



Pearson  
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2020

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Geography A (1GA0)

Paper 03: Geographical Investigations:

Fieldwork and UK Challenges

## **Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications**

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://www.btec.co.uk). Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus).

## **Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere**

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: [www.pearson.com/uk](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

Autumn 2020

Publications Code 4GL1\_01\_2011\_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2018

## **Introduction**

This was the second series of the Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) Geography A specification. This Examiner's Report is intended to provide an insight into performance on Paper 3– Geographical Investigation: Fieldwork and UK Challenges – in particular, analysing the majority of questions in terms of what went well and where common mistakes and underperformance were evident. It should be noted, however, that the entry for this series was very small and the candidates may not have been representative of a 'normal' cohort.

The structure of the paper remains the same and is outlined below; please note that this (and future) question papers are based upon Issue 3 of the specification.

This paper consists of three sections. Of the 64 marks, up to 4 marks are awarded for spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology. The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, calculations and 8-mark extended writing questions. The command words which are used in this paper are defined on page 43 of the specification. Each of the questions is mapped to one or more of the Assessment Objectives (AOs).

In Section A: Physical Environments, candidates are required to answer either Q1 (River Environments) or Q2 (Coastal Environments), dependent on their chosen fieldwork investigation. This section is awarded a total of 18 marks.

In Section B: Human Environments, candidates are required to answer either Q3 (Urban Environments) or Q4 (Rural Environments), dependent on their chosen fieldwork investigation. This section is awarded a total of 18 marks.

In Section C: UK challenges, candidates are required to answer all questions, with 4 marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar on Q5(f), giving a total mark tariff of 28 for this section.

Overall, candidates found the extended fieldwork questions challenging in particular, where they were expected to demonstrate they could make sound judgements (AO3) based on either their own fieldwork experience or fieldwork in an unfamiliar context.

**Question 1 (a) (i)**

In this question, candidates were asked to describe one fieldwork method that the students may have used to measure river width. In most responses seen candidates were able to describe a basic point about using a tape measure however, many did not expand on their further to achieve the second mark.

**Question 1 (a) (ii)**

This question required candidates to reflect on their response for Q1ai and explain one disadvantage the students may have encountered when using this specific data collection methods. In some cases, candidates did not explain the disadvantage of measuring river width and chose a different method or explained a disadvantage of using a sampling technique. Where candidates did answer this question well, they were able to effectively identify a disadvantage (the tape measure may have got caught in the flow of the water (1)) and develop this for the second mark (this could have resulted in an inaccurate reading of the channel width (1)). Therefore, where candidates did demonstrate this, they were providing the WHAT and WHY. What is the disadvantage and why is this a disadvantage of using this specific data collection method.

**Question 1 (b) (i)**

This question required candidates to show understanding of how to calculate a mean using a data set. Most candidates were able to correctly calculate the mean using the data set and round their outcome to two decimal places. The question specifically asks candidates to show their working out in the space provided which not all candidates did.

**Question 1 (b) (ii)**

In this question, candidates were required to explain one conclusion that could be drawn from the data in Figure 1b for 2 marks. Most candidates were able to identify a conclusion that could be drawn from Figure 1b such as the river width, depth and velocity increasing for their first mark. However, there were several candidates who failed to achieve the second mark for the development of their point because they provided two conclusions based on the three characteristics. The question asked for only one conclusion.

### **Question 1 (c)**

For this question, candidates were required to complete the missing two bars representing data on sediment size across five sites. Most candidates were able to use the scale correctly to plot the two missing bars. Similarly, to previous series, some candidates' bars were drawn free hand.

### **Question 1 (d)**

In this extended 8-mark question candidates were required to evaluate the effectiveness of the different techniques used to present their fieldwork data.

