work, but it is clear that some centres are not awarding marks correctly for this assessment objective.

Level 1 asks for a description of the geographical ideas that underpin the investigation and drive the study forward. Many candidates demonstrated this by means of a glossary at the beginning of their study or by reference to established theory from textbooks. The glossary and the theory must be directly relevant to the investigation. Once a candidate can start to apply these concepts to the investigation more directly, such as within their methodology, they can access Level 2. The concepts should then be applied accurately throughout the interpretations, the conclusions and the evaluation. To gain all 6 marks in this section, the candidates should have used their key concepts accurately throughout the entire body of the work, and located their study in detail.

It is the accurate application of the key concepts that provides evidence of a candidate's level of understanding and, therefore, the mark gained in this section. The location evidence is used to 'fine tune' marking within a Level, it cannot be used to move a candidate from one Level to another. There were instances where candidates were awarded Level 3 purely based on location evidence.

## **Methodology**

This section was tackled well by candidates with the majority gaining marks at Level 2 or above. The best studies used one clear hypothesis to focus the investigation and this allowed candidates access to the full range of marks whilst producing enquiries that were well organised and not too long. Enquiries based upon multiple-hypotheses tended to be repetitive and did not usually allow candidates to access the full mark range. Such studies encouraged candidates to write at greater length yet often restricted the marks available as the sub-hypotheses were

tackled separately and links between the data sets were omitted, thereby failing to access Level 3 marks in Interpretation.

Once candidates have identified a question or issue, stated how the investigation will be carried out and provided a clear description of the valid data collection methods to be used, some of which must involve the collection of primary data, then marks at Level 2 can be awarded. It is the access to Level 3 marks that continues to prove more difficult for candidates and for centres when marking.

Originality in data collection and the justification of the data collection methods used are the major 'triggers' to accessing Level 3 marks in this section. Some centres credit candidates with Level 3 marks inappropriately by identifying originality in terms of the presentation skills used, the use of ICT and even the quality of the writing seen. Other examples where Level 3 marks have been awarded incorrectly are where the candidate has done something a little different in terms of data collection; such as selecting their own location for a pedestrian count, taking a photograph or writing one additional question to a group questionnaire. To gain the Level 3 marks the candidate must select, describe, justify and use data capture methods that add significantly to the overall study. If the candidate is carrying out completely independent work then Level 3 is easier to achieve than it is for candidates carrying out teacher directed enquiries. Teachers must plan for the Level 3 opportunities and not limit their candidates to the top of Level 2. Where candidates demonstrate clear evidence of originality, this should be noted on the Candidate Record Form or in the body of the work.

Marks can only be awarded for data collection methods that are actually used by the candidates within their enquiries. Describing and justifying methods in the Methodology section of the enquiry does not earn credit unless there is evidence of results collected by use of the methods stated. Examples were seen where centres were awarding marks to candidates for describing a wide range of data collection techniques yet few, if any, of the techniques described were used and this should have been reflected in the marking.

## **Data Presentation**

The majority of candidates were able to access Level 2 in terms of Data Presentation, with even the less able candidates completing basic graphs and maps successfully. As with the other criteria, the Level 3 requirements are more challenging and many centres over marked the work of their candidates in this section.

To reach Level 3 candidates must first fulfil the requirements for Levels 1 and 2. This requires a range of presentation skills to be completed and it is expected that the skills used are appropriate and accurate. It was not uncommon to see incomplete and inaccurate work given undue credit. Some candidates did not help themselves to extend the mark range in this section because they limited the presentation techniques employed to one or two favourite examples. One study, for example, contained 62 pie charts and this repetition of a relatively basic skill did not help the candidate gain marks in this section and certainly was not a good use of their time. Graphs should always be complete with titles and labels on the axes. Maps should have titles, scales and a North arrow.

Once the requirements for Levels 1 and 2 have been met, candidates can access Level 3 by producing 'more complex' presentation techniques. These high order techniques, if completed accurately, may include; choropleth maps, scatter graphs, proportional flow lines, located pie charts, well annotated (not simply labelled) photographs, cross-sections, dispersion graphs and so on. All such presentation techniques must have titles, labels, keys, scales, etc. Simple graphs produced using ICT are not Level 3 presentation techniques.

The use of ICT within the enquiry has a direct bearing on the marks awarded in this section. There must be at least two different ICT contributions to the enquiry if the candidate is to be awarded marks at Level 2 or Level 3. If there is no evidence of ICT, or just one example e.g. text, then the candidate will be limited to marks at Level 1, assuming that there are presentation skills within the enquiry. The majority of the work seen this year was produced entirely using ICT with some exceptional presentation skills evident.

