

Notes and guidance: assessment objectives

This will help your students to understand assessment objectives (AOs) in preparation for the exams. Use it with the [Specimen Assessment Materials](#) (SAMs) to contextualise the examples given.

Assessment objectives: assessment summary

Paper 1 and paper 2

Section A and Section B

- 4-mark question: A01
- 6-mark question: A03
- 6-mark question: A01 – 2 marks
A02 – 4 marks
- 20-mark question: A01 – 10 marks
A02 – 10 marks

Section C

- 4-mark question: A01
- 6-mark question: A03
- 9-mark question: A01 – 4 marks
A02 – 5 marks
- 9-mark question: A01 – 4 marks
A02 – 5 marks
- 20-mark question: A01 – 10 marks
A02 – 10 marks

Assessment objectives: points to note

A01

- Students should learn theories, concepts, processes and case studies in depth with suitable detail to be able to reach the higher marks on the levels of response mark schemes.
- For the higher mark questions students can only achieve a maximum of Level 2 for only reciting learned material.

A02

- The synoptic A0 questions will have links identified that students are expected to respond to.
- It's different from the previous specification where questions had broad and overarching questions, which allowed students the opportunity to bring in their own synoptic links.
- Students are expected to respond to links made in the following ways:
 1. elements not signalled within specification topics – novel situations that require students to apply their knowledge and understanding to. These types of question will always come with a resource
 2. links made within specification topics that are not signalled in the specification
 3. links made across specification topics that are not signalled in the specification.
- Students should apply their knowledge to unseen material in the exam, exploring links in the above ways.
- One question per series will require students to make links either between the core content units (Water and carbon cycles, Changing places and Global systems and global governance) or between their chosen optional unit and the core unit.
- Students need to consider a range of potential connections between different aspects of their study to achieve the higher marks in these A02 questions, not by reciting learned knowledge.
- Case studies can be used and where they are signalled in the specification, this constitutes A01. However, if these are used to support the answer to a question and clearly used in the context of the question, then this would be application (A02).

Developing A02 skills

Here are some ways that you can address A02 with students in the classroom.

- Give students a copy of the specification for two units and ask them to find some areas where they may be able to establish links and what those might be.
- Students could be challenged to make connections between different aspects of the units throughout the topic, eg Hazards.

Venn diagrams can be effective in establishing links between topics, eg fires in nature and storm events:

- both linked to extreme weather
- both linked to El Nino?
- both have increased incidence recently?

Here's another task:

Order the following hazard events:

- wildfires
- storms
- volcanoes
- earthquakes

least to most, in terms of:

- likely to cause death in an LIC
- hardest to respond to in an HDC
- best suited to apply the Park Model to.

Justify the rank orders, using specific evidence.

- Students may need scaffolding of where these links are to begin with, eg students would be given two elements and asked to establish links between them. See question 06.6 from Paper 1 of the first set of [SAMs](#) on Globalisation and destruction of ecosystems.

What are the links? Eg:

- Globalisation leads to the existence of global agencies, for example WWF/Greenpeace who work internationally to limit the destruction of ecosystems.
- Global firms (TNC) exploit environments beyond the boundary of their home nation, eg firms which use palm oil.

A03

- Students should be competent in skills on the geographical skills checklist in the [specification](#)
- A03 skills are principally assessed by the Non-examined assessment (NEA).
- In the written examinations A03 questions will always link to some sort of stimulus resource.
- One type of 6 mark question requires students to use only the resource. As it is testing A03 students are only required to analyse/evaluate/interpret the data presented in the resource. In this type of question knowledge and its application is not creditworthy.

Developing A03 skills

- A03 can easily be integrated into teaching as resources will be used frequently.
- Students should read around the topic they're covering and analyse new resources that they come across, eg photographs and text.
- When looking at new resources, students should:
 - identify the most significant data/elements/information and extract facts
 - look for trends and anomalies within the data
 - see if data manipulation is possible
 - look for relationships within the data provided
 - look for connections between resources if more than one is provided
 - conduct spatial analysis of maps, if appropriate
 - interpret statistics to infer significance, if appropriate
 - analyse change over time when dates are used.

In the exam

Question styles

Here's a list of the types of question that students will need to answer in the exam.

4-mark

- A01
- These are the 4-mark questions at the start of each section.

