

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCSE in Geography B
(5GB04)

Paper 1: Researching Geography

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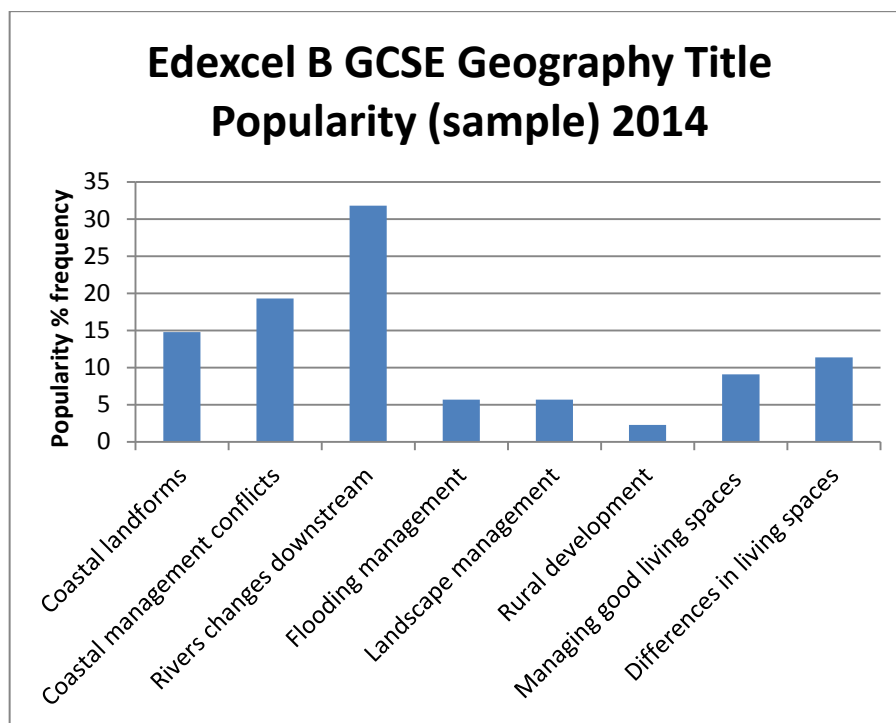
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General Comments

May 2014 has witnessed the fourth cycle of moderation for controlled assessments (CA) in GCSE Geography. Candidates are required to produce a piece of work over about 20 hours under both limited and high control. New for this series is a stricter enforcement of a 2000 maximum word length. The work is based around one of 8 tasks set by Edexcel (4 broadly physical and 4 broadly human in nature) and must include fieldwork and research. Centres choose their own topic(s); most Centres only did one with the students, but a few offer a choice through different fieldwork experiences.

In this 5th year, when a large number of centres have submitted work for several earlier series, a key issue remains the appropriate contextualisation of the task so that the controlled assessment is both manageable and still closely linked to the main focus. Many Centres are still replicating exactly the same fieldwork that they have done for many years and failing to adapt to a different task. The “how and why” components of tasks were rarely considered. Of particular note for 2014 is the shift towards more physical topics accounting for about 70% of the total choices (Rivers was more than 30% in a large sample of Centres). This may be down to the fact that the human titles seem less “obvious” or that there is simply a reluctance to try anything different from a previous series.



For many the newly revised mark scheme for 2014 did not present too many challenges. Moderators reported however that most of the higher ability candidates did in fact exceed the word limit (or totally disregarded it), largely because their introductions contained poorly connected, unnecessary theory. In this respect, teachers have only partially adapted to the new mark scheme as the two sections which were sometimes over-marked, were data presentation (lack

of complex techniques) and evaluation (still of the “wish I had tried harder” variety in many cases.

