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GCSE Geography A 1GA0 03

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Introduction

This was the first assessment of the new specification for GCSE (9-1) Geography A, Paper 3 – Geographical Investigations: Fieldwork and UK Challenges component.

This paper consists of three sections. Of the 64 marks available for this paper, up to 4 marks are awarded for spelling, punctuation, grammar (SPAG), and use of specialist terminology. The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, calculations and 8-mark and 12-mark extended writing questions.

In Section A: Physical Environments, candidates are expected to answer either Question 1 (River Environments) or Question 2 (Coastal Environments), dependent on their chosen fieldwork investigation. This section is awarded a total of 18 marks.

In Section B: Human Environments, candidates are expected to answer either Question 3 (Urban Environments) or Question 4 (Rural Environments), dependent on their chosen fieldwork investigation. This section is awarded a total of 18 marks.

In Section C: UK Challenges, candidates are expected to answer all questions, with Q5f carrying a SPAG mark of 4, giving a total mark tariff of 28 for this section.

Sections A and B provided challenges for students where there was a focus on both familiar and unfamiliar questions. Candidates tended to perform marginally better on the unfamiliar style questions in Section B. Overall, Section C was generally well received by candidates with many demonstrating a good understanding of the UK Challenge based on sustainability.

The following report outlines candidates' performance on the paper, highlighting areas of strength and weakness across the different questions, offering examples of performance and suggestions for improvements in future series.

Question 1 (a) (i)

In this question, candidates were asked to explain one limitation of the quantitative fieldwork method they used when investigation river discharge. Many candidates found this question challenging due to misconceptions around the understanding of 'river discharge' and the associated quantitative methods used to calculate it. This led to many candidates referring to sampling techniques or sediment analysis, rather than the limitations associated with measuring either the width, depth or velocity of a river. Candidates that did discuss a limitation of one of these methods were unable to develop their limitation further to 'explain' why this was a limitation. This was a matter of exam technique and candidates understanding the expectations of an 'explain' question.

1 (a) You have studied a river as part of your own fieldwork.

(i) Explain **one** limitation of the quantitative fieldwork method you used when investigating river discharge. **(2)**

Named quantitative fieldwork method ~~using (width x depth) / velocity~~ measuring width to use for calculating discharge

When measuring the rivers width using a tape measure, it was difficult to achieve an ~~accurate~~ accurate result because of the speed of the water dragging the tape measure. This meant that our results for river width weren't entirely accurate.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This response scored the full 2 marks. The candidate has clearly identified a limitation for measuring the width of the river and has developed this limitation by explaining how this impacted on the data collected.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When asked to 'explain', candidates should develop their point using phrases like 'this means that' in order to achieve the second mark.

Question 1 (a) (ii)

In this question, candidates were asked to explain one way they could have improved the quantitative fieldwork method. Inevitability, those candidates that found Q1ai challenging also found this second part of the question challenging. Candidates that did identify an improvement made comments around the use of improved equipment, like a flow meter for measuring velocity, but were frequently held at 1 mark because there was limited development as to why this would improve the method.

Question 1 (b)

