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AS

# Geography

7036/2 Human geography and geography fieldwork investigation  
Report on the Examination

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## General

Students produced a wide range of performance. The paper proved generally accessible to students across the ability range; whilst stretching and challenging the most able, it also allowed those of seemingly moderate ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Students seemed to manage their time effectively and there were very few who seemed to have failed to complete the paper due to time constraints. I think there will be improvements in the future as centres become more familiar with the new assessment objectives and demands of the specification.

It worth reminding centres how the assessment objectives have impacted upon the papers.

*AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of places, environments, concepts, processes, interactions and change, at a variety of scales.*

This is worth up to 40% of the overall A Level.

This is a very straight forward and fairly traditional assessment objective. It tests knowledge in isolation and recall of specification content. Multiple choice questions and short tariff questions are all testing AO1. Learned material as part of the course of study should be used to support answers. This includes the use of case studies, where they have been signified in the specification. AO1 also forms the basis of longer responses i.e. it is the knowledge of the specification content which is used to underpin the 9 mark and 20 mark questions.

*AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues.*

This is also worth up to 40% of the overall A Level.

AO2 – This is a significant departure from previous approaches to the way in which questions are set. This is the synoptic assessment objective. Previously AQA A Level papers set generally broad and overarching questions, which allowed students the opportunity to bring in their own synoptic links. The key difference now is that the question setter will identify links which students are expected to respond to. Here students are expected to respond to links made in the following ways:

- Elements not specified within specification units; novel situations which candidates are required to apply their knowledge and understanding to. These types of question will always come with a resource.
- Links made by the question setter within specification units which are not signalled in the specification.
- Links made by the question setter across specification units which are not signalled in the specification.

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This assessment objective encourages students to apply their knowledge to unseen material in the examination, exploring links within, units, across units and to novel situations.

Teachers should ensure that their students understand that learning subject knowledge from a course textbook, without considering a range of potential connections between different aspects of their study, will only secure a limited outcome in the examinations. Up to 40% of the public examination will be testing this approach to synopticity.

It is clear that some students were better prepared than others when it came to assessing this element. Instead of applying their knowledge to the context of the question, many simply regurgitated specification content around the theme of the question. This constituted AO1 marks only as these answers always lacked application of knowledge to the context of the question.

Centres should note that both the 9 and 20-mark questions will no longer have direct links to identified specification content. Candidates need to be prepared to use their knowledge understanding of content, concepts and processes. This should then be applied to the context of both the 9 and 20 mark questions, rather than narrative approach of reciting learned materials which some more limited responses showed.

*AO3 – Use a variety of relevant methods and techniques to:*

- *investigate questions and issues*
- *interpret, analyse and evaluate data and resources*
- *communicate findings*

These skills were tested in this examination paper whenever a stimulus resource was used. The main issue here is that many candidates demonstrated AO2 type answers by applying their knowledge, offering reasons for patterns for example. This was not the question. The command 'analyse' in this context, simply required candidates to interface with the data and deconstruct the information.

Overall students performed at a higher level on Section A (Changing Places) than Section B. They appeared well-prepared for this section and it was very pleasing to note the significant numbers who were able to access Level 4 in the essay, demonstrating thorough and detailed AO1 knowledge and understanding of both places and an ability to make the AO2 links to social inequality or demographics. Typically evaluative conclusions were supported by the body of the essay. However, all students must be prepared to deconstruct the questions, identifying the command words and the AO2 links they are required to make, thereby answering the question. For example, they should be encouraged to respond to 'to what extent' by actually stating the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement. Weaker responses leaned heavily upon subject knowledge and learned place-study detail, without clearly linking such material to the terms of the question. These responses were predominantly descriptive and narrative, lacking critical engagement with the theme and demands of the question.

Students appeared less-well prepared for Section B with many unable to access Level 2 and above, due to failure to be specific about their own fieldwork. Many were unable to

evaluate why they used a particular data collection method or presentation technique. The very best responses were able to accurately describe the fieldwork carried out and link this to real locations with valid findings supported by evidence. Lower attaining candidates produced generic answers with no specific evaluation.