Particular comments from the moderating team in 2014

Administration:

Administration was similar to 2013 and most work arrived on time (15th May 2014) and carrying the correct documentation. Centres are however reminded that:

1. Moderators still found a number of errors in arithmetic in some work. It is essential that work is correctly added-up and those marks are accurately transferred to the OPTEMs / electronic sheets. If moderators find that work is not correct they will have to contact the Centre and request an adjustment. This creates additional burden for all those involved. Please note that the OPTEMs should only be used to record the raw candidate marks (out of 50), not a percentage or any other conversion.
2. Candidates should firmly attach their work together (no plastic wallets or A4 folders/wallets please) and complete the correct cover sheet indicating: specification, candidate and centre names and numbers, data of exam cycle and task title. On some occasions the title-space was left blank so moderators were unsure as to what the focus of the work might have been.
3. Both the teacher and candidate must sign the coversheet – always. This is a requirement of submission and work cannot be moderated without correct authentication.
4. Highest and lowest work must be included, even if it doesn't form part of the original (*) sample. If there are multiple pieces of work with the same highest / lowest marks then please just send one example at that mark.

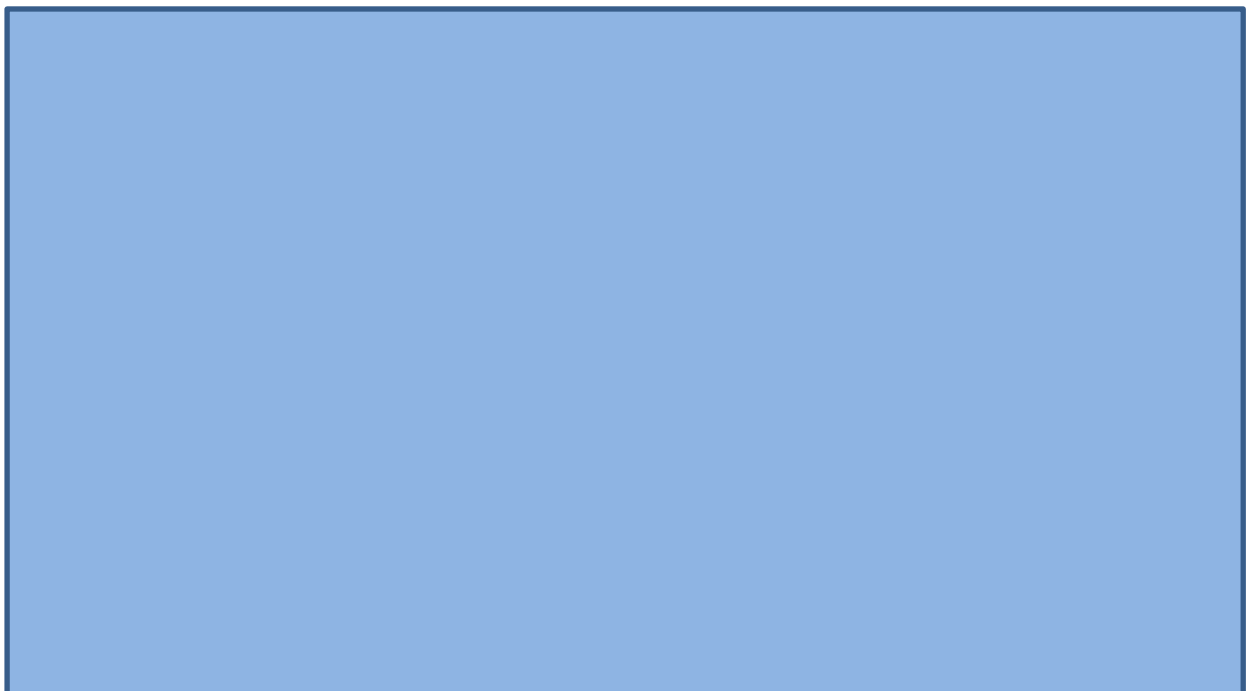
Comments on the quality of marking:

Moderators commented that once again in 2014, marking was generally fair, reliable and accurate. Very much maintaining the standards set by last year's qualification, despite there being changes to the mark scheme and word limit. Once again, some candidates, especially in the lower range of marks, seemed to be marked somewhat harshly. Equally there was evidence of some centres being too optimistic for candidates around the A and A* grades (37-45 range especially). A big thank you to all those centres who annotated the candidate mark sheet. This makes the moderation process easier; it also indicates internal moderation which larger centres should be carrying out.