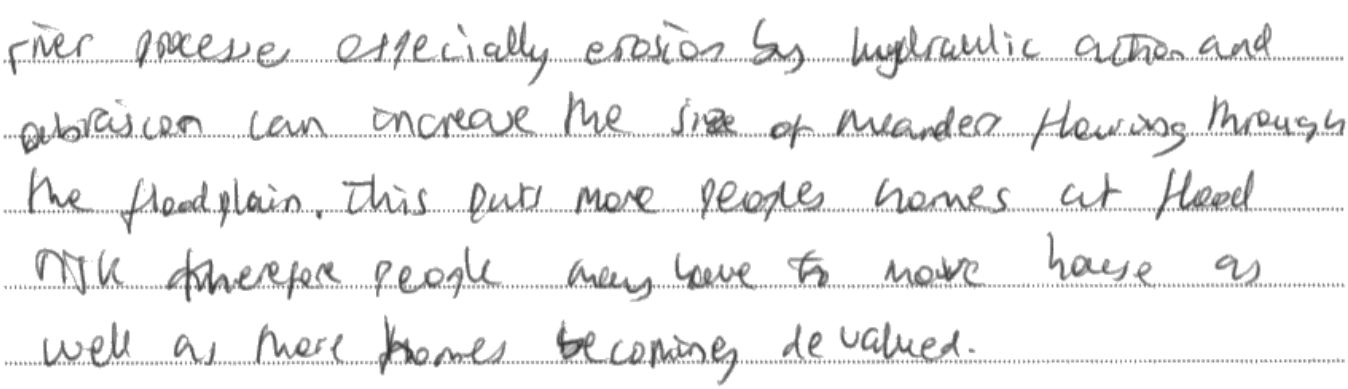
This question prompted candidates to explain how their qualitative fieldwork method supported their understanding of river landforms. Many candidates did not recognise the term 'qualitative' fieldwork method, leading them to explain 'quantitative' fieldwork methods or secondary data sources. Candidates that did refer to their qualitative fieldwork methods used either annotated photographs or field sketches and often scored 1 or 2 marks because their reference to how the method supported their understanding of river landforms was not sufficiently developed. Candidates who did score 3 marks were able to identify a river landform that they sketched (e.g. a meander), develop their point through identifying features, like a river cliff or point bar, and link this back to the question, explaining how this supported their understanding of erosion and deposition processes.

Question 1 (c)

In this question, candidates were asked to explain one way river processes might affect people living in the catchment area of the river they had studied. Candidates were able to correctly identify a river process and explain how this impacted upon people. However, fewer candidates achieved the third mark by developing this impact further. Whilst there was no requirement for candidates to refer to the river they had studied, some candidates did, which often led to a more descriptive response not focused on answering the question related to the impacts on people.

(c) Explain **one** way river processes might affect people living in the catchment area of the river you studied.

(3)



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate has stated river processes that take place and has developed this by explaining the impact these processes have on people. Notice how the candidate uses the connective 'therefore' to extend their idea about the risk to homes and ultimately displacement of people, allowing the candidate to achieve 3 marks.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When learning about the impact of river processes on people, candidates should consider beyond the 'damage to houses' and consider how this will impact people.

Question 1 (d)

This question differentiated quite nicely, with many candidates scoring at least 5 marks. Quite often candidates would refer to Figure 1a and 1b identifying the changes to the river's width, depth and sediment load from site 1 to site 5. Candidates that scored the higher marks were able to link these changes to arrive at conclusions based on their understanding of the Bradshaw Model and erosion processes from their own river investigation.

Some candidates referred to their river investigation which was not relevant because this question was in an unfamiliar context and, therefore, the response should have been focused on the Figure(s) provided.

Candidates that did score in Level 3 (7 marks) did not achieve 8 marks because they did not always fulfil the requirements for an ‘assess’ question. To achieve full marks, candidates need to comment on the ‘most’ plausible conclusions from Figure 1a and 1b.

Question 2 (a) (i)

In this question, candidates were asked to explain one limitation of the quantitative fieldwork method they used when investigating beach morphology. Many candidates found this question challenging due to misconceptions around the understanding of 'beach morphology' and the associated quantitative methods. This led to many candidates referring to sampling techniques or sediment analysis, rather than the limitations associated with measuring the width and gradient of the beach profile. Candidates that did discuss a limitation of one of these methods were unable to develop their limitation further to 'explain' why this was a limitation. This was a matter of exam technique and candidates understanding the expectations of an 'explain' question.

Question 2 (a) (ii)

In this question, candidates were asked to explain one way they could have improved the quantitative fieldwork method. Inevitability, Candidates that found Q2ai challenging also found this second part of the question challenging. Candidates that did identify an improvement made comments around the reduced potential for human error, for example additional people to check the reading on the clinometer or the use of ranging poles, but were frequently held at 1 mark because there was limited development as to why this would improve the method.

Question 2 (b)

This question prompted candidates to explain how their qualitative fieldwork method supported their understanding of coastal landforms. Many candidates did not recognise the term 'qualitative' fieldwork method, leading them to explain quantitative fieldwork methods or secondary data sources. Candidates that did refer to their qualitative fieldwork methods used either annotated photographs or field sketches and often scored 1 or 2 marks because their reference to how the method supported their understanding of coastal landforms was not sufficiently developed. Candidates who did score 3 marks were able to identify a coastal landform that they sketched (e.g. a coastal stack), develop their point by identifying features, like a wave-cut notch, and link this back to the question, explaining how this supported their understanding of erosion processes.

