

GCSE Geography webinar Your questions answered

GCSE Geography in the spotlight: results insights webinar resource

Autumn 2019



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How to use this resource

This webinar resource booklet collates and summarises all of the questions asked during the GCSE Geography in the spotlight: results insight webinar. Here you will find detailed responses to all of your questions from our subject experts – including those unanswered on the day. We have grouped related questions into themes and questions and answers into tables, to make this resource as concise, clear and accessible as possible.

For any questions asked that are not related to results insights, or for any further questions, you can get in-touch with your subject team.

For extra information on results:

- Join our Heads of Curriculum for a [video breakdown of GCSE results](#).
- Access our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool. We've created [two-minute tutorials](#) to show you how.
- Navigate to [e-AQA](#) to download the full report on the exam for a detailed breakdown.
- Book on to one of our [Feedback events](#), for a detailed view of results, student answers and examiner commentaries.

Theme one: content delivery

Questions and answers

Question	Expert answer
Were there any particular case studies that worked better than others?	One of the points you'll hear when we talk about things that went well this summer is where students were drawing from examples and case studies that were really local or familiar to them, particularly on the human units. You tend to find students engage much more with them when they are able to relate in some way. When it comes to some of the bigger case studies, sometimes students can become quite confused if they're looking at a single country for their LIC/NEE case study for example, but also use the same country for the city (ie Brazil and Rio), so if you take that approach with students, it's really important that they focus on selecting the right information for the right questions/area of the content.
What strategies could we use to improve students use of photographs please?	Students will get better at engaging with photographs by having lots of practice using them. Ensure that you allow time in the delivery of the content to expose students constantly to stimulus (including photographs) and ensure that you switch between stimuli that are familiar and unfamiliar to them. Encourage students to apply their knowledge and understanding and stress the importance of using the figure (are they picking out something they can see and are they linking in to the question asked?). Consider posing questions to students that target different assessment objectives, so that they can become familiar with the different question types that they might be asked, and therefore determine how they need to use the photograph (look back at the slides from the presentation about AO2 & AO3 questions as a starting point).
Does AQA have a glossary of key terms that all students need to know?	Yes, we have subject vocab resources available here that covers a wide range (though not all) of the key terms: https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/geography/gcse/geography-8035/teaching-resources
Will the specification be altered at all in light of the exams done so far? e.g. areas taken out? I'm thinking of the UK and the EU point in Changing Economic World!	It is not possible to make amendments to the subject content as the criteria are overseen by Ofqual.

<p>Would you recommend studying an LIC and a LIC City in the same country? I am going to do this with Lagos and Nigeria.</p>	<p>There is no right or wrong way of doing it. If you do chose to opt for this strategy, you really need to ensure that students are able to select the right bits of information for the right questions. Often we find they mix the two when it comes to looking at responses so it really depends on your preference and the way you deliver the content.</p>
<p>Great to hear you value local case studies as a way of engaging students, so just to be clear, students can use local examples of coastal engineering if required 'to use their own understanding' in a question?</p>	<p>As long as the example/case study is relevant to the area of the content, it's fine to use any example that you feel is suitable.</p>
<p>Are there any courses for support with teaching paper 2 in terms of strategies and support with the content?</p>	<p>Last year we ran a series of events that were specifically related to changing economic world – you can download those materials now on e-AQA. We may look into providing an additional course from next year so thank you for your feedback on that.</p>

Theme two: assessment

Questions and answers

Question	Expert answer
What is the reading age of the assessment material?	<p>Reading age for all papers is pitched at two years below the age of students sitting the examination (14 years for GCSE, 16 years for A-Level) and papers do undergo a language review as part of the process of producing the papers. Reading age calculators are not necessarily suitable for assessment materials as they often don't take into account subject specific terminology or command words that are a requirement of the assessment.</p> <p>Following feedback from teachers last year, AQA spent quite a bit of time for 2019 papers looking at breaking down questions with multiple commands to make the language overall more accessible. Language and accessibility is something we are continuing to look at.</p> <p>When it comes specifically to pre-release, the complexity here can be a little different because students are given it in advance of the assessment. It's important to spend time really breaking it down with students before they see it and finding those areas that they might struggle to access.</p>
With regards to changes in grade boundaries, is there a maximum amount the can increase by?	<p>Grade boundaries are set based on the ability of that particular cohort, that particular year, sitting a particular paper and so because we base our grade boundaries on predictions and need to ensure the standard is comparable year on year, there are no expectations that grade boundaries will increase/decrease by a certain amount each year. With that same logic in mind, they will fluctuate to maintain that standard.</p>