Comments relating to particular sections:

- **Purpose of investigation** –many lacked any conceptual background which is really needed for maximum marks -history and pictures generally don't deliver this. There is room for this section to be much tighter and more focused. Secondary / research data was not used as much as it could have been to give context. Sometimes models and theories are irrelevant to the topic being studied
- **Methods of collecting data** – usually marked well. Moderators often report that tables work better than paragraphs, particularly with well-focused column titles. Data collection amounts were usually realistic and appropriate, but needed to be more rigorous on sampling and questionnaire design for example.
For some studies, eg rivers work, it is essential to collect enough data across enough sites. The downstream tasks requires more than three sites to make it meaningful (8-12 would be ideal) even if that data comes from secondary sources. It's a shame that students rarely comment on the distribution of their sites or acknowledge the idea of spread or clustering.
- **Methods of presenting data** – generally marked soundly, but there is still an issue with range and sophistication. Some centres really only use Excel graphs and claim this to be a wide range because they have numerous (often inappropriate) graphs; this is not a range, all it shows is that data can be entered in a spread sheet and a button pressed. Range needs to include maps, graphs, photos etc. Moderators are frustrated by student's not labelling the y-axes of graphs!

Presentation was often scrappy and rarely truly sophisticated, sketching and colouring skills were very weak.



- **Analysis and Conclusions**– mostly accurately marked with good use of the mark scheme. But as with the previous series, there was often a lack of any meaningful rigour in terms of handling data. At best descriptive, often not making any real geographical sense of what they had found. There is significant opportunity for improvement here by many schools and it's an area that should be addressed, especially in preparation for 2016 and the new GCSE specifications.
- **Evaluation** – there were comments (often very detailed) on individual data collection methods and other individual aspects of the work. There were few that evaluated overall, i.e. all sections of their report. Some found it difficult to separate their evaluations from conclusions. For the top of the band students should be strongly encouraged to reflect on their findings in relation to the original task set by Pearson / Edexcel. This was often forgotten or ignored.

Use of GIS

Moderators reporting increasing take-up of more sophisticated GIS and visualisation techniques. A growing number of centres are using approaches that allowed students' to plot their results on digital overlays using software such as Google Maps, Google Earth, ArcGIS Online and Aegis. It was also acknowledged, that for some centres, access to ICT remained a considerable challenge, but centres were reminded that GIS and visualisation remained an important part of the controlled assessment.

Pearson / Edexcel has a support document concerning GIS which is available from their website. There are also GIS / Visualisation courses supporting the use of this technology being offered by The Geographical Association (GA), FSC and the RGS.

Good Practice and Suggestions for Improvement:

There remains considerable variation in the quality and approach to CA by centres. It was sometimes worrying to still see centres, for instance, who seemed to have partially ignored the task set and carried on doing the same fieldwork and write-up style as they had done for legacy coursework or previous years of CA. Some centres were also unaware of the need to localise and contextualise the task – this is necessary since many of the tasks are simply too big / unmanageable to be tackled in their original state. The tasks are deliberately set in this way so that centres can have flexibility in terms of choice of location and fieldwork focus. Another issue is choosing appropriate aim(s) to link to the task brief as many students struggled to link the two. Many did loosely related aims e.g. Bradshaw's model or struggled to relate quality surveys such as clone town to the question. There is more support available on the Pearson / Edexcel website. One Moderator also commented that in some instances teachers had sacrificed individualism and flair for getting the marks for most students and so all the low control aspects of the work read too similarly. Training and support is planned for events are planned for in 2014-2015 which will look in more detail at some of these aspects.

At the centre of a successful piece of CA is well designed and well thought-out fieldwork which is relevant, rigorous and fit-for purpose.

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>

