GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Geography

GCE

Summer 2026

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.[1]

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

[1] ***Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.***

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Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
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Executive Summary

Geography A Level candidates generally performed well across all assessed components in 2026, with evidence of strong subject knowledge, effective use of case studies and increasingly confident essay writing. Performance was broadly in line with previous series, with candidates demonstrating sound understanding of both physical and human geography concepts and applying these effectively in a range of assessment contexts. The quality of responses across the qualification indicates that centres continue to prepare candidates well for both examination and non-examination assessment requirements.

Across Components 1 to 3, stronger candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding (AO1), supported by well-selected contemporary examples and case studies. Many candidates were able to apply, analyse and evaluate geographical concepts effectively, particularly in extended responses. In Component 1, candidates showed a good grasp of key concepts within Changing Landscapes and Changing Places, while many effectively incorporated case studies into essay responses. Component 2 proved accessible across the ability range, with significant numbers of candidates achieving high marks, particularly in data response questions and extended essays. Component 3 continued to differentiate effectively, with many candidates producing high-quality essays that displayed sophisticated assessment, evaluation and synthesis.

Several positive trends were evident. Candidates were increasingly able to draw upon current geographical events and issues to support their responses, particularly in Component 3. Likewise, the use of diagrams to support understanding was generally effective where included, especially within physical geography topics. Centres have also clearly benefited from engagement with examiner reports and training opportunities, resulting in improved essay-writing skills and stronger preparation for synoptic assessment.

Despite these strengths, some common areas for improvement emerged across the qualification. Analysis of resources and data remains variable, particularly where candidates rely on description rather than fully interpreting patterns, relationships and significance. Interpretation of statistical test results in Component 1 also remains an area for development. Across examination components, candidates would benefit from further practice in deconstructing questions, maintaining focus throughout extended responses and developing more explicit evaluation. Some essays included lengthy introductions at the expense of sustained analysis, while weaker responses occasionally demonstrated inaccuracies in case study knowledge.

In the NEA, administration was generally excellent, particularly given the transition to mandatory digital submission. However, moderators identified recurring issues relating to compliance with regulations on teacher support, including concerns about the use of common templates and writing frames. In addition, centres should ensure that any use of AI is appropriately acknowledged and referenced within candidate reports, in line with published guidance. Presentation of evidence also requires attention, as some submitted graphs and images were not sufficiently legible for moderation.

To support future performance, centres are encouraged to focus on developing candidates' analytical and evaluative skills, particularly in relation to resource interpretation, statistical analysis and essay construction. Continued emphasis on accurate case study knowledge, effective use of evidence and concise, question-focused writing will further strengthen outcomes. Centres should also make full use of WJEC/Eduqas examiner reports, CPD opportunities, assessment guidance, published AI guidance documents, alongside NEA administration and compliance resources, to support preparation for future series.

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EDUQAS GCE GEOGRAPHY

GCE A level

Summer 2026

A110U10

Overview of the Component

The paper assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3. AO3 is assessed through resource-based questions whilst AO1 and AO2 are assessed as short answer questions and essays. Candidates can choose between Coastal and Glaciated Landscapes whilst all candidates must answer questions on Changing Places.

Many candidates showed effective use of case studies to support their answers, especially in essays. They could be incorporated more consistently across the 8- mark questions. Students showed a grasp of key concepts, especially in both the Changing Landscapes and Changing Places units. These could be more effectively applied in some contexts across the paper.

Resource based questions need more holistic analysis of patterns rather than just description of data. Interpretation of results of statistical tests is an area that could do with improvement Better scripts displayed knowledge and understanding but in places critical evaluation of the topics assessed was sporadic and lacked structural thought.

The inclusion and use of diagrams in the physical geography section was sound and mainly supported answers to the essay and 8-mark questions in the stronger papers.

Performance of the component: the paper performed to the same standard as previous papers.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Coasts:

Q.1 (ai & ii): In (a) (i) most candidates were able to calculate the missing values A and B and gained full credit. In (a) (ii) many candidates found difficulty in the interpretation of the result of the Spearman Rank calculation. Most were unable to identify the negative nature of the correlation, Many also found it difficult to use the calculated value of Spearman's Rank to accept or reject the hypotheses set out in the question. However, a small number of candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of Spearman's Rank and gained full marks for both calculations and concluding correctly the statistical significance and direction of the relationship with reference to the null/alternative hypothesis.

(b) There were some good responses that displayed a knowledge and understanding of the processes of suspension and saltation and were able to link these to the process of spit formation. This was frequently achieved by considering longshore drift as the key element of spit formation with an analysis of the contribution of suspension and saltation to this process. Many strong answers were based on case study material with Spurn Head, Blakeney Point, Morfa Harlech and Hurst Spit frequently used to support responses. In several cases candidates viewed spits holistically and

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reviewed the role of saltation and suspension in the formation of dune systems on the spit and the development of marshes behind. Candidates at this level frequently offered annotated diagrams to clarify the development of spits. However, answers often lacked balanced understanding of both processes and were only able to provide a narrow and partial discussion of the link between process and spit formation. Weaker responses showed limited grasp of process and only provided general analysis.

Q.2 (a) The better answers addressed the analyse element of the question and focussed on a discussion of global pattern. These answers looked at overall distribution and commented on the concentration of cities at a continental scale and often reflected on the pattern of cities using the population scale to distinguish between where the larger and smaller cities were located – megacities versus millionaire cities. It was pleasing to see that centres had spent time preparing their candidates to address this sort of question and as a result were confident in including overview statements in their answers rather than just a descriptive list from the resource. Less secure answers focussed on descriptive listing and there was some drift to explanation relating to physical or economic characteristics that were not included on the resource.

(b) Overall candidates displayed a confident understanding of fetch and, to a lesser extent, wave refraction. The better answers linked both elements with energy levels within the coastal system and commented on how differences in fetch and refraction impacted upon erosional and depositional processes and consequent landform development. Answers were often supported with well annotated diagrams that illustrated the operation of fetch and refraction. Exemplar material was frequently used as support across the range of answer quality. Some candidates offered unbalanced answers which were more secure with fetch than refraction and some spent too little time on the link to coastal processes. There was some evidence of weaker candidates not being secure in their knowledge, especially on wave refraction which led to answers which were limited in quality.