<p>Will example 9 mark answers be available to view from the 2019 papers? Are there plans to bring out other SAMS papers?</p>	<p>You'll be able to download examples of student answers and commentaries from the feedback events this Autumn term shortly after the last event had taken place. These will be available towards the end of this term. We will not be producing additional SAMS. There are 3 sets of SAMS and two sets of past papers to support this component.</p>
<p>Is there a 'best practice' structure to answering AO2 and AO3 with a stimulus to gain that top level 3 mark?</p>	<p>Students can achieve L3 in several ways. You tend to find that some students like to state something they can see in the figure, and then will demonstrate their understanding of that in the context of the question, whereas other students will state their understanding and then refer to something in the figure that evidences their understanding. Either approach is legitimate. The main thing is that students use the figure appropriately ('cover of the figure' is the phrase used in the mark scheme to achieve L3 - students should avoid simply describing the figure). Aside from this, students should be demonstrating general exam technique typical of a L3 answer e.g. geographical language, developmental connectives etc.</p>
<p>We had lots of pupils who were stuck at Level 2 for 6 and 9 mark responses? What are the main things that examiners are looking for to jump from a Level 2 to a Level 3?</p>	<p>Students need to demonstrate all three assessment objectives well - AO1 (knowledge), AO2 (understanding) and AO3 (application, analysis and evaluation). Examiners are looking to see that students are answering the question set directly (responding to the command word) and that they have addressed all parts of the question (for example 'social <i>and</i> economic impacts'). They should show developed and linked points and use evaluative language to assess their ideas. Students should be using geographical terminology wherever possible and supporting their points with case studies/evidence from the stimulus (if appropriate), with every point having clear and direct relevance to the question - they may use the language of the question in their answer to help with this. Their answer does</p>

	<p>not necessarily need to show a balance in the argument presented, but it will reach a clear conclusion.</p>
<p>We have been told that the stimuli were provided for lower ability students to use to help them write something appropriate i.e. describe/state what they see. This isn't always the case - how can lower ability students access questions if not credited for this?</p>	<p>A stimulus is a really integral part of the assessment because they can be used to assess multiple combinations of assessment objectives and therefore students need to be aware of how to use them in different ways to access the marks. Stimulus material can be really useful for lower ability students to have something to draw from, absolutely - but simply describing the stimulus for some question types won't necessarily help them to gain those marks. They need to bring in their own understanding if the question is testing AO3 and AO3. If there were a stimulus used for a knowledge based question or a skills question (AO4), students would be expected to describe patterns, trends or state something they can see. This is another way that stimulus can be used in the assessment. I'd suggest looking at the papers again and see where you can spot those differences in question types and consider how you might want to help your lower ability students to practice and see the differences between them.</p>
<p>Would the AO number ever be displayed alongside the mark tariff, so students know??</p> <p>Could you put together a resource that outlines the triggers that questions use and which AO it relates to?</p>	<p>We don't do this as a rule for our assessments; it only appears in the mark scheme so it's important that students can see the triggers in the question with the phrasing that is used.</p> <p>In terms of the resource, this is great feedback and something we can certainly look into.</p>
<p>Do you have a guide to help develop marking of 6 mark and 9 mark questions? To enable students to have direct feedback on how to reach the top levels in longer answer questions</p>	<p>We don't have a guide specifically aimed at answering these question types, but we do provide a variety of exemplar material, some of which contain 6 and 9 mark responses at L3 which you can access. Many of these are contained within the feedback materials and you can download those from e-AQA towards</p>

	the end of the Autumn term (exemplars from 2018 are available now).
Will you be sharing candidate exemplars with commentary for 2019 papers? I would like to see some full mark answers for 6 & 9 mark Qs.	Our Feedback Events are detailed sessions that will use real student examples and examiner commentary from the series - illustrating, with explanations, full mark answers. You can book using the link on page 3. You will be able to download the materials from the feedback events towards the end of this term as all of our events materials go onto e-AQA after the final event has been run. The 2018 feedback materials are on e-AQA.
In 6 and 9 mark questions do you need a specific introduction paragraph? It is often shown in examples but not necessarily in your exemplar answers and certainly not in mark schemes?	There is no requirement in the mark scheme that students need to have an introductory paragraph when answering 6 and 9 mark questions. Exemplar material can often show a variety of different ways that students can approach answering questions. It is worth noting that credit is only given where students are answering the question set, and so an introduction that simply restates the question would not be helpful. Students can access the full range of marks without an introduction, providing they have answered the question fully and met the assessment objective requirements.
How do you ensure optional questions are of the same standard/require the same level of skill?	Optional units are considered very carefully when question papers are produced and undergo a detailed scrutiny to ensure that the standard of questions is comparable. You will notice when looking at Section C units that the structure of each section in terms of the questions set, the skills tested and the types of stimulus used are similar.
Do students have to specifically refer to a figure in their answer e.g. figure 4 shows...	Implied use of a figure is still creditable, but it can be useful to get students into the habit of directly referencing the figure in their answers.