In preparation for section B, students are required to carry out fieldwork that is clearly linked to the specification. A large proportion referred to fieldwork that was clearly rooted in Changing Places and it was pleasing to see such a wide variety of topics chosen (students were frequently ill-prepared and unable to demonstrate an understanding of the fieldwork process). A small proportion appear to be doing fieldwork that has no apparent links with the current specification and is more rooted in the legacy specification or GCSE specifications. Centres should ensure that AS fieldwork meets the requirements to ensure that students can access the questions in Section B.

There was no significant difference in the number of students who chose question 3 or question 4. Overall students showed good skills in completing the graph and the Standard Deviation table. However, 3.3/4.3 and 3.4/4.4 were less well-done. Many students were unable to use the Standard Deviation result to compare the data sets, with a significant number seeing Standard Deviation as a measure of the range without any reference to the mean. Many students were unable to evaluate the use of Standard Deviation and restricted their marks as they didn't make use of the data.

Throughout this paper, students need to engage with the resources and they should be encouraged to practice this throughout their AS course. A significant number of students struggled with the interpretation of resources and how they need to use them in the exam.

## **Question 1**

### **1.1**

95% of students got this question correct and they indicated their response in the correct manner by shading the internal circle.

### **1.2**

89% students got this question correct and they indicated their response in the correct manner by shading the internal circle.

### **1.3**

This question was generally disappointing in terms of the quality of responses. This was an AO1 knowledge question, taking from the section on meaning and representation of places. However many students seemed to have a poor-understanding of 'place-meaning'. Just over a quarter of students failed to access any marks. Many focused on the reference to corporate bodies and referred to TNCs and Clone Towns. This clearly is not directed at creating 'place-meaning'.

However it did differentiate well and over a third of students gained at least 2/3 marks. The better responses tended to be those that put the idea of place-meaning into the context of an actual example such as 'Glasgow Make People' or 'Plymouth – Ocean City'. They accessed further marks through the description of how the place-meaning was created.

Weaker responses frequently dealt with the question in a more abstract way for example ‘advertising’ with very little in the way of elaboration. A smaller proportion didn’t engage with the command to describe and explained ‘why’ place-meanings were created rather than ‘how’.

#### 1.4

Most students quickly assessed the differences as being qualitative versus quantitative sources and considered the merits of subjectivity compared to objectivity. The better responses were able to take an aspect of physical geography such as relief and contrast the way in which it was shown on both maps using actual evidence such as height or place names. It was very disappointing to see a large proportion of students who either didn’t understand the concept of physical geography or didn’t read the question sufficiently. The concept of ‘physical geography’ is fundamental to geography teaching and at this level it was surprising that so many responses considered the roads and buildings to be relevant to the question.

Many students did not consider the usefulness of the maps in question but simply described what each showed. ‘Contrast’ was probably the best word used as the majority of candidates did seek to look at the differences. However, this is an example of where students should be encouraged to study resources carefully before answering the question. Some students relied on assumptions about the differences between qualitative and quantitative sources rather than engaging with the actual evidence. For example, ‘figure 1a doesn’t have contour lines to show relief whereas 1b does’ was a frequent comment. Whilst the contour lines are not shown in the conventional style in 1a they are present.

Few responses than expected used specific map evidence. Disappointingly, when grid references were used they were often incorrect (northings before eastings). Students should be encouraged to use resources by giving evidence from that resource. So, in this case by referring to place names, specific heights or accurate grid references.

#### 1.5

This question was generally answered well with over 70% of students accessing L2 or better. They were able to describe the changes brought about by the regeneration and link it to how this affected lived experience. The level 3 responses were more discursive and there was some insightful assessment of the extent to which lived experience might change. Some also considered the source of the information and the extent to which this could be biased.