Q.3 A more popular choice than Q4. There were a number of successful approaches to this question. Some candidates used location as the framework of their answers and compared the processes of mass movement using a series of case studies to highlight the relative importance of different mass movement processes. These typically used the Holderness and Jurassic coastlines to examine type and rate of mass movement with many commenting on the role of weathering, erosional process and human intervention. This enabled candidates to score well in both AO1 and AO2 aspects of the mark scheme. Some candidates used time scale as their essay structure and addressed the link between processes operating at different speeds to create different landform characteristics. For example, sudden rockfalls on the Jurassic coastline compared to soil creep or rotational slumps on the Holderness coastline. Other responses selected one location or landform as their framework and discussed how different types of mass movement and other factors influenced development. All approaches were acceptable and strong answers showed a good grasp of mass movement processes. Some candidates looked at the role of mass movement in the coastal system and commented on it as an input into the development of depositional landforms such as spits or beaches. Less effective answers provided partial analysis of mass movement processes or reverted to a discussion of caves, arches, stacks and stumps with little evaluation. There was a lot of focus on the other processes involved in the development of coastal landscapes without much consideration of mass movement. More sophisticated answers evaluated the importance of other processes,

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such as weather events, geology and erosional processes, but developed these in the context of mass movement.

Q.4 This was a slightly less popular choice. Responses included a range of interpretation of what was meant by sea level change. Many successful answers viewed seal level change as variations that had taken place during and after recent glaciations and showed a grasp of eustatic and isostatic processes. These responses examined the alteration that took place to form emerged and submerged coastlines using exemplar material from Cornwall, Devon, Pembrokeshire, New Zealand and Western Scotland to support the analysis of coastal landscapes. A smaller number of candidates approached this question through an examination of differing spatial scales, local, national and global, and took a comparative approach in terms of the importance of sea level change in the alteration of coastal landscape. Some valid answers looked at recent changes to sea level as a response to climate change and reflected on the impacts on rates of erosion. Good answers that took this route usually discussed the Holderness coast and reflected on how sea level rise impacted on parts of the coast with different geological characteristics. Some tried to link rising sea levels to changes in coral reefs, but these were less successful as the rate of change was not considered and other factors such as acidification and pollution formed a significant proportion of the answers. Weaker answers showed some confusion over what constituted sea level change and focused on short term variations such as storms which involved the analysis of coastal erosion processes. A number found it difficult to incorporate an evaluative element into their answers and so were limited. More successful evaluations compared locations or reviewed different time scales of change.

Glaciation

Q.5 (ai & ii) In (a) (i) most candidates were able to calculate the missing values A and B and gained full credit. In (a) (ii) many candidates found difficulty in the interpretation of the result of the Spearman Rank calculation. Most were unable to identify the positive nature of the correlation, Many also found it difficult to use the calculated value of Spearman's Rank to accept or reject the hypotheses set out in the question at different significance levels.

However, a small number of candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of Spearman's Rank and gained full marks for both calculations and concluding correctly the statistical significance and direction of the relationship with reference to the null/alternative hypothesis.

(b) All answers seemed to grasp the idea of seasonality well and described the link between rates of ablation, energy and sediment size effectively. Good responses related this to deposition cycles in pro-glacial lakes analysing the depth and composition of layers within a sequence of varves. Strong answers were frequently accompanied by clear annotated diagrams. Some less effective answers were confused as to where the deposition of varves took place and drifted into discussion of sandur and even englacial meltwater channels.
These had the seasonal element, but the composition of the varve layers was lacking in precision.

Q.6 (a) Candidates did not find this resource as easy to access as its coastal equivalent. Most answers to this question focused on specific comments that described the distribution of population exposed to GLOFs in different

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mountain areas. Some candidates did however look at the differences in magnitude shown in the resource and gave quantitative or qualitative overviews. The dominance of Asia was often recognised as was the similarity between the Andes and the Alps. However, most answers were in Band 2.

(b) The vast majority of candidates followed the instruction to examine natural causes and few drifted into human induced climate change. Strong answers focused on glacials and interglacials caused by Milankovitch cycles or shorter-term fluctuations caused by sunspot activity or volcanic eruptions. In these responses processes were clearly linked to the characteristics of climate change. As the question did not include a time scale some candidates did discuss changes to permafrost and how these natural changes impacted climate change. Less successful responses tended to be unclear on process and the link to climate change.

Q.7 This was slightly less popular. Stronger answers tended to be organised around the characteristics of the two types of ice mass and the processes operating within them. This approach enabled candidates to link the differences in the nature of glacial landscapes to ice mass and gave an opportunity to discuss the magnitude of processes operating. Case studies used to support focused on UK regions with North Wales and the Lake District used to illustrate the landscapes of valley glaciers and Scottish Islands supporting the landscapes of ice sheets. Although most responses concentrated on erosive features there were a significant number that gave some attention to differences in the depositional landscapes of the two ice masses. Less successful answers lacked balance and usually focus on valley glaciers at the expense of ice sheets and thus were partial in AO1 credit and found evaluation difficult. Others simply described glacial landscapes without an examination of reasons for any differences that were highlighted.

Q.8 This was the more popular choice, but many found it difficult to examine rapid mass movement in glacial landscapes. There were some good answers that looked at the development of scree slopes and pro-talus ramparts. These discussed the processes of weathering in the context of both landforms and linked this to rock falls and persistent snow patches. Few looked at the failure of over steepened slopes or rock avalanches despite recent examples of this taking place in Alaska and Italy. A number looked at the glacial system and saw mass movements as an input that impacted on some landforms of deposition such as lateral moraines. Some did not understand the idea of mass movement as a slope process and instead examined the movement of a mass of ice looking at warm and cold based glaciers. This shows only a partial understanding and was marked as such. AO2 credit was achieved by many candidates in their analysis of the role of mass movement one of a list of several processes, but others looked at other factors such as geology with some success. Unfortunately, some candidates drifted into periglacial process such as solifluction ignoring the ‘rapid’ element of the question.

Changing Places:

Q.9 (a) Good answers were able to identify that there were formal and informal representations in the resource and that there was a time element that could also be examined. Many candidates also reflected on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the resource, newspaper article versus poster. Some responses commented on bias shown in the negative and positive representation of coastal communities. A significant number simply described what was shown in the resource and struggled with the term representation which is given some emphasis in the specification. These

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responses were only partial and merely described a positive and negative view of the places.

(b) Candidates normally responded to this question with engagement. More sophisticated answers focused on a variety of factors that affected the attachment to place such as age, gender, income level and media representation with the occasional reference to literature, art and the cinema. Some reflected on the role of social media in providing an, albeit superficial, attachment to place. Better answers recognised how these factors could create an emotional, social or cultural bond to a place. A number of answers were structured around how these factors, or combinations of these factors, provided the 'lens' through which places are viewed. Many places were used to support the points made by candidates with frequent reference to the Lake District, Ludlow, Sheffield and Birmingham. Responses where the analysis was thinner tended to simply describe the places where people lived and outline how this could generate positive or negative feelings about the location. These responses often demonstrated a socioeconomic or cultural bias.