The quality of written communication remains pleasing with the majority of candidates expressing themselves with reasonable accuracy.

## **Data Interpretation**

This section continues to be a very powerful discriminator, with progression through the levels being determined by the key 'triggers' of explanation, analysis and linkage. In the best enquiries the candidates described and analysed their results. They organised and processed their data in such a manner that they could refer to percentages, proportions, patterns and anomalies. This gave greater precision and meaning to their interpretations. They went on to provide explanations and demonstrated links between data sets (the key requirement for Level 3 access), and then they reached valid conclusions that related to the original hypothesis. Centres often credited candidates with Level 3 marks when the analysis was poor and where no links between data sets were evident.

There were many instances where candidates reached Level 2 in the marking criteria, but simply repeated that level many times over. This tended to happen when candidates were tackling several hypotheses or where they had compartmentalised their results so that each set of results, or graphs, was interpreted in turn but no connections were established between the sets of data. In some cases the candidates simply had too much data to cope with and they could not make sense of their results.

The main weakness among candidates was that they gave descriptions without reference to the results they had collected. The interpretation, therefore, lacked an element of analysis. In addition, centres often over marked these descriptive accounts of the results.

Teacher comments and annotations on the Candidate Record Forms or in the body of the work suggest that there is still confusion with regard to the crediting of conclusions. The awarding of marks for conclusions reached by the candidate, after examination and analysis of the data, should be considered in this section rather than in the evaluation.

## **Evaluation**

Centres are becoming more aware of the demands of this section and they are encouraging their candidates to write about their investigations with greater reflection and precision. Problems with the data collection methods were usually covered comprehensively, allowing access to Level 2, with more general comments being made about the effect these problems had on the accuracy of the results. It is the evaluation of the conclusions that continues to be the weakest element in this section.

In the best enquiries, candidate's evaluation statements were detailed and specific to the enquiry rather than being vague and generic. Furthermore, instead of discussing the three components of the criteria separately, they proceeded to link the components identifying the fact that problems with their methods would compromise the accuracy of their results and that the conclusions, which were based on these results, would therefore have questionable validity.

In the weaker enquiries, the evaluation was often missing or covered very briefly. Here the candidates often stated what went well or, if they reflected on possible improvements, they produced a 'wish list' of what they would like to do next time. Such statements were very basic and made no reference to results or conclusions.

The key point to remember about this section is that it is an opportunity for the candidate to provide a critical appraisal of the effectiveness of the enquiry process and to suggest how improvements can be made. It is not about making judgements regarding the quality of the geography.

## **Summary**

The majority of centres are enabling candidates of all abilities to produce interesting, relevant and, at times, exceptional enquiries based on investigations of small-scale issues. These centres are assessing their candidates accurately using the criteria set out by the Board. Unfortunately there are still centres where marking is outside of the tolerance level set by the Board. It is hoped that this report may suggest ways of improving the work and the accuracy of the marking in these centres. Support from experienced Coursework Advisors is available for any centre and this can be arranged by contacting the Subject Office at AQA.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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



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## Centre-Assessed Coursework – 3036/3037/3038/C

### General

The number of centres offering the Short Course to their students is declining. Most of the centres still offering this option have a relatively small number of candidates, although there are still some centres entering in excess of 50 candidates each year. The full range of marks was seen, but there was evidence of centres entering less able candidates more in hope than expectation. The standard of assessment was good with relatively few centres out of tolerance.

In centres where candidates are offering both Full and Short Course Geography, there is often no difference between the coursework being produced by the candidates. The differences in the marking criteria and the reduced word limit for the Short Course are apparently discounted. Candidates, therefore, are often producing more work than is required yet not always accessing the full mark range, as the Short Course investigations have not been planned with reference to the marking criteria. Studies in excess of 100 pages were seen this year and there is no need for candidates to produce so much material.

As with the Full Course, teacher directed enquiries continue to be the norm and moderators rarely saw totally individual work. The range of topics also mirrored those seen in the Full Course, with urban studies the most popular and CBD investigations the most common focus of these enquiries. Some physical studies were seen, with rivers and coasts the most popular topics.

### Administration

Administration, as ever, was done meticulously by a few, adequately by most and haphazardly by a significant minority. The following areas remain from one year to the next troublesome for centres and as a result prove time consuming and problematic for moderators.