While the mark scheme identifies the indicative content for this question, this is not an exhaustive list and candidates were awarded marks for relevant understanding, interpretation and skills which were not listed. Ultimately, when deciding on the final mark, examiners use the level descriptors to allocate a 'best fit' level to the response and then decide where, within the level, the response falls. The level descriptors are the same for all 'evaluate' questions, and also across all the papers in both GCSE geography specifications. It is therefore important that centres and candidates become familiar with them and how they are applied in the context of the paper and specific question that is being asked.

In the case of these questions, the assessment objectives (AOs) which are being examined are AO3 (4 marks) and AO4 (4 marks).

For this question, for candidates to secure the AO4 marks, they were required to communicate their findings through providing evidence related to their own river investigation.

Similarly, to previous series, candidates who were able to communicate their findings with clear evidence from their own fieldwork investigation, scored the higher marks. Some candidates misread the question and did not evaluate their fieldwork presentation techniques.

### **Question 2 (a) (i)**

In this question, candidates were asked to describe one fieldwork method that the students may have used to measure beach gradient. In most responses seen candidates were able to describe a basic point about using a clinometer however, many did not expand on their initial point to achieve the second mark.

### **Question 2 (a) (ii)**

This question required candidates to reflect on their response for Q2ai and explain one disadvantage the students may have encountered when using this specific data collection methods. In some cases, candidates did not explain the disadvantage of using a clinometer and chose a different method or explained a disadvantage of using a sampling strategy. Where

candidates did answer this question well, they were able to effectively identify a disadvantage (the difficulty in reading the angle on a clinometer (1)) and developed this for the second mark (this could have resulted in an inaccurate reading of the angle of slope (1)). Therefore, where candidates did demonstrate this, they were providing the WHAT and WHY. What is the disadvantage and why is this a disadvantage of using this specific data collection method.

### **Question 2 (b) (i)**

This question required candidates to show understanding of how to calculate a mean using a data set. Most candidates were able to correctly calculate the mean using the data set and round their outcome to two decimal places. The question specifically asks candidates to show their working out in the space provided which not all candidates did.

### **Question 2 (b) (ii)**

In this question, candidates were required to explain one conclusion that could be drawn from the data in Figure 2b for 2 marks. Most candidates were able to identify a conclusion that could be drawn from Figure 1b such as the average sediment size decreasing for their first mark. However, there were several candidates who failed to achieve the second mark for the development of their point because they provided two conclusions based on the three different beach characteristics. The question asked for only one conclusion. Candidates should be reminded that when asked to explain one conclusion that they develop this point and not make two separate points.

### **Question 2 (c)**

For this question, candidates were required to complete the missing two bars representing data on sediment size across five sites. Most candidates were able to use the scale correctly to plot the two missing bars. Similarly, to previous series, some candidates' bars were drawn free hand.

### **Question 2 (d)**

In this extended 8-mark question candidates were required to evaluate the effectiveness of the different techniques used to present their fieldwork data.

While the mark scheme identifies the indicative content for this question, this is not an exhaustive list and candidates were awarded marks for relevant understanding, interpretation and skills which were not listed. Ultimately, when deciding on the final mark, examiners use the level descriptors to allocate a 'best fit' level to the response and then decide where, within the level, the response falls. The level descriptors are the same for all 'evaluate' questions, and across all the papers in both GCSE geography specifications. It is therefore important that centres and candidates become familiar with them and how they are applied in the context of the paper and specific question that is being asked.

In the case of these questions, the assessment objectives (AOs) which are being examined are AO3 (4 marks) and AO4 (4 marks).

For this question, for candidates to secure the AO4 marks, they were required to communicate their findings through providing evidence related to their own river investigation.

Similarly, to previous series, candidates who were able to communicate their findings with clear evidence from their own fieldwork investigation, scored the higher marks. Some candidates misread the question and did not evaluate their fieldwork presentation techniques.

### **Question 3 (a) (i)**

This familiar fieldwork 'explain' question required candidates to give one reason why they used a qualitative fieldwork method for their urban study. Some candidates explain a reason for one of their quantitative fieldwork methods which demonstrated some confusion around their understanding of the difference between the two types of data. Where candidates did achieve the 2 marks there was clear evidence of a reason for the qualitative method and a development of their initial point to address the expectations of the command word 'explain'.