This is an example of where students must read the question carefully and deconstruct it to ensure success. The instruction ‘with reference to figure 2’ means that they are expected to refer to it. The last two words in the question stated, ‘**this place**’. Most candidates made use of the resource to give evidence in support of the changes. However, a few students failed to use the resource at all and gave a generic account of changes brought about by investment. Some resorted to a description of a different regeneration scheme, which was not creditworthy as the AO2 criteria in this question was the use of the ‘novel situation’.

The very best responses had a short conclusion to allow them to fully consider the 'extent' to which change was likely. This supported the rest of the answer. For example, some students considered that for people who had lived in Park Hill for a long time, the change in lived experience would be different for someone who had only lived there for a short time. Some also considered the nature of the evidence, interpreting correctly that it was from the Urban Splash website. Therefore, it was biased and was promoting the regeneration in a positive light.

## 1.6

The full spectrum of responses was seen with over 40% of students achieving at least Level 3. Some responses were of outstanding quality. To read phrases such as "the frictionless nature of modern geographic distance limits the effect of the localised built environment" is a joy.

All but a very few students were able to access the question. The weaker responses tended to be able to describe demographic characteristics or social inequality in a narrative fashion but frequently had a poorer understanding of the built environment. In light of the responses seen, a flexible view was taken as to what constitutes the built environment. As a result, credit was given to those responses which took the built environment to be the services and activities that take place in the buildings.

The best responses demonstrated a balance between the AO1 knowledge and understanding of both the local and distant places and could demonstrate the AO2 link between the built environment and demographics or social inequality. They were also more discursive and considered the extent to which the built environment determined either demographics or social inequality, usually concluding that other factors were also responsible.

Depth of knowledge of both places was critical to the success. Some students chose places that were far too large to study in depth and therefore found it hard to access higher marks. For example, referring to London as a whole rather than choosing an area such as Stratford meant that it was difficult for students to describe the demographics with any degree of precision or accuracy. Students should also be advised against simply writing a potted history of each place without relevance to the question.

Some students attempted to cover both demographics and social inequality and as a result their response suffered due to a lack of depth. In such cases the most creditworthy option was credited. Students are required to study **either** demographic and cultural characteristics **or** social inequality and economic change. Centres should ensure that students are clear on this choice and what has been studied.

Planning is also critical in these 20 mark questions and students would be advised to spend time considering a short plan. Where this had evidently been done, responses frequently had more structure and focus on the question throughout.

## Question 2

### 2.1

4% of students did not answer this question. The question was testing the understanding of 'risks' combined with the skill of annotating a photo. Most responses to the question accessed at least 50% of the marks. Those who failed to score any marks generally did so as a result of not having the basic skills of using an arrow to connect to the feature being described. Many students described risks that could not be seen in the photograph, for example a lack of emergency services or 'windy' weather conditions. Students should be discouraged from describing what is absent in a photo and should focus on what is actually evident. Most students were able to identify hazards but then frequently failed to develop this by explaining what the resulting risk might be.

## 2.2

This question was not answered well. Very few students addressed how you might use a weather map; for example, by using the isobars to identify the possibility of strong winds. Most were able to suggest how you might minimise the likely risks, with the most common response being that you would choose another day. The best responses featured a realistic suggestion of information that would be gleaned from a weather map linked to the specific idea of how the resulting risk could be minimised. For example you would be able to use a weather map to assess the likelihood of rain by observing weather fronts; you would ensure you had waterproof clothing.

## 2.3

Surprisingly this question generated generally very poor responses. Only 21% of students accessed L2 on this question which was very disappointing. This was due to failing to make the AO2 link between the method and the aim. Most students were able to describe their method of data collection (AO1) but then only made a very tentative link to the aim. There were several ways of addressing the link to the aim, such as ensuring reliability, sampling or a justification of the method in terms of carrying out the aim. However, very few students did this with any degree of success. The best responses were where students were able to describe what they did in a step-by-step fashion, linking these steps to the aim, for example 'we asked 5 people in each age bracket so that we had a fair distribution of opinions on the redevelopment of the housing estate'.