Q.10 (a) (i) The distinguishing feature of responses to this question was the candidates' understanding of the command word analyse. Better answers gave an overview of the trends shown on what was a straightforward line graph and commented on the relative importance of the three sectors over time. The majority of candidates were able to identify that tertiary employment had experienced the most change and that primary and secondary had declined over time. Partial responses simply described the changes that had taken place to each sector over time sometimes reflecting on the rate of increase or decrease.

(ii) The question required a straightforward application of the reasons for deindustrialisation to the pattern shown by the trend of secondary industry shown on the graph. The majority of candidates were able to identify globalisation and mechanisation as important reasons for the decline of manufacturing. Many reflected on the impact of government policies in the UK and the changing expectations of a population that had increasingly benefited from post 16 education. Good responses often gave case study material to support their answers making reference to the post-industrial regions of the UK like Northeast England, the Black Country and South Wales. Some reflected that the same processes were operating in other countries such as the USA, France and Germany. Unfortunately, some candidates drifted into explanations for the decline of mining or the growth of the tertiary and quaternary sectors. Good responses explained the growth in manufacturing before WW2 and referred to the role of rearmament and recovery from the Great Depression.

Q.11 was the slightly less popular choice. There was an open interpretation of what constituted a central urban area, and most candidates chose to address changes in the CBD, peripheral post-industrial zones, inner city suburbs and the expanded city centre. Strong responses focused on the drivers of change whether they be internal or external and gave clear explanation of how these had resulted in change in their chosen area(s). High scoring candidates identified and developed the economic, social and environmental drivers of change and frequently reviewed investment, gentrification, changes to retail and post Covid recovery. Answers were impressively

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case study focused with good examples cited such as Birmingham (Bull Ring & Brindley Place) London Docklands, Cardiff Bay and some very good use of Manchester after the IRA bombing. Other candidates examined their own town centres or local neighbourhoods that had been gentrified. Less effective answers concentrated on a description of the changes that had taken place without due consideration of the drivers that had given rise to these changes. Some lapsed into an inspection of cities as a whole or areas that could not be classified as a central urban area such as peripheral science parks. There were some good examinations of AO2 comparing the relative importance of drivers or discussing how drivers operated in different places.

Q.12 This was the more popular choice with stronger responses balancing both counter urbanisation and second home ownership. Good answers were again rooted in case study material with some impressive use of Cornwall, the Lake District and North Wales for the challenges of second home ownership. Case studies of counter urbanisation were more centre orientated but there were some impressive answers that used St. Ives Cambridgeshire as support. Many strong answers assessed the challenges and the associated impacts in their chosen locations, for example changes to the housing market associated with counter-urbanisation and second home ownership, including impacts on lower-income, local house buyers and higher rates of owner-occupation suppressing the private rental market for local residents. Increased inequalities caused by changes in the socio-economic characteristics of rural areas was also frequently discussed. There were strong discussions about North Wales and Cornwall and how the rural communities were resistant to change and viewed new residents with suspicion or hostility. Some answers failed to recognise the difference between counter urbanisation and second home ownership and simply considered ‘challenges’. AO2 was not strong in many instances but some did comment on the differences and similarities between counter-urbanisation and second home ownership whilst others gave their evaluation in a comparison of two case studies.

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EDUQAS GCE GEOGRAPHY

GCE A level

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A110U20

Overview of the Component

Significant numbers of candidates once again scored highly across all (or nearly all) items on the paper, indicating that this was an accessible assessment which successfully enabled candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The structured data response questions this year all followed a format consisting of a standalone 1-mark data item followed by a level-marked 4-mark analytical item. As a result, the most able candidates were often able in each case to secure all five AO3 marks available for data analysis and interpretation.

The optional essay pairs (Questions 3, 4, 7 and 8) performed as intended. They focused on themes such as water resources, feedback loops and global connectivity, all of which allowed candidates to write confidently and knowledgeably about their case studies, while still presenting sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able, particularly in relation to the attainment of AO2 evaluative marks. Despite time constraints, many candidates wrote extensively, often producing responses spanning three or more pages. In many instances, candidates achieved full or near-full AO1 marks due to the breadth of content covered.

The 21st Century Challenge questions were again designed to be accessible across the full ability range. This year, the resources had a place focus on Port Talbot, South Wales. Compared with some recent series, the reading requirements were slightly higher than usual. One benefit of this, however, was that very clear information had been provided for candidates at the lower end of the ability range to utilise within their answers, thereby allowing them to access AO3 marks more readily than has sometimes been the case in previous series.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) (i) Following the logic that the correct value appeared to be greater than half an hour but less than three- quarters of an hour, answers within that range were all acceptable. Most candidates had no difficulty accessing the mark.

(ii) Many candidates wrote clear and concise responses that accurately described the trends using appropriate qualifying words and phrases. Those scoring four marks typically described the “extremely rapid” fall in infiltration rate, the “very steep” rise in runoff, followed by a levelling-off or “plateau” phase.

(b) This was one of the poorest-answered items on the paper. In most cases, candidates showed very little progression in understanding beyond GCSE level. Many candidates scored only 2 marks for demonstrating a simple understanding that permeability is an important influence on whether surface runoff occurs and that steeper slopes tend to generate greater amounts of runoff.

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Examples of valid rock types, together with additional process understanding (for example, the role of gravity in controlling water movement) were worthy of additional credit, particularly when supported by appropriately developed examples. Only a very small proportion of candidates were able to offer more complex responses, for example recognising that even steep slopes underlain by permeable geology can generate surface runoff if antecedent conditions have resulted in saturated soils following prolonged or intense precipitation. Responses containing this level of complexity were likely to achieve full marks, provided other elements of the answer were correct.

Q.2 (a) (i) Most candidates were able to complete the simple calculation without difficulty. Once the meaning of the data had been understood, the mathematical operation required was straightforward.

(ii) This was a very well answered item. Around half of all candidates, following the prompt provided in the previous question, voluntarily calculated carbon storage per unit area for some or all of the other environments shown. They then used these calculations to give strong analysis of the relative importance of peatland carbon stores. Candidates awarded 4 marks typically presented two analytical arguments. They commented not only on the high carbon storage per unit area of peatlands but also considered the relative global extent of forests and grasslands compared with peatlands when analysing overall contributions to global carbon storage.