### **Question 3 (a) (ii)**

In this question, candidates were required to follow on from Q3ai to explain one disadvantage of the same qualitative method. Similarly, to Q3ai, some candidates explained a disadvantage of a quantitative fieldwork method or the use of sampling strategy. Where candidates did achieve the 2 marks there was clear evidence of the WHAT and WHY components for an 'explain' question. Providing a disadvantage 'what' and then expanding this to explain 'why' this was a disadvantage of using their chosen qualitative fieldwork method.

### **Question 3 (b)**

For this 'state' question, candidates were required to provide one risk that they considered before collecting their urban fieldwork data. Some candidates provided a hazard instead of a risk. For future series, candidates would benefit from having a clear understanding of the difference between a hazard and a risk when conducting a risk assessment.

### **Question 3 (c)**

In this question, candidates were required to explain one advantage of a sampling strategy with clear evidence relating to their own fieldwork. Despite the small cohort of candidates seen, similarly to previous series, candidates struggled to develop their point due to a lack of detailed understanding about the different sampling strategies.

### **Question 3 (d)**

This 'explain' question had 3 marks available. Candidates were required to explain how their chosen secondary data source supported their urban investigation. For the responses seen in this small cohort of candidates, many were able to give a reason for using a specific secondary source and develop this to say how it supported their investigation. However, candidates found it difficult to double develop their points to achieve the third mark.

### **Question 3 (e)**

In this second extended question, candidates were required to use evidence from Figure(s) 3a and 3b to assess the possible conclusions that could be drawn from the unfamiliar fieldwork data provided. Most candidates were able to extract information from the Figure(s) to demonstrate evidence for (AO4) communicating findings. However, candidates found it more challenging to assess through interpreting the evidence from the Figure(s) to draw out the potential conclusions to demonstrate evidence for (AO3) making judgements.

### **Question 4 (a) (i)**

This familiar fieldwork 'explain' question required candidates to give one reason why they used a qualitative fieldwork method for their urban study. Some candidates explain a reason for one of their qualitative fieldwork methods which demonstrated some confusion around their understanding of the difference between the two types of data. Where candidates did achieve the 2 marks there was clear evidence of a reason for the qualitative method and a development of their initial point to address the expectations of the command word 'explain'.



#### **Question 4 (a) (ii)**

In this question, candidates were required to follow on from Q4ai to explain one disadvantage of the same qualitative method. Similarly, to Q4ai, some candidates explained a disadvantage of a quantitative fieldwork method or the use of sampling strategy. Where candidates did achieve the 2 marks there was clear evidence of the WHAT and WHY components for an 'explain' question. Providing a disadvantage 'what' and then expanding this to explain 'why' this was a disadvantage of using their chosen qualitative fieldwork method.

#### **Question 4 (b)**

For this 'state' question, candidates were required to provide one risk that they considered before collecting their urban fieldwork data. Some candidates provided a hazard instead of a risk. For future series, candidates would benefit from having a clear understanding of the difference between a hazard and a risk when conducting a risk assessment.

#### **Question 4 (c)**

In this question, candidates were required to explain one advantage of a sampling strategy with clear evidence relating to their own fieldwork. Despite the small cohort of candidates seen, similarly to previous series, candidates struggled to develop their point due to a lack of detailed understanding about the different sampling strategies.

#### **Question 4 (d)**

This 'explain' question had 3 marks available. Candidates were required to explain how their chosen secondary data source supported their urban investigation. For the responses seen in this small cohort of candidates, many were able to give a reason for using a specific secondary source and develop this to say how it supported their investigation. However, candidates found it difficult to double develop their points to achieve the third mark.