The majority of Short Course centres, have 20 or fewer candidates, and therefore, they should ensure that all their candidates work together with, the PINK AND YELLOW copies of the Centre Mark Sheets or an EDI print out (if an EDI print out is being used then centres must make sure that the Centre name and number is included on the print out). These should arrive with the moderator by the deadline indicated, allowing time for postal delivery. If a centre has more than 20 candidates, they should ensure that, the PINK AND YELLOW copies of the Centre Mark Sheets (or two copies of the EDI printouts) should arrive with the moderator by the deadline indicated allowing time for postal delivery. (Some centres only sent one copy of the CMS or EDI, which meant a photocopy had to be made by the moderator). The moderator will return the YELLOW copy of the CMS (or one of the EDI printouts) indicating which candidates' work needs to be forwarded as the sample. The work must be dispatched within five working days of notification from the moderator. If any centre anticipates that they are not going to meet the coursework submission deadline, then they will need to inform the Board and apply for an extension.

The Candidate Record Form should be attached to the relevant pieces of work. They should be filled in correctly, making sure that the candidate numbers are placed in the relevant boxes and that both the teacher and the candidate have signed the document (for the first time this year failure of the candidate to sign the CRF form will result in zero marks being awarded for the coursework). As well as totalling up the marks awarded on the reverse side of the CRF, the total mark is also required to be placed in the box provided on the front of the CRF. This allows moderators to place the work from a centre in rank order without having to open every plastic wallet in order to access the total mark. The majority of centres continue to ignore these boxes

or simply choose to place a tick in the relevant box. In one or two cases, centres continue to use out of date CRF forms and, as a result, do not provide all the information required, for example summative statements and teacher signatures. The incorrect addition of marks on the CRF forms and the inaccurate transfer of the total mark to the Centre Mark Sheet remain a common problem. A significant number of centres continue to fail to supply the Centre Declaration Sheet with the sample.

A significant amount of coursework continues to be sent with each page inside a plastic sleeve and this causes problems especially if the work is not secured properly. It would be appreciated if individual sheets could be removed from any plastic envelope; this would save time. Also, if the pages were numbered this would facilitate cross-referencing particularly when it came to the summative comments on the CRF.

The work should be securely packaged using the Board's sacks. If the work could be placed in the sacks in rank order, resisting the temptation to cram far too many enquiries into one sack so that it breaks in the post it would be appreciated. Equally, there is no need to send the work registered post as this requires the moderator to sign for the package, and inevitably this leads to delays, particularly if the moderator has to visit the local sorting office.

A number of candidates were given zero marks for their enquiry. If the candidate has submitted some work but it has been found to be worthless then 0 (zero marks) should be encoded in the 'Total Mark' box on the CMS. If the candidate has produced some evidence relating to the enquiry, no matter how basic, it would be extremely unlikely to be worthless. Centres need to examine the work of their lowest ability candidates carefully before giving zero, as experience has shown that, in a number of these cases, there are elements that have been found to be creditworthy. If a candidate failed to submit work or has withdrawn then 'X' should be encoded. Leaving a blank box next to a candidate's name on the CMS is not an option.

The quality and quantity of teacher comments/annotation varied enormously. It was often excellent on the CRFs but less impressive in the body of the work as teachers did not always relate comments to levels. There was ample evidence that comments were obviously provided by experienced specialist Geography teachers being detailed, informative and showing evidence of a clear understanding of the application of the marking criteria. A minority of centres continue to provide only limited evidence that internal assessment has taken place. Examples of poor practice included: just marks on the CRF; a number of ticks in the body of the work or a few unhelpful comments scattered throughout the work that bore no relation to the content or the mark scheme. Centres will hopefully realise that far from being an unnecessary chore, annotation helps their candidates by focusing their marking and making it more likely that moderation will confirm the centre's marks.

It is the responsibility of the centre to make sure that the sample of work and accompanying paperwork is correct. It is vital that time and resources are allocated to this part of the moderation process. In a few centres, this has not been given priority and moderators are spending more time dealing with the problems associated with administration than they are on assessing the quality of the geography. It is also important that the internal standardisation process carried out by the centre is rigorous. If there are problems with the marking, it is sometimes the result of one teacher's marking not being in line with the rest of the department. In these cases, the ramifications are felt across the whole centre.