(iii) At the upper end of the mark range, candidates applied well-chosen knowledge and understanding from across the Specification to answer this question. Some used the visual prompt provided in Figure 2 (different tree types) to explain why variations in tree species / biome type might influence carbon pathways into the soil and overall levels of soil carbon storage. Other popular themes included human intervention, with deforestation leading to increased runoff, leaching and the removal of carbon from soils. Only a very small number of candidates drew upon local-scale catchment concepts studied within the hydrology topic, considering how variations in slope angle, underlying geology or soil characteristics might influence soil depth, drainage and, ultimately, carbon storage. At the lower end of the mark range, candidates sometimes struggled to restrict their answers to explanations of soil carbon storage, instead writing more generally about carbon storage in vegetation.

Q.3 This was by far the more popular of the two physical geography essays. Many candidates had learned case studies of aquifers, lakes and peatlands in considerable depth and were able to recall them with great accuracy. In such cases, an AO1 mark of 9 or 10 could be expected.

At the upper end of the mark range, differentiation was achieved more through AO2 and the extent to which more nuanced arguments were generated about why these problems might be difficult to solve. The strongest responses pointed to ongoing demands on water resources undermining mitigation efforts. They also showed a clear understanding of the timescales over which some water resources and peatlands are created, recognising that there is no easy short-term way to reverse some of the declines that are underway.

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In the middle of the mark range, candidates sometimes appeared not to be fully cognisant of the global scale of peatlands. They felt that the small-scale local initiatives they had studied demonstrated that all peatlands could be easily and quickly restored, whereas water resources were a more challenging problem. Middle-range answers sometimes lacked the same level of factual support and evidence or contained errors and omissions.

Q.4 Relatively few candidates answered this question. Those who did often scored highly because their familiarity with, and deep understanding of, feedback loops had drawn them to a question that others had shunned in favour of the issues-driven framing of Question 3.

Candidates who answered Question 4 were usually able to provide strong counterargument(s) to the statement, pointing to the accelerating pace of climate change now that the 1.5°C and 2°C warming thresholds appear to have been crossed. Many used sophisticated scientific language and concepts to underpin arguments about permafrost thawing and other feedback loops.

High-scoring answers were also likely to distinguish between positive and negative feedback loops and to argue that, while the former can intensify environmental change, the latter can help to rebalance and restore systems towards their previous steady state.

Q.5 (a) (i) Most candidates were able to perform this simple calculation correctly, having identified the two relevant figures requiring manipulation. A small minority simply wrote down the remittances received value of 60 but did not subtract 18.

(ii) Many candidates reached the upper mark band and were awarded 3 or 4 marks. Differentiation typically took the form of whether candidates were able to provide an overview of the extent to which the *overall* value of remittances sent and received had changed over time, sometimes with supporting evidence. For example, candidates could add together the five remittance-receiving figures for 2005 and 2020 and identify the tripling in overall value. Candidates scoring 3 marks were more likely to provide an unselective list of individual changes, producing a detailed but fragmented answer that lacked a clear and succinct overview of the increasing value of remittance flows within global systems over time.

(b) This was a more challenging question than some of the other five-mark items on the paper because it required candidates to clearly state *two reasons* for disagreement. Many answers provided factual information about migration policies and disagreements, but it was not always clear which *two reasons* formed the focus of the response. Often, reasons had to be inferred from what candidates had written rather than being explicitly stated. The highest-scoring answers clearly identified two distinct reasons. For example, some candidates argued that one reason for disagreement was “views about the costs of housing and other social benefits”, while another was differing “opinions about cultural diversity”. Where reasons were clearly stated and developed with supporting detail about migration policy, full marks were awarded. In contrast, candidates scoring 2 or 3 marks often named politicians such as Nigel Farage, or issues such as freedom of movement prior to Brexit, but the response was not framed in a way that aligned clearly with the wording of the question.

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Q.6 (a) (i) Most candidates answered this correctly.

(ii) This question was not answered well, even by candidates who otherwise scored highly on the paper. It demonstrated that, while candidates have been taught how to perform statistical operations, there is often an underlying lack of appreciation of what measures of central tendency and spread are intended to show. For example, candidates were very keen to identify the maximum values and upper quartiles for different ocean regions. However, they often neglected to refer to the median - the key measure of central tendency that was included in the data - and therefore the best / only indicator of a *typical* concentration value. Some candidates wrote up to half a page listing minimums, lower quartiles, upper quartiles and maximum values for the different regions while neglecting the median entirely. Only a handful of candidates focused their response on the contrasting lower median values for the Pacific and higher median values for the Atlantic. This helped them to make a stronger case that, based on this particular sample, the Atlantic may appear to be more polluted.

(iii) This question offered candidates an opportunity to apply their understanding of gyres and garbage patches to the data shown in the figure. There was a wide spread of marks. Some candidates made no mention of gyres and instead wrote in extremely general terms about varying wind strengths. Some even attempted to apply knowledge of the process of longshore drift. In contrast, candidates who knew this part of the Specification well were able to write clearly about the way gyre currents interact with inputs of plastic waste from both land and marine sources to create highly concentrated accumulations of plastic in particular ocean regions.

Q.7 This was significantly more popular than Question 8. Most candidates supported their answers with accurate recall of information about data flows, migration and the movement of commodities through global shipping.

Candidates often showed a good conceptual understanding of connectivity and were able to distinguish between economic connections created through trade and social or cultural connections created through migration and global social media.

As with Question 3, differentiation was achieved more through AO2 than AO1, given that many candidates produced lengthy and accurate responses with little difficulty reaching the top AO1 band. Typically, candidates achieving full marks were able to deconstruct the phrase *long-term growth* and compare historical growth in connectivity (for example, during the time of the British Empire) with recent decades in which the internet has become a dominant force.

In contrast, candidates achieving around 12–15 marks were more likely to score highly for AO1 than AO2 because their evaluation was relatively basic. Their conclusions often amounted to statements such as: "Data flows are important for connectivity, but so too are migration and TNCs." There was little complexity or nuance beyond recognising that multiple influences exist; put another way, the discussion of *causality* was limited.

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Q.8 Far fewer candidates answered Question 8 than Question 7. Those who did were often well versed in case studies of refugees and ocean conservation, producing richly detailed answers that scored highly for AO1. Strong responses also scored highly for AO2 when they explored how global actions are accompanied by national and local actions. Candidates who were familiar with these topics argued that refugees require support from local councils and organisations while, at the same time, national / global commitments to refugee protection are fulfilled. Similarly, they recognised that ocean conservation relies heavily on the work of volunteers, for example, beach clean-ups, while also operating within a global framework of conservation agreements and biodiversity policies.