<p>Is there anywhere that shows a range of the AO question triggers as a breakdown? Eg you said if it says use figure 3 then it is an AO3 question.</p>	<p>We don't have a guide specifically to breakdown the AO's and question triggers, because there are a variety of ways that these question types can be used and phrased and part of the assessment is getting students to understand what the question is asking. The important thing that teachers can do is to become really familiar with the AO's and what they mean, and I would encourage you to pay attention to the AO's in the mark scheme for the sample and past papers. Stimulus can be used in questions that target any of the AO's - not just AO3. In the case of the AO2 and AO3 questions mentioned in the slides, reference to the figure and applying understanding to the figure is where AO3 is tested.</p>
<p>Can you explain more about how SPaG marks are given.</p>	<p>Guidance on SPaG marks is given in each of the mark schemes.</p>
<p>It can be hard for students to apply or evaluate a response when they may not have a reserve of subject knowledge at their fingertips. Given the breadth of content of some of the case studies what are some tips for students attempting 9 mark questions?</p>	<p>9 mark questions equally assess 3 marks of AO1, 3 marks of AO2 and 3 marks of AO3 and are designed to provide a level of challenge to be able to differentiate the 9 mark range. The most successful students are those who are able to be really selective of the information that they take from their relevant case study and are able to apply that to the question being asked. Relaying large amounts of knowledge about a particular case study equally wouldn't give the student the best opportunity to move through the levels.</p>
<p>On the PP you have some information about the difference between a grade 2 and grade 4 students. Is it possible to get this for a grade 6-7 and a 8-9 student?</p>	<p>You'll find some support on this in the feedback materials for each paper.</p>
<p>Where can I find model answers (answers in a range of levels, not just full marks) for questions for the previous 2 years of exams?</p>	<p>We don't provide examples of answers for all levels across all levels marked questions each year. Lead Examiners select a range of examples for their feedback materials that</p>

	<p>exemplifies the main messages that they want to get across to teachers each year. You can download these feedback materials even if you're not able to attend as they are uploaded onto e-AQA towards the end of the Autumn term. The 2018 feedback materials are on e-AQA.</p>
<p>Will AQA consider the length of the papers and time allowed per question?</p>	<p>Timing appeared to be much better for students this year, particularly on Papers 1 and 2. However, we are aware of timing being reported as difficult for students on Paper 3. This is something we will continue to look into and consider ways of improving this for students in future series. Making changes to the time allocated to an assessment must be requested and approved by Ofqual.</p>

Theme three: fieldwork

Questions and answers

Question	Expert answer
How many methods should students complete and how many presentation techniques for Paper 3?	We advocate a single hypothesis or question that can be evaluated by collecting data on two variables (two sets of data). You can do more than this, but it's not essential. Some may collect two sets of primary data whilst others might collect one set of primary data and use some secondary data to support this. The number of presentation techniques isn't set, it depends on the nature of the data you are using, and the most important thing is that students understand why certain methods of data presentation are better than others. We would suggest ensuring that students are given access to a variety of different ways of presenting data as this will also help with the unfamiliar fieldwork questions.
The last two years of exams the students were not penalised for not knowing their FW titles – will that continue?	There is no mark attached to writing their title - they can write nothing and still get full marks. If they can give the examiners something to help them with a location and context that really does help.
Might be a basic question - but do the fieldwork titles need to be questions, or can they be a statements?	Questions or hypotheses – it doesn't matter.
How do we teach unfamiliar fieldwork please?	This is about testing students' general fieldwork skills. For example, they could be asked to look at different environments and suggest what type of investigation could take place there, what data collection methods could be used or think about how suggested methods could be improved. They might be asked to manipulate data in reference to a specific fieldwork enquiry or to look at data and suggest ways that it might be presented. These questions could relate to any part of