It was pleasing to see such a wide range of fieldwork techniques carried out but centres should ensure that it meets the requirements and that there is sufficient depth so that students are able to describe what they did and why they did it in detail. For example, many students described doing questionnaires without any reference to how they carried out the questionnaire or what they wanted to achieve from it.

## 2.4

As for 2.3, responses to this question were very disappointing in quality. Students were frequently unable to describe their presentation technique much beyond simply naming it. Whatever technique is chosen students need to be able to describe its construction for example, by describing the units, scale, plotting points or how to draw a line of best fit, Diagrams are creditworthy and can aid this process.

Consideration of the usefulness was often confined to very generic statements such as 'easy to see' or 'quick to draw'. Students should be encouraged to think carefully about why they select techniques for presentation and how this aids their understanding of the data presented. They should be prepared to refer to specific data, for example, through describing units used on a scattergraph or identification of specific anomalies. Where



results were referred to, responses often drifted into describing results rather than focusing on an assessment of the technique in aiding the analysis of results.

10% students failed to access any marks. This was frequently because they used a technique of analysis such as Spearman's Rank rather than a presentation technique or described a method of data collection. There were also a few students who didn't identify a single presentation technique but just referred to 'graphs'.

Choice of technique is critical as it is very difficult to access marks beyond level 1 if you are describing and evaluating a tally chart or table. It is also vital that an academically appropriate technique is selected. A line graph should only be used where there is a continuous x-axis scale for example temperature change or a beach profile graph. When drawing a scattergraph the independent variable should be on the x-axis and dependent variable on the y-axis.

## **2.5**

This was poorly answered, with very few students able to demonstrate an awareness of the value of statistical tests in analysing data. Less than a third of students scored any credit at all. This supports observations from 2.3 and 2.4; students need to have a clearer understanding of the whole fieldwork process. It is not enough at AS level to just be able to describe what was done; students also need to have an appreciation of why they are doing it.

## **Questions 3 and 4**

There was very little variation between alternative questions 3 and 4 in terms of choice or quality.

### **3.1 / 4.1**

The majority of students were able to access both marks. Plots were usually accurate, drawn with precision. A minority of students missed out the question.

### **3.2 / 4.2**

Most students were able to access full marks and complete the standard deviation calculation to the stated two decimal places. Reasons for not attaining full marks were frequently due to not completing the table. Some students were unable to substitute the formula, usually by failing to use the square root in the calculation.

### **3.3 / 4.3**

Many candidates, whilst being able to calculate standard deviation, were unable to interpret the values. A frequent misconception was that standard deviation indicates the range of the data or that it indicates an unreliable mean. However, most students were able to access at least one mark through a simple contrast of the two values. A few candidates thought a higher value indicated a larger pebble size or more people educated to degree level and therefore failed to access any marks. A significant number of students, confused standard deviation with Spearman's rank and attempted to compare the data sets by using significance levels.

**3.4 / 4.4**

On the whole, students did not have sufficient skills and understanding of standard deviation or other techniques to be able to do this question any sort of justice. Most candidates were unable to go beyond generic suggestions of the usefulness of standard deviation and dispersion and so failed to access any marks beyond level 1. Where students had an understanding of standard deviation they often fared better as they were able to focus more on the specific data and make clear reference to it.

The very best responses evaluated the usefulness of standard deviation in interpreting the specific data. They referred to specific results for example by identifying anomalies that might impact the standard deviation value. Other techniques were also considered and evaluated for example, interquartile range or measures of central tendency.

Many students sought to answer this question by suggesting that Spearman's Rank was an applicable and more appropriate technique than standard deviation. It would not be possible to use Spearman's Rank with either data set due to the absence of a relationship to test. In preparing for the exam, students need to familiarise themselves with a variety of skills and consider when it is appropriate to use them, according to the nature of the data.

**Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.