The strongest answers therefore demonstrated excellent geographical understanding by showing secure knowledge of *multiscale* governance and the need for geographers to consider the interaction of politics and decision-making at local, national and global scales.

Q.9 Both questions in Section C offered candidates an opportunity to produce a geographical analysis of Port Talbot in South Wales using the scaffolding provided by the four figures. These outlined employment and investment trends in the context of the drive towards net zero and changing global economic systems.

Question 9 focused specifically on sustainability challenges. At the upper end of the mark range, candidates deconstructed this phrase to provide a systematic discussion of environmental, economic and social sustainability issues arising from the decarbonisation of the steelworks and the knock-on effects for local communities.

Candidates accessing the very highest marks were able to incorporate parallel case studies from Component 1 alongside ideas about climate change and global systems from Component 2. Differentiation at the very top depended largely on the quality of AO2 evaluation. The best answers viewed the issues through a complex geographical lens. For example, they acknowledged that Port Talbot will continue to experience the effects of climate change even if local emissions are reduced. They also recognised that job losses in the short term may eventually be offset by new opportunities arising from regeneration and economic rebranding.

Answers in the middle of the mark range were more likely to use the four resources sequentially and effectively but with limited supporting case-study knowledge or geographical terminology to strengthen AO1. Their evaluation was also more basic, for example recognising that climate change will continue to affect Port Talbot while people are simultaneously losing their jobs.

Q.10 This was the less popular of the two questions. Candidates who attempted it used the four figures to structure an answer exploring climate change, deindustrialisation and globalisation as challenges facing the UK at both national and local scales.

At the upper end of the mark range, candidates successfully incorporated ideas, terminology, concepts and evidence from Component 1 to demonstrate a deeper understanding of global shift and the progressive decline of secondary employment in the UK. They also introduced a more optimistic perspective by recognising that many deindustrialised towns and cities have successfully reimagined and regenerated themselves, creating new tertiary-sector employment in line with the information shown in Figures 7 and 8. The highest-scoring essays therefore discussed the challenges while also acknowledging potential solutions that might mitigate them.

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Answers in the middle of the attainment range were more likely simply to describe the contents of the four figures, with limited supporting knowledge drawn from elsewhere in the course. They tended to agree that Port Talbot faces many challenges but did not critically discuss their scale, severity or possible solutions.

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EDUQAS GCE GEOGRAPHY

GCE A level

Summer 2026

A110U30

Overview of the Component

It was good to see that almost all students managed to write 3 good quality essays within the time allowed. It is a challenging paper in terms of the breadth of knowledge being tested, but they coped well and were well prepared.

The most important task for students taking this exam is to make sure they fully understand the question before beginning their answers. Most seemed able to do this but there are some who either lose focus as the essay progresses or never really grasp it from the start. Continued work on deconstructing questions would therefore be an excellent way to prepare for this exam.

It is clear that students are being taught effective essay writing skills but there are some who spend too long introducing their essays before getting to the key focus of the question. Whilst these introductions can get some credit, mostly for AO1, keeping them to a few pertinent sentences rather than a side of writing would be recommended.

Some tend to use PEER / PEEL or variations on this as their key essay structure, and this can work well. Those that are referring to the question throughout the essay can then afford shorter conclusions, if timing is an issue.

There is no requirement to draw diagrams but those that chose to often use them to good effect. These were mostly seen in tectonics and ecosystems e.g. PAR model, Degg's models of vulnerability, Park's Disaster Response Curve and Gersmehl's nutrient cycling diagrams. Students are advised to develop simplified versions which are quick and easy to use under exam conditions.

The paper differentiated very effectively with substantial numbers of candidates displaying both impressive levels of knowledge and conceptual understanding (AO1) to form an effective platform from which to develop their sophisticated skilled analysis, evaluation and synthesis (AO2).

Students were able to use some very current knowledge in their essays which is always pleasing to see. We had many mentions of the Strait of Hormuz issues, the June 2026 heatwave in the UK and the impact of volcanic activity on Grindavík and surrounding areas in Iceland, for example.

There are some students who muddle up their case study knowledge. We try to give benefit of the doubt when we can, but when death tolls, costs or other facts are really wrong this cannot be credited.

There were not too many cases of illegible handwriting, but some were seen. For some it may be a need to be assessed for using a word processor in exams and for others it may be a need for more handwriting practice in timed conditions.

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There were, as ever, quite a few students who added extra sections to their essays using asterisks or other means. Although a minor point, if the extra information is going on a different page, it would be very helpful for us to know where to look.

It is pleasing that many centres have studied the reports of previous examinations and taken advantage of exam board training and heeded the advice on the two stages of long-term preparation (a) researching and developing knowledge and understanding for the chosen options and (b) honing the candidates essay writing skills.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The mark scheme for this exam is very detailed and will be a really useful tool to accompany this report.

Section A: Tectonic Hazards

- The specification says: “Examples and case studies selected for study by centres to exemplify the content must be contemporary, that is within the last two decades, unless an historical context is useful for a time dimension, which also informs the present context”. Question 1 did lend itself to the inclusion of historic eruptions and these did get credit although contemporary examples should be the main focus.
- Question 1 led to a range of arguments, but some used their knowledge of effusive and explosive eruptions really well to make the point that effusive tend to have more minor and local scale impacts than explosive.
- Question 2 was usually well answered with most deciding that the factors affecting vulnerability tend to be inter-related or some saying that level of development tends to be the dominant factor. As long as they had an argument and justified it, it was credit worthy.
- It was excellent to see that most students had a range of case studies that they could draw from in order to support their arguments and tended to only use the relevant information rather than telling us everything they knew about them.
- There was no real pattern of preference for one question over the other and both allowed students to show off their knowledge and understanding.

Section B: Ecosystems

- Not all students had a decent case study / example of total protection. Those that did often used Surtsey, but others struggled.
- Question 4 had the possibility of rubric errors as it specified two biomes. The vast majority covered the tropical rainforest and the Arctic tundra although some used temperate grasslands instead. If third biomes were included, we gave credit to the best 2. Some students covered ecosystems rather than biomes and these were credited on a case-by-case basis.
- In both ecosystems questions in was good to see that many had a clear understanding of the meaning of biodiversity and nutrient cycling, but this was not true in all cases. Effective introductions often included definitions of these key terms.
- Question 4 saw the inclusion of Gershmel diagrams, and these often added effectively to the essay, particularly when annotated or supporting a point in a paragraph. Weaker essays tended to focus on the general negative impacts of human activity on the biomes rather than on nutrient cycling specifically.
- Once again there was no real preference for one question over the other.