## Marking Criteria

The assessment objectives each consist of three levels with each level statement containing a number of different criteria. Candidates must fulfil the requirements for a particular level before they can be awarded marks in a higher level. It is not possible to award Level 3 marks before the candidate has met the requirements for Levels 1 and 2. They might, however, produce evidence that contributes towards the requirements of the higher level criteria, but it is only when the lower level requirements have been fulfilled that the higher level evidence is considered and credited. The application of the marking criteria, therefore, is not a 'best-fit' model it requires evidence of progression through the Level statements of the assessment objectives.

There is a difference in the quality of the evidence required to access a level and that required to be secure at the top of the same level. A problem seen by moderators is where centres automatically credit a candidate at the top of a level when the evidence suggests that the candidate has only just accessed that particular level. When this approach is used across all of the sections of the marking criteria it will lead to the centre marks being outside the tolerance set by the Board.

## Applied Understanding

In the majority of cases, enquiries were well organised, based on a single clear and manageable hypothesis, underpinned by established geographical concepts that related to the taught Specification, and were approached in an investigative manner. Location evidence, whether in map form or through description, was usually very good. Some centres, however, used the location evidence as the primary justification for the awarding of marks in this section and, as a result, were too generous in their marking. The location evidence should be used to 'fine tune' the marking within a Level, it should not be used to move a candidate into or out of a level.

To be successful in Applied Understanding, the application of the geographic concepts underpinning the work must be thorough, and that it is used accurately throughout the enquiry. It was not uncommon to see Level 3 Applied Understanding marks being credited as early as the first paragraph of a study. In many cases the candidate justifiably earned Level 3 marks later in the body of the work, but it is clear that some centres are not awarding marks correctly for this assessment objective.

Candidates need only focus on one key concept or process for this investigation. Sphere of influence, hierarchy, velocity, management, sustainability, erosion, etc. may be identified as being the focus for the particular investigation being undertaken. Level 1 asks for a description of the geographical concept or process that underpins the investigation. Many candidates demonstrated this by means of a simple glossary at the beginning of their study or by reference to established theory from textbooks. Whichever method is used, the concept or process must be relevant to the investigation. Moderators saw examples of students producing several pages of theory copied directly from textbooks where a range of coastal features were described and explained in detail, yet the candidate simply investigated longshore drift along a short section of coastline. Once a candidate can start to apply the key concept or process to their study more directly, such as within their methodology, they can access Level 2. The key concept or process should then be applied accurately throughout the interpretations, the conclusions and the evaluation. To gain all 6 marks in this section, the candidates should have used their key concept or process accurately throughout the entire body of the work, and located their study in detail. A common problem noted by moderators was for candidates to have too many concepts on which they had to focus throughout their enquiries. This caused problems, especially for the

less able candidates, and restricted access to the higher levels as they failed to cope with the volume of work involved.

It is the accurate application of the key concept or process that provides evidence of a candidate's level of understanding and, therefore, the mark gained in this section.

## **Methodology**

This section was tackled well by candidates with the majority gaining marks at Level 2 or above. The best studies used one clear hypothesis to focus the investigation and this allowed candidates access to the full range of marks whilst producing enquiries that were well organised and not too long. Enquiries based upon multiple-hypotheses tended to be repetitive and did not usually allow candidates to access the full mark range. Such studies encouraged candidates to write at greater length yet often restricted the marks available as the sub-hypotheses were tackled separately and links between the data sets were omitted, thereby losing marks in Interpretation.

For the Short Course, candidates need only use three data collection methods to access Level 3. Many candidates involved in teacher directed work were asked to use five or more methods, yet their marks were limited to Level 2 as there was no evidence of originality. It is the originality in data collection, and the justification of the data collection methods used, that are the major 'triggers' to accessing Level 3 marks in this section. Some centres credit candidates with Level 3 marks inappropriately where the candidate has done something a little different in terms of data collection, such as selecting their own location for a pedestrian count, taking a photograph or writing one additional question to a group questionnaire. To gain the Level 3 marks the candidate must select, describe, justify and use data capture methods that add significantly to the overall study. If the candidate is carrying out completely independent work then Level 3 is easier to achieve than it is for candidates carrying out teacher directed enquiries. Teachers must plan for the Level 3 opportunities and not limit their candidates to the top of Level 2. Where candidates demonstrate clear evidence of originality, this should be noted on the Candidate Record Form or in the body of the work.

Marks can only be awarded for data collection methods that are actually used by the candidates within their enquiries. Describing and justifying methods in the Methodology section of the enquiry does not earn credit unless there is evidence of results collected by use of the methods stated. Examples were seen where centres were awarding marks to candidates for describing a wide range of data collection techniques yet few, if any, of the techniques described were used and this should have been reflected in the marking.