6-mark stimulus: analysis or interpretation of data

- A03
- Eg 'Analyse the data shown in Figure 1'. This requires the use of the resource *only* to answer the question. Credit will not be given for linking to theory or examples; only for the resource provided. Students therefore do not need to explain reasons for patterns and trends presented in the data.
- Eg question 01.2 from Paper 1 [2018 series](#)

6-mark/9-mark stimulus: application of knowledge

- A01 and A02
- 6 marks on the core units
- 9 marks on the optional units
- These questions require students to use both the resource and their own knowledge; it is testing A01 and A02.
- Eg question 02.3 from Paper 2 [2018 series](#)

9-mark: un-signalled specification links

- A01 and A02
- Eg question 05.6 from Paper 1 of the first set of [SAMs](#)

9-mark: signalled specification links

- A01 and A02
- Eg question 05.7 from Paper 1 of the first set of [SAMs](#)

20-mark

- A01 and A02
- There will be a 20-mark question on every core and optional unit.
- The mark scheme is generic for these questions.

There will always be at least one question per series requiring students to make links across the specification units. These may appear in the 9-mark or 20-mark questions. Each series these questions are highlighted in the examiner's reports.

Approaching questions

Students must:

- understand the link between AOs and the skills that they require to succeed in the exam. For example, writing detailed knowledge about geographical concepts for a question which targets A03 will not be credited
- ensure, where appropriate, that there is a balance of discussion and use of evidence. Utilising data will potentially allow students to demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of concepts, processes and interactions, in particular case study data, which should underpin the response throughout
- engage with the command word, eg responses to questions which ask 'to what extent' should express a clear view on the extent to which the student agrees/disagrees with the point of view presented in their response
- write concisely to answer questions
- allocate their time appropriately, eg spend approximately 45 minutes on sections A and B and approximately 1 hour on Section C.

4-mark

Students should be looking to include four pieces of information – either as separate points or two developed points. The responses should be focused and factual. Command words will include, 'explain' and 'outline'.

6-mark questions stimulus: analysis or interpretation

The aim for a detailed response is clear analysis of the evidence provided, which makes appropriate use of data. Clear connection(s) between different aspects of the data and evidence should be made, within and (if appropriate) between resources.

6-mark stimulus/9-mark: application of knowledge

The question will ask student to use the resource(s) "...and your own knowledge...".

On the 6-mark questions, A01 is worth 2 marks and A02 is worth 4 marks.

Command words include '*assess*', so students need to study the resource(s), then use evidence from the resource(s) and their own knowledge base to form a decision.

The emphasis is on application of knowledge and not analysis of the resource. Students should use the resource as a springboard.

An example of a 9-mark resource question can be found in the second set of SAMs, Paper 2, question 03.6.

9-mark questions

These questions challenge students to make links within and across units. They are synoptic in nature and require students to use A01 combined with A02.

On the 9-mark questions, 4 marks are allocated to A01 and 5 marks to A02.

Students should be looking to include a range of appropriate and detailed information derived from geographical theories, concepts and case studies within their response in order to demonstrate A01. This information should be used to make decisions related to the question, in order to show the analysis, interpretation and evaluation in application of knowledge for A02.

Students will need to assess and evaluate within their responses, and come to conclusions. Questions will include evaluative commands, eg 'assess the importance of...' and 'to what extent do you agree...'. Whilst there is no singular approach required to respond to these commands, a decision on the question based on the proceeding content will be a very important element to any 9-mark question response.

It is recommended that students give a brief summary statement in relation to the question. It is important to balance the time spent on this with the time to present and analyse the evidence used before the summary statement is made.

20-mark questions

For a 20-mark question, 10 marks are allocated each for A01 and A02.

The key focus for students is to understand the necessary balance of A01 and A02 in their responses. This means that simple repetition of knowledge on a topic will not allow students to access the full mark range as they will not have applied their knowledge. An approach like this would limit students to a maximum of 10 A01 marks if they only demonstrated excellent, relevant knowledge.

One way students could structure their response:

- 10% – introduction
- 80–90% – main body
- 10% – conclusion

There are three strands for each AO that are used to identify marks to credit when marking; students should have an understanding of these strands.

A01

K & U - knowledge and understanding of place(s) and environments

C & P- knowledge and understanding of key concepts and processes

S & T - awareness of scale and temporal change

A02

A & E - analysis and evaluation in the application of knowledge and understanding

Links – links between knowledge and understanding to the application of knowledge and understanding in different contexts

Conc – evaluative conclusion that is applied to the context of the question

The distinction between ‘analysis and evaluation’ and ‘evaluative conclusion’ is that the conclusion should come to an overall judgement related to the steer of the question, eg as prompted by the command words ‘to what extent...’ and ‘assess the extent to which...’ etc.