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Section B: Economic Growth and Challenge: India, China or Development in an African context

- Questions 5 and 7 were designed for students to weigh political factors against other factors and most did this very effectively. Those that did particularly well tended to have a sense of changing importance of factors over time.
- Questions 5 and 7 seem to have been marginally more popular than 6 and 8 but both seem to have been accessible and well understood.
- Questions 6 and 8 had the potential for rubric errors as students had to choose one from water, or food or energy. If more than one of these was covered credit was given to the best of them.
- The best answers to questions 6 and 8 had a real focus on strategies and their success or failure, whereas weaker answers talked more generally about issues surrounding water, food or energy in these countries.
- For questions 9 and 10 on Africa, it is worth noting that the specification now says African countries not sub Saharan African countries. This does not mean that the case studies being used need to change of course, it was just an opportunity to remind people about this.
- In question 9 there were two parts of the question in terms of the development gap within and between countries. Students tended to be better at one aspect or the other. But the key learning point here is that once again the introduction proved to be an ideal place to show a clear understanding of what development and the development gap are.
- Question 10 allowed students to argue climate variability against other factors affecting development, but the focus of the essay needed to be climate variability. Students could not choose to ignore this and focus on colonialism, corruption and other factors instead.
- Question 10 is an example where the case studies they knew tended to dictate the direction of the essay as some African countries experience more climate variability than others. Some students interpreted this as variability over time (seasons and / or climate change) whereas others looked at variability within the country.

Section B: Energy Challenges and Dilemmas

- There were a range of approaches to question 11 with some talking about the environmental problems being caused by non-renewable energy and then either implicitly or explicitly linking this to a rise in renewable energy. Others looked more at the environmental problems caused by specific types of renewable energy – please note that nuclear energy is not renewable and therefore not creditworthy in this question. These environmental issues were then argued against others such as economic, technological, social and political.
- Question 12 enabled some students to show off some very detailed knowledge of energy mixes; some even drew graphs to show this. The UK and Iceland were very commonly included. Most decided that energy mixes are affected by decisions at both scales and it will be dependent on each individual country's situation.

Section B: Weather and Climate

- Question 13 was taken from one of the specification updates and did not prove popular, perhaps because it was alongside a very accessible climate change option.
- Those that did tackle question 13 tended to focus on ENSO but we did see some mention of the seasonal shift in the ITCZ and tri cellular model including reference to the Indian monsoon.
- There was some drift away from the focus of the question in some essays. We credited as much as we could, but points made did need to link to cyclic events.

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- Question 14 showed that students do tend to have a good understanding of the difference between mitigation and adaptation for climate change. Again, stating definitions in the introduction tended to work really well.
- In some answers to question 14, there was no mention of global scale strategies which tended to limit the mark. Making sure they have global, national and local strategies to discuss would hopefully help in any future iterations of a question like this

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EDUQAS GCE GEOGRAPHY

SUMMER 2026

Component 4 NEA

A110U40

Overview of the Component

Centres are congratulated for their administration when marking and submitting the NEA. In most cases, the administration was conducted flawlessly. 2026 was the first year in which centres were obliged to submit digital copies of the NEA reports and associated forms.

Moderators are required to conduct a clerical check of the submission. It would greatly assist the moderation process if the following points were noted by centres when they are preparing work for submission:

- ensure that the current candidate declaration form is used and clearly signed by both the teacher and candidate. The current form includes a reference to the use of Artificial Intelligence.
- record the correct candidate number on each of the candidates' reports, proposal forms and mark recording sheets.
- please save digital files using a file name that includes the candidate number and centre number.
- organise uploads into two documents for each candidate: one file for all administration forms (mark sheets, declaration form and proposal form) and a separate file for the NEA report itself. This means that moderators can easily view the mark sheets and the candidate's report at the same time on screen.
- where paper copies are scanned:
  - please use a flatbed scanner (not the camera of a smart phone).
  - after scanning, please check the digital file to check that all pages are present; that the work is legible; and that the pages are in the correct sequence and orientation.

Please ensure that candidates present their maps, graphs and other images in a format that is legible. A significant number of reports in 2026 included pages where an image, such as an excel graph, had been screen shot and incorporated into the text at a size that made it impossible to read the graph or the labels on the axes.

Compliance issues

Centres are reminded of the regulations concerning teacher guidance that are set out clearly on pages 46 and 47 of the specification. In particular, the first two bullet points:

Teachers must not*:

*This includes third party fieldwork providers. Teachers must ensure that at all times they remain confident in the authenticity and independence of the candidates' work

- provide candidates with a choice of titles or tasks from which candidates then choose
- give detailed feedback to individual candidates about how to improve work to meet the assessment criteria. The guidance provided prior to final submission should only

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enable candidates to take the initiative in making amendments, rather than detailing what amendments should be made. This means that teachers cannot provide templates and model answers for specific candidates work.

It is essential that these regulations are met by all centres in order to preserve the integrity of this assessment. Moderation has raised some concerns about compliance issues since the introduction of the independent investigation in 2018. These concerns were raised again in 2026 by issues seen in the work of a minority of candidates and centres. Teachers need to be vigilant and be aware of the following issues:

- a small but significant number of centres may be providing too much support to candidates when it comes to structuring the independent investigation report. Moderators are seeing the same subheadings being used across multiple candidates in the sample of work that is moderated suggesting the possible use of a writing frame provided by the centre or third-party provider. Similarly, tables are sometimes used to record data collection methods or to provide a structure for another part of the report, such as the evaluation. The use of a table is not, as such, of any concern. However, where the tables of different candidates have identical column headings, it would seem to suggest that improper assistance was given to the candidates. Centres and third-party providers are reminded that the use of templates is expressly prohibited in the specification (see page 48 of the specification). Your attention is drawn to the JCQ document 'Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures (page 45) which describes the use of a basic table or template as 'improper assistance'.
- Attention is drawn to the document "Guidance on the use of AI tools in the independent Investigation (NEA)" which is available on the WJEC/Eduqas website. This document outlines the ways that AI may and must not be used by candidates when working on their NEA. It should be noted that, if candidates do use AI to support them with certain aspects of the investigation this must be done with **caution and transparency**. Any use of AI tools must be **acknowledged and referenced** within the final investigation. Examples were seen where the use of AI was indicated on the declaration form, but there was no referencing of AI within the report itself.