Question 2 (c)

In this question, candidates were asked to explain one way coastal processes might affect people living close to the coastline they had studied. Many candidates were able to correctly identify a coastal process and explain how this impacted upon people. However, fewer candidates achieved the third mark by developing this impact further. Whilst there was no requirement for candidates to refer to the coast they had studied, some candidates did, which often led to a more descriptive response not focused on answering the question related to the impact on people.

Question 2 (d)

This question differentiated quite nicely, with many candidates scoring at least 4 marks. Quite often candidates would refer to Figure 2a and 2b identifying the changes to the width, angle of slope and sediment characteristics from site 1 to site 5. Many candidates struggled to extract and use data from the beach profiles in comparison to the sediment characteristics illustrated in the bar chart. Candidates that scored the higher marks were able to effectively extract and manipulate the data and link these changes to arrive at conclusions based on their understanding of Longshore Drift and erosion processes from their own coastal investigation.

Some candidates referred to their coastal investigation which was not relevant because this question was in an unfamiliar context and, therefore, the response should have been focused on the Figure(s) provided.

Candidates that did score in Level 3 (7 marks) did not achieve 8 marks because they did not always fulfil the requirements for an 'assess' question. To achieve full marks, candidates need to comment on the 'most' plausible conclusions from Figure 2a and 2b.

Question 3 (b) (i)

This question proved difficult for most candidates, with many focusing on sampling techniques instead of the associated advantages and disadvantages of conducting a questionnaire. Candidates that did identify an appropriate advantage or disadvantage did not extend their point to explain why, often limiting them to a total of 2 marks.

Question 3 (b) (ii)

Many candidates were able to offer a disadvantage of random sampling and developed this to achieve 2 marks. However, very few candidates were able to extend this disadvantage further to achieve the third mark. This is a matter of exam technique, where candidates are required to extend their point further to achieve 3 marks. Some candidates attempted to explain why an alternative sampling method, for example, stratified sampling, would have been more appropriate so candidates should focus their answer on the question being asked.

(ii) The student used a random sampling strategy to collect the data.

Explain **one** disadvantage of using this sampling strategy.

(3)

The student may subconsciously ask people from a certain social group thus oversampling which can then affect the results / findings thus making it unrepresentative.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate has provided one clear disadvantage of using random sampling through extended development. The candidate uses the word 'thus' to start their explanation of why the idea of unintentional bias is a disadvantage of using this sampling strategy.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When learning about sampling strategies, ensure that candidates have an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages associated with using this strategies.

Question 3 (c)

In this question, candidates were required to plot the data given in the question by completing the graph in Figure 3b for a total of 2 marks. This question was well received by candidates and most were able to plot the points to complete the radial graph. Where candidates did not achieve full marks, it was often because they had only marked the points without completing the lines.

Question 3 (d)

In this 8-mark, extended writing question, candidates were asked to evaluate the different techniques used to present their fieldwork data. The responses by candidates were divided between those that read the question and those that did not. Those candidates that did not read the question often scored zero marks because responses were focused on data collected methods, rather than data presentation techniques. The highest scoring candidates were able to explain the success of data presentation techniques, such as radial graphs, bar graphs and scatter graphs, looking at both their advantages and disadvantages.

Several candidates missed out on top marks as they did not write an effective conclusion making a judgement on which technique was the most/least beneficial to their study.

Question 4 (b) (i)

This question proved difficult for most candidates, with many focusing on sampling techniques instead of the associated advantages and disadvantages of conducting a questionnaire. Candidates that did identify an appropriate advantage or disadvantage did not extend their point to explain why, often limiting them to a total of 2 marks.

Question 4 (b) (ii)

Many candidates were able to offer a disadvantage of random sampling and developed this to achieve 2 marks. However, very few candidates were able to extend this disadvantage further to achieve the third mark. This is a matter of exam technique, where candidates are required to extend their point further to achieve 3 marks. Some candidates attempted to explain why an alternative sampling method, for example, stratified sampling, would have been more appropriate but candidates should focus their answer on the question being asked.