When writing responses, students should be aware that the conclusion does not need to be at the end of the response, nor indeed the beginning as an opening proposition. Students will be credited appropriately for arriving at an overall conclusion regardless of the structure of the work. However, students must be aware that a conclusion is a very important element of the response.

Approaching mark schemes

Here are some example questions from [Paper 2](#) of the first set of SAMs on Global systems and global governance, with commentaries on how the mark scheme is applied.

Paper 2, question 01.1

This is a point marked question. The types of point that would be creditable for a mark are shown with (1).

It is not expected that a student would cover all of the points given. They are indicative of the range of suitable points students would be likely to make.

Here the example uses *Nike*, but examiners will look for similar detail for any other appropriate case study used.

The notes for answers demonstrate the difference between a single point, for one mark, and how an idea might be developed for two, or even three, marks.

As the question asks students to refer to a specific TNC, the notes for answers give a clear steer that students should be using specific data to support their response. Generic responses will not receive higher marks.

Paper 2, question 01.2

This is an example of a level-marked question, with two levels.

Teachers should follow the guidance on determining levels, then marks.

As this question is only testing A03, no credit will be given for students who add their own knowledge of the climate of Antarctica.

It is not expected that a student would cover all of the points given. They are indicative of the range of suitable points students would be likely to make.

The following points from the mark scheme demonstrate the range of A03 analytical skills that students may integrate into their approaches:

- overall trend
the data illustrates conditions of extreme cold throughout the year, with no recorded monthly temperatures above freezing (Figure 1)
- connecting patterns across data, describing trends
the lowest monthly temperatures at all three stations occur more or less continuously through the Antarctic winter of total darkness in the months April–September. After this, there is a 4-month period where the temperature rises to a peak in January and then drops rapidly again (Figures 1 and 2)
- specific data supporting ranges shown across stations
average annual temperatures vary between the three locations: -14°C at McMurdo, -40°C at Amundsen Scott and -55°C at Vostok. Similarly, there is much variation in annual temperature range: 23°C at McMurdo, 32°C at Amundsen Scott and 36°C at Vostok (Figure 1)
- using information on locations to create a spatial reasoning for data shown
this shows that a coastal location is much less extreme than places further inland (Figure 1). Indeed, the lowest temperatures are recorded at a point that is furthest from the sea, not at the geographical pole (Figure 1)
- using information on altitude to analyse the role this has in the data
temperatures show a link with altitude, with higher temperatures recorded at McMurdo, which is close to sea level, in comparison with Vostok, which has the lowest temperatures at around 3500 metres altitude
- using information on locations to create a spatial reasoning for data shown
temperatures are generally 30–40 degrees Celsius higher on the coast than at the centre of Antarctica (Figure 1)
- inferring information from the data
precipitation is likely to be in the form of snow due to perpetually low temperatures and is generally very low, varying between 7 and 200 mm at the 3 weather recording stations (Figure 2)
- advanced analysis connecting data and information regarding locations and altitude
the coastal station records the highest precipitation, but in the interior, precipitation drops almost to zero. The South Pole receives only 7 mm per year (Figure 2), despite the high altitude of almost 3000 metres

- analysing temporal variation in data
there is little evidence of a seasonal pattern of precipitation for both Vostok and the South Pole. However the data for the coastal station of McMurdo indicates that precipitation reaches a maximum between late summer and mid-winter (Jan-June), decreasing to a minimum in spring (October and November)
- summary analysis
in summary, temperatures decrease with increasing latitude, with distance from the coast and with increasing altitude. Precipitation also decreases markedly from the coast inland, and with increasing latitude and altitude.

These show that simple lifting of data will not be sufficient to access higher marks. The students must be connecting, combining other information that has been provided, thinking temporally and spatially.

Paper 2, question 01.3

Students should be looking to show that they understand and can interpret the data provided and connect this to their wider understanding of flows, capital, raw materials and products linked with globalisation.

The knowledge that a student could have connected to this topic is shown in the A01 section of the notes for answers. It is not expected this knowledge would be separate; it should be integrated into the analysis. This is repeated throughout the A02 section, where it is applied to the resource to build analysis.

The A02 notes for answers show how students would integrate use of the resource into their answer. It shows that students interpret the map, connect this to their wider body of knowledge to make an assessment on the extent to which the data shown connects to their understanding of the learned theory.

Not all points covered in the notes for answers would be expected within the response.