Tasks
Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

The majority of centres continue to submit reports that indicate excellent practice:

- the reports are all different and have clearly been planned and conducted independently by the candidates
- proposal forms show an explicit link to a specific area of geographical content in the specification
- the candidates have focused on a narrow and relevant range of geographical literature when writing the introduction of the report.
- the four days of fieldwork have been used well: there is a clear understanding of sampling strategies and ways in which primary data can be collected, processed, presented and analysed

However, the sample of work from a small but significant number of centres shows evidence that candidates are only given the opportunity to consider a very narrow range of geographical content when choosing a title for their independent investigation. This was particularly noticeable in centres where the NEAs arose directly from fieldwork conducted during one of four days of fieldwork. In some, relatively small centres, all of the candidates investigate the same area of the specification. The common themes are sand dune ecosystems, pebble sorting on gravel beaches and quality of life in an urban environment.

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Given that the independent investigation is an opportunity for candidates to investigate an aspect of geography that interests them personally this is, at the very least, disappointing. For some high-flying candidates, the limited choice of investigation may considerably limit their opportunities and potential. It also raises concerns of 'improper assistance' as centres and third-party fieldwork providers **must not** provide candidates with a choice of titles or tasks from which candidates then choose.

Successful reports	Less successful reports
• Provide very clear aims in the introduction and have a laser focus on relevant knowledge and understanding of a geographical theory, concept or process • Select a valid sampling framework that is clearly justified • Choose appropriate methods to represent data, including representations of spatial data or other more sophisticated techniques • Use quantitative and/or qualitative methods of analysis and interpret the data by making links to wider theory • Provide an effective evaluation of the reliability and validity of the investigation and demonstrate clearly how the investigation had led to clearer geographical understanding • Reference all literature and sources of secondary data accurately throughout the report.	• Have unclear aims and take a scattergun approach to numerous aspects of geographical understanding – most of which have only tenuous relevance to the investigation • Name a sampling strategy but fail to provide any detail or justification • Use mainly simple methods of data presentation and include some which are inappropriate or incomplete • Describe maps and graphs occasionally using only very basic methods of quantitative or qualitative analysis and make few if any links between their data wider theory • Provide an evaluation that focused largely on the methods of data collection and give little thought to what knowledge or understanding had been gained from the experience. • Reference sources in the introduction only.

The quality and communication of written work in the majority of reports remains high. Most candidates stick to a recognised structure with suitable headings. The majority of candidates should be commended for diligence in paginating their reports and adding suitable contents pages and figure numbers. A significant number of candidates also use a recognised method for referencing their literature sources, although this is also an area of improvement for many centres

The majority of Investigations exceed the recommended word length of 3000-4000 words. A significant number of Investigations were very long indeed. The longest investigations usually have lengthy introductions and very long, descriptive passages in the analysis section. It is helpful to give candidates some advice at the outset about the number of words they might use in each section of the report in order to hit a target of 3000-4000 words. Projects that are close to 4,000 words in extent tend to have very clear aims and analysis sections that are directly focussed on two or three clear sub questions.

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Common misconceptions

It seems to be a relatively common misconception that as many theories and concepts as possible should be discussed in the context section of the report. This scattergun approach is not helpful and leads to some very lengthy reports. The key to a good literature review is to focus as carefully as possible on one theory, concept or process that underpins the investigation. Successful candidates will then choose a limited number (perhaps only two or three) sources and use these to explore the geography behind their study. The most successful reports integrate the literature review into their research framework: using it to explain and justify their own investigation. Less successful reports treat the literature review as a separate, 'bolt-on', exercise.

In coastal investigations, attempts to explain cyclical beach profiles are simplistic and often confused. Discussion of theories such as littoral cells, sediment budgets, systems theory, equilibrium or feedback mechanisms would be more appropriate at this level of study. In place and space studies, a discussion of the Burgess Model is not appropriate. Burgess' model is historically specific to the growth of US cities in the early twentieth century. Contemporary UK cities are shaped by complex factors that are very different to those considered by Ernest Burgess making their land use patterns far more irregular.

When planning their methods of field investigation some candidates choose to use data collection strategies that irrelevant or tangential to the aim of their investigation. This is perhaps because they feel the need to demonstrate as many types of data collection as possible in order to satisfy the need for a 'range' of methods. This issue seems to occur most often where data has been collected by a group of students and every student feels the need to make use of all of the data. a residential trip, where students have limited time to collect data independently and then struggle to create an independent title that arises from the data – rather than starting with an investigation title and then choosing the most valid methods of data collection afterwards.

Most candidates who claim to have used stratified sampling have actually used purposive sampling. Stratified sampling is correctly used when the population can be divided into mutually exclusive subsets or strata. To conduct stratified sampling, the candidate must first know the relative proportion of each strata in the overall population. A sample should then be taken from each strata (using an appropriate probability sampling method such as random or systematic) in proportion to their overall weighting of each strata within the overall population. Most candidates are actually using **purposive** sampling, where the sample is selected based on specific characteristics that the researcher believes are most relevant to the study's objectives. This is a form of non-probability sampling and is, therefore, much more vulnerable to bias. For example, in a coastal study, they might decide to include sample points from two different beaches: one that is managed and one that is unmanaged, so that they can make a comparison between the two.

GIS packages are sometimes used in the data presentation of findings and the maps produced can look impressive. Markers should be careful when applying the marking criteria to these maps. Was the correct form of data presentation selected? Is it possible for the reader to interpret the data easily and accurately from the map? For example, GIS packages are frequently used to generate proportional circles. However, the circles need a scale if the reader is to interpret their meaning and this scale is sometimes absent. Furthermore, the use of this technique is not always appropriate. Proportional circles are effective when displaying data that has a very great range. If the range is small, then the circles will all be of a similar size. In this case, located proportional bars are the most appropriate technique to use to present the smaller variations.

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During the analysis and interpretation stage of the report, some candidates relegate their statistical tests to an appendix. Where a statistical test is used, it is of direct consequence to the marking of the report. As such, it must be presented within the main body of the report. Just because a statistical test has been used, the marker cannot assume that a mark in the top band should be given for this section. The wrong statistical test may have been selected by the candidate, or there may be insufficient data for that particular test to be used. The following table provides some further guidance.