Question 4 (c)

In this question, candidates were required to plot the data given in the question by completing the graph in Figure 4b for a total of 2 marks. This question was well received by candidates and most were able to plot the points to complete the radial graph. Where candidates did not achieve full marks, it was often because they had only marked the points without completing the lines.

Question 4 (d)

In this 8-mark, extended writing question, candidates were asked to evaluate the different techniques used to present their fieldwork data. The responses by candidates were divided between those that read the question and those that did not. Those candidates that did not read the question often scored zero marks because responses were focused on data collected methods, rather than data presentation techniques. The highest scoring candidates were able to explain the success of data presentation techniques, such as radial graphs, bar graphs and scatter graphs, looking at both their advantages and disadvantages.

Several candidates missed out on top marks as they did not write an effective conclusion making a judgement on which technique was the most/least beneficial to their study.

Question 5 (b)

In this question, candidates were asked to state two reasons for the use of sustainable transport schemes in the UK. This question was well received by candidates with most scoring the full 2 marks. Where candidates failed to score a mark, it was usually because their answer was too generalised; simply saying, for instance, 'pollution' or similar. Candidates need to be encouraged to express themselves clearly.

Question 5 (c) (ii)

Most candidates were able to score 1 or 2 marks on this 3-mark question, identifying a resource which was likely to come under increasing pressure due to population growth, such as food. However, few provided meaningful development of their idea. Some candidates provided several reasons, rather than one reason, which were often undeveloped, limiting the number of marks obtained. Candidates should be reminded that when asked to provide one reason they should develop this reason clearly to achieve the 3 marks by using phrases like, ‘this means that’, ‘this results in’ or ‘this lead to’.

Question 5 (d)

Most candidates were able to calculate the increase in the total membership for the Santander bike scheme to achieve the mark. Some candidates went one step further and calculated the percentage increase, rather than the increase in the membership. Candidates should be encouraged to read the question carefully to ensure they meet the required expectations.

Question 5 (e)

In this 4-mark question, candidates were asked to explain two advantages of building on brownfield sites. This question was generally well received by candidates, with many able to identify two advantages to score 2 marks. A large proportion of candidates referred to the recognition of previous infrastructure, planning permission and reduced impact on the use of greenfield sites. The highest scoring candidates were able to develop their point to explain why these were an advantage. However, some candidates demonstrated misconceptions when referring to brownfield sites not impacting on wildlife at all, and no cost to installing utilities.

(e) Explain **two** advantages of building on brownfield sites.

(4)

1 Cheaper development costs. This is because infrastructure such as piped water and electricity access are already present in these areas, meaning less money needs to be spent on infrastructure.

2 Access to city. Most brownfield sites are from shut down factories near the CBD so, if people build on brownfield sites, there will be easy access to the city centre for commercial, and business purposes.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate has identified two clear advantages of building on brownfield sites and has explained these reasons to achieve the full 4 marks.

ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

When asked to explain an advantage or disadvantage, candidates should be encouraged to develop their points using phrases like, 'this is because...'

Question 5 (f)

In this 12-mark, extended writing question, candidates were required to discuss the view that the use of sustainable transport schemes will significantly improve the environment. Most candidates scored between 8-10 marks.

This question was well received by many candidates who were able to effectively use the evidence provided by the Figure(s) to provide an argument on the view of the use of sustainable transport schemes. Generally, candidates' responses could be divided into two types: (i) those that used Figure(s) to form an argument on the use of sustainable transport schemes, (ii) those that went beyond the concept of transport schemes and discussed other methods that could contribute to promoting sustainability. The latter were those candidates that inevitably achieved marks in Level 3.

Paper Summary

The performance across the paper varied between the fieldwork questions and the UK Challenges. Overall, candidates performed better on the UK Challenges section.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Understand key terminology, for example, the differences between quantitative and qualitative fieldwork methods, as well as river discharge and beach morphology.
- Understand the different stages of the fieldwork enquiry process, in particular, knowing the differences between data collection methods and data presentation techniques.
- Show candidates how to provide developed points in the 'explain one reason' questions, as this is where there was the greatest variation in performance across these responses.
- Ensure that candidates know how to tackle the 'assess' questions. Offer a concluding comment which identifies the most important factor.
- Ensure that candidates know how to tackle the 'evaluate' questions. Offer a concluding comment which draws together the evidence discussed.

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