#### **Question 4 (e)**

In this second extended question, candidates were required to use evidence from Figure(s) 3a and 3b to assess the possible conclusions that could be drawn from the unfamiliar fieldwork data provided. Most candidates were able to extract information from the Figure(s) to demonstrate evidence for (AO4) communicating findings. However, candidates found it more challenging to assess through interpreting the evidence from the Figure(s) to draw out the potential conclusions to demonstrate evidence for (AO3) making judgements.

### **Question 5 (b)**

Candidates were asked to state two impacts of climate change on landscapes in the UK.

For this small cohort, most candidates were able to provide two examples of potential impacts climate change might have on landscapes.

### **Question 5 (c)**

In this question, candidates were required to calculate a percentage increase based on the data provided. Most candidates found this calculation difficult and did not arrive at the correct answer. In future series, candidates would benefit from opportunities to practice calculating percentage increase/ decrease using different sets of data.

### **Question 5 (d)**

This 4 mark 'explain' question required candidates to explain two impacts of climate change on people in the UK. Most candidates were able to offer two possible impacts but did not always develop these to say why these would impact on people for the second marks.

### **Question 5 (e)**

Candidates were required to explain one example of a sustainable transport scheme in the UK.

Most candidates scored 2 marks on this question with some development of their initial point about a specific sustainable transport scheme. The common examples seen were the use of public buses or a congestion charge system. Where candidates found it more challenging was to double develop the reason why this scheme was sustainable to achieve the third mark.

### **Question 5 (f)**

In this 12-mark, extended writing question, candidates were asked to discuss the view that the use of local scale responses is less important than national scale responses in tackling the challenges of climate change in the UK.

As in the previous series, candidates were able to extract information from the Figure(s) to demonstrate evidence for AO4 and discuss what this information suggested about the difference in the use of local vs national scale responses to climate change. However, where candidates struggled to achieve the higher marks it was drawing in evidence of their own knowledge and understanding from the rest of their geography course. It should be noted that

this is the final question for their GCSE course and requires candidates to demonstrate their wider understanding in their argument.

Many candidates provided a structure to their response with several points based on the Figure(s) and a conclusion. Although, many of the conclusions seen were unsubstantiated and didn't always tie together the original points argued in the main body of their essay.

This question also had 4 marks allocated for the assessment of spelling, punctuation, grammar and use of specialist terminology. Most candidates achieved either 2 or 3 marks. Obviously, candidates were not awarded any of these marks if they did not answer the question or if their response did not achieve any marks for the main content being assessed. The use of paragraphs was one element which contributed to this mark and should be encouraged as it helps to structure candidates' responses.

## Paper Summary

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

- ◆ Ensure that you are familiar with the command words used in this specification. For example, the difference between what is expected for 'examine' and 'evaluate' and 'assess'.
- ◆ For the familiar extended writing responses candidates are required to include knowledge from their own fieldwork investigations. It is important that candidates use this knowledge and understanding from conducting their own fieldwork investigations to answer the question which has been set rather than to simply write out everything they have learnt about their own investigation. The material which they have learnt should be used to support their explanation and argument.
- ◆ When answering the 8 mark 'evaluate' questions, ensure that candidates understand that they are required to measure the value of something and, ultimately, provide a substantiated judgement/ conclusion.
- ◆ When plotting graphs it is important that this is done accurately. Candidates should use a ruler when, for example, completing a bar chart rather than drawing freehand.
- ◆ In questions where they are asked to develop a single reason, it is important to ensure that the appropriate number of links in the explanatory chain are developed. The number of marks should be used as a guide to this. For example, where the question is worth asking for one reason for 3-marks there should be two explanatory chains to achieve the higher marks.
- ◆ Centres should spend time reviewing the specimen and live papers to ensure that they are familiar with the key vocabulary which is being used in the questions – such as the differences between qualitative and quantitative data and the possible sampling strategies of random, systematic and stratified.
- ◆ It is important that centres incorporate the teaching of the 'integrated skills' into their delivery. These can be found below the subject content in each section of the specification.

## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