When the statistical test is performed badly one or more of the following apply	When the statistical test is performed effectively
The wrong test is chosen (see the misconception box). The reason for using the test is not explained. The null hypothesis is not stated. Insufficient data is used, for example, fewer than 10 pairs of data in a Spearman's Rank test or values lower than 5 in the Expected column of a Chi Squared test. The data and working out are not shown. The significance of the result is not discussed.	The context is stated – what is the candidate trying to discover? The null hypothesis is given. The data and working out are shown. The significance of the result is explained using significance tables. The result is interpreted – what did the candidate discover? The result is linked to theory … and … in the best case, it is linked to the literature research.

Task marking
Comments on approaches to internal marking

In the majority of centres, the application of the marking criteria was both accurate and consistent. Where marking was inaccurate, generous application of the marking criteria was more common than severe application of the marking criteria. Generous marking was seen in all six sections of the marking criteria. The most common reasons for misinterpretation of the marking criteria are described below.

Context: Many candidates provide unnecessary historical contexts when writing their introductions. Others focus on a geographical context, but the introduction becomes an 'everything I know about …' discussion rather than one that focuses on geographical theory that is directly relevant to the aims of the investigation itself. In either case, markers sometimes misinterpret the marking criteria and place the context section in too high a band. Candidates working in band 5 really need to demonstrate an understanding of relevant geographical theory and link this theory effectively to their own aims. By contrast, candidates who treat the literature review as a stand-alone essay which does not explicitly support the research question should be placed in a lower band.

In 2026 a small number of centres submitted work which was practically devoid of any geographical theory at all. Studies of litter on beaches and sand dunes, for example, where the only 'theory' was one of distance decay from a source such as a car park. This made it hard for candidates to engage in a meaningful way with any theories in either the introduction, analysis or evaluation sections of the report. These studies would be more suited to KS3 fieldwork, or, possibly GCSE fieldwork where the focus of fieldwork may legitimately focus a little more on methods of data collection, presentation and analysis alone.

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Methods of field investigation: This section of the report is differentiated by the strand of the marking criteria that describes the sampling strategy. The majority of candidates do a good job of describing data collection methods, but the depth and accuracy of the discussion of sampling strategies varies considerably. In band 5, “the sampling strategy is well designed, explained and justified. The strategy is wholly appropriate to the investigation”.

Candidates who simply name their strategy as random, systematic or stratified should be placed in a lower band: band 2 states that the “sampling strategy has been described”.

Where candidates achieve highly in the first and/or second strand of the marking criteria, but only manage band 2 for the third strand, a best-fit approach to choosing an intermediate band must be employed.

In order to show clear evidence of working in band 5 for the sampling strand, candidates should be able to explain details of their strategy (such as sample size, sample frequency and sample location) and they must also be able to justify their decisions. Justifications can be achieved with a consideration of issues such as bias, reliability and whether the sample is representative of the wider population. The best reports geolocate their sample points. This allows candidates to develop more sophisticated forms of data presentation such as proportional bars or pie charts that are located accurately on a base map.

The methods section is structured by some candidates using a table whereas others use extended writing. You are reminded of something stated in the 2025 Principal Moderator’s report: WJEC has no preferred or recommended way to structure this section. However, candidates should be aware of the potential limitations of using a table as there is a tendency to:

- provide very concise descriptions so that the reader would find it difficult to replicate the method
- copy and paste blocks of text from part of a table to another – making it difficult to see how 'individual' approaches are taken
- sampling strategies are rarely discussed in sufficient detail within a methodology table. This issue is much less apparent when candidates use extended writing.

Data presentation of findings: This section of the report is usually marked quite well. However, generous marking is sometimes seen. The first strand of the marking criteria refers to the range and accuracy of the techniques. This strand seems to be understood by most. The second strand of the marking criteria is sometimes applied a little generously. In band 5 data presentation techniques are ‘well-selected, applied and wholly appropriate’. This means that candidates have selected an appropriate method (for example a line graph for continuous data) and that the method applied well (each axis is correctly labelled so that the reader can interpret the graph properly). In some circumstances methods of data presentation are not wholly appropriate, for example:

- a scatter graph with less than 10 pairs of data
- individual sites (discrete) which are joined by a line graph
- located proportional circles on a map where the range of data is very small, so all of the circles are a very similar size.

In these circumstances, a lower band should be indicated for the second strand of the marking criteria. Where a candidate is placed in band 5 for strand 1 and band 3 for strand 2, a mark in band 4 might be appropriate.

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Analysis and interpretation of findings: There are two strands to the marking criteria and markers tend to mark generously in each of these strands.

The first strand is about the methods of analysis used by the candidate to identify patterns, trends, correlations and anomalies. In order to access marks in the upper two bands of the marking criteria for section 4 candidates must provide evidence that they can apply appropriate methods to analyse quantitative data (such as measures of central tendency, measures of dispersal, or statistical tests) and/or appropriate methods to analyse qualitative data (such as simple text analysis, coding or effective annotation of images). Where candidates use only a very few, basic methods of analysis, such as the occasional calculation of mean, a mark in band 2 or band 3 would be appropriate for this strand.

The second strand assesses how well the candidate has explained and interpreted the data. In bands 5 and 4 this requires the candidate to apply their wider geographical understanding to the specific data collected in their enquiry in order to explain it.

Conclusions and presentation requirements: This section is often marked accurately. However, generous marking sometimes occurs, and this is usually down to misinterpretation of the second strand of the marking criteria:

- a significant number of reports do not have accurate references – but are still given marks in the upper bands. Candidates should provide a reference every time they refer to a piece of geographical literature (for example, in the introduction, analysis or conclusion section) and whenever they lift a secondary source (such as a map or graph in the data presentation or analysis section) and paste it into their report. The source of the latter are often missed by candidates.
- nearly every report is overlength and many of these reports are not concise – but are still given marks in the upper bands. Markers should take into account reports that are repetitive (for example, repeating sections of the methodology or repeating analysis in the conclusions). They should also be aware of reports that go off on a tangent. This is sometimes because of poorly worded sub questions in the context section. However, another common reason for verbosity is an analysis section that focuses on description rather than methods of analysis and interpretation.

Evaluation: As was pointed out in the 2025 Principal Moderator report, this section is often marked with some generosity. There are five strands to the marking criteria and, to be given a mark in band 5, a candidate needs to demonstrate ability in each of these strands. Candidates often focus heavily on an evaluation of the methodology, and this will limit them to one of the lower bands unless they broaden their evaluation to consider what they have learned (strand 1) and how the investigation might be realistically extended (strand 4). Any discussion of ethics at this stage is usually very brief but it must be evaluative rather than a simple repetition of what mitigations were set in place.

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Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
Tel: **02922 404 281**
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