	<p>the enquiry process (see the strands of enquiry in the specification) and could test any of the skills on the skills checklist which you'll also find in the specification. You can teach this when delivering your own fieldwork as well as during the delivery of the content. Find opportunities for students to engage with fieldwork data whilst teaching Paper 1 and 2 content, show them different environments and ask them to discuss the potential opportunities for fieldwork and the decisions that would have to be made at each stage of the enquiry process.</p>
<p>Do you have any model answers for familiar fieldwork? Such as the 'location' question you have mentioned?</p>	<p>We are hoping to work on the support we provide currently for Paper 3 which we will be building on after the Autumn term. You'll be able to see some of these during the feedback events, but if you can't attend those you will be able to download all the examples used towards the end of this term.</p>
<p>Are students expected to recall data from their fieldwork results?</p>	<p>If using data helps students to evidence their responses then it can be really useful (particularly when justifying conclusions) but it's not expected and we cannot ask students to state data (remember, no AO1 marks on this paper). Focus on students selecting appropriate data that supports their conclusions.</p>
<p>Has there been any consideration of dropping the number of fieldwork enquiries to one?</p>	<p>Fieldwork requirements, as with the content is a requirement by the DfE and outlined in the subject level conditions handed down by Ofqual. We would not be able to make changes to this during the lifetime of this specification</p>
<p>Are students limited in the marks they receive if you only do 1 data technique for your fieldwork? Can they still access 9 marks? Or if they do more techniques, have they got more chance in gaining higher marks?</p>	<p>Students are asked to discuss technique(s) in their responses so a student can achieve the full range of marks using just one technique. Students often find it quite difficult to do this with just one technique however, and so find it better to reach level 3 by having more than one technique to choose from. They can then</p>

	<p>find opportunities to compare as well as bring in a wider range of ideas.</p>
<p>Could you help us with the question about how the conclusions can be made more reliable? We are not sure how to advise the students.</p>	<p>In the exam, the best students are able to evaluate the full enquiry process to consider how reliable their conclusions are and link these ideas to their original question/title. Those answers that require some work often focus solely on the data collection methods and don't always consider the bigger picture. There are a number of elements in the enquiry process (see table on pages 27-28 of the specification) that have an effect on how 'secure' the conclusion may be. The highest achieving students should be considering the 'extent' of how reliable (or secure) their conclusions were, as opposed to whether they were simply reliable or not reliable.</p> <p>Some important themes to talk about with students are outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable: If you repeated the method of data collection, would you get the same results? Did you design the investigation in a way that has allowed you to draw secure conclusions? E.g. if someone else was to repeat your study, would they get similar results? Were there other factors that have arisen that now need investigating in order to draw a secure and reliable conclusion? • Accuracy: How did you plan and conduct your data collection in order to avoid errors? E.g. using a clinometer to measure the angle, using the ranging poles to ensure accuracy of angle measurement, using tape measure rather than '3 steps' to measure intervals. • Validity: A way of describing how reliable and accurate your data collection was. <p>Talking to students about the accuracy and reliability of different aspects of the enquiry whilst in the field is as important as talking about it back in the classroom. The focus of the assessment will always be about why decisions were made as opposed to what the</p>

decision was. By involving students in the decision-making process (albeit a more guided role as the teacher will have likely already made these decisions), they will have a better understanding of the enquiry process and hopefully access the more evaluative questions in the exam more successfully. Here are some questions to help consider the reliability of the conclusions made – you can see that there is more to consider than just the data collection methods. This is not an exhaustive list and there are plenty of other questions to consider, depending on the nature of the enquiry. It would be good to ask ‘how do I know this?’ after each question. Whilst there may not always be a clear-cut answer, hopefully at least considering this will encourage some deeper thinking.

Suitability of question/hypothesis

- How well does the investigation title itself allow you to meet reach valid conclusions i.e. would have it been better to compare 2 places or have you now uncovered a factor that became relevant during the investigation that you could have initially chosen to explore?

Choice of data collection methods

- Were these methods the most appropriate for answering the investigation question?
- How useful were individual methods compared to one another?
- Are there other methods that may have been useful in answering your original fieldwork title/question?

Sample size/timing

- Did you have enough data to provide suitable evidence to draw a reliable conclusion from the data and answer your original fieldwork title/question?
- Was the sample size/area large enough to provide suitable evidence to draw a reliable conclusion from the data and answer your original fieldwork title/question?
- Did the time at which you collected data

have any effect of the results? If so, does this affect your ability to draw a reliable conclusion from the data and answer your original fieldwork title/question?

Sampling strategies

- How did the sampling strategies chosen affect the results you collected? Does this affect your ability to draw a reliable conclusion from the data and answer your original fieldwork title/question?
- Are there more appropriate sampling strategies you could have used? Why would they have been better in helping you draw a reliable conclusion from the data and answer your original fieldwork title/question?

Results

- Do the results you have provide suitable evidence to draw a reliable conclusion from the data and answer your original fieldwork title/question How do you know? Remember - results may be reliable in regard to the way in which they were collected, but not necessarily in relation to the aims of the enquiry.

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