## **Data Presentation**

The majority of candidates were able to access Level 2 in terms of Data Presentation, with even the less able candidates completing basic graphs and maps successfully. As with the other criteria, the Level 3 requirements are more challenging and many centres over marked the work of their candidates in this section.

To reach Level 3, candidates must first fulfil the requirements for Levels 1 and 2. For the Short Course, this requires a narrow range of presentation skills to be completed and it is expected that the skills used are appropriate and accurate. It was not uncommon to see incomplete and inaccurate work given undue credit. Some candidates did not help themselves to extend the mark range in this section because they limited the presentation techniques

employed to one or two favourite examples. Graphs should always be complete with titles and labels on the axes. Maps should have titles, scales and a North arrow.

Once the requirements for Levels 1 and 2 have been met, candidates can access Level 3 by producing 'more complex' presentation techniques. These high order techniques, if completed accurately, may include; choropleths, scatter graphs, proportional flow lines, located pie charts, well annotated (not simply labelled) photographs, cross-sections, dispersion graphs and so on. Three 'more complex' presentation techniques are required for maximum marks in Level 3 to be awarded. Simple graphs produced using ICT are not Level 3 presentation techniques.

The use of ICT within the enquiry has a direct bearing on the marks awarded in this section. There must be at least two different ICT contributions to the enquiry if the candidate is to be awarded marks at Level 2 or Level 3. If there is no evidence of ICT, or just one example e.g. text, then the candidate will be limited to marks at Level 1, assuming that there are presentation skills within the enquiry. The majority of the work seen this year was produced entirely using ICT.

The quality of written communication remains pleasing with the majority of candidates expressing themselves with reasonable accuracy.

## **Data Interpretation**

This section continues to be a very powerful discriminator, with progression through the levels being determined by the key 'triggers' of explanation, analysis and linkage. In the best enquiries the candidates described and analysed their results. They organised and processed their data in such a manner that they could refer to percentages, proportions, patterns and anomalies. This gave greater precision and meaning to their interpretations. They went on to provide explanations and demonstrated links between data sets (the key requirement for Level 3 access), and then they reached valid conclusions that related to the original hypothesis. Centres often credited candidates with Level 3 marks when the analysis was poor and where no links between data sets were evident.

There were many instances where candidates reached Level 2 in the marking criteria, but simply repeated that level many times over. This tended to happen when candidates were tackling several hypotheses or where they had compartmentalised their results so that each set of results, or graphs, was interpreted in turn but no connections were established between the sets of data. In some cases, the candidates simply had too much data to cope with and they could not make sense of their results.

The main weakness among candidates was that they gave descriptions without reference to the results they had collected. The interpretation, therefore, lacked an element of analysis. In addition, centres often over marked these descriptive accounts of the results.

The awarding of marks for conclusions reached by the candidate, after examination and analysis of the data, should be considered in this section rather than in the evaluation.

## **Evaluation**

Centres are becoming more aware of the demands of this section and they are encouraging their candidates to write about their investigations with greater reflection and precision. Problems with the data collection methods were usually covered comprehensively, allowing access to Level 2, with more general comments being made about the effect these problems

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had on the accuracy of the results. It is the evaluation of the conclusions that continues to be the weakest element in this section.

In the best enquiries, candidate's evaluation statements were detailed and specific to the enquiry rather than being vague and generic. Furthermore, instead of discussing the three components of the criteria separately, they proceeded to link the components identifying the fact that problems with their methods would compromise the accuracy of their results and that the conclusions, which were based on these results, would therefore have questionable validity.

In the weaker enquiries, the evaluation was often missing or covered very briefly. Here the candidates often stated what went well or, if they reflected on possible improvements, they produced a 'wish list' of what they would like to do next time. Such statements were very basic and made no reference to results or conclusions.

The key point to remember about this section is that it is an opportunity to provide a critical appraisal of the effectiveness of the enquiry process and to suggest how improvements can be made. It is not about making judgements regarding the quality of the geography or the presentation techniques used.

## **Summary**

The majority of centres are enabling candidates of all abilities to produce interesting, relevant and, at times, exceptional enquiries based on investigations of small-scale issues. These centres are assessing their candidates accurately using the criteria set out by the Board. Unfortunately there are still centres where marking is outside of the tolerance level set by the Board. It is hoped that this report may suggest ways of improving the work and the accuracy of the marking in these centres. Support from experienced Coursework Advisors is available for any centre and this can be arranged by contacting the Subject Office at AQA.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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