

OCR Geography Independent Investigation Webinar Transcript

Question 1: Can you clarify when the projects are due and how they need to be submitted to OCR? E.g. electronically/paper copies/bound? Additionally, please outline the situation with cover sheets.

Mark answered:

The timelines for submission of marks and projects will be the same standard timings as for other subject's non-exam assessment, so the 15th May will be the key date. However, internally you will want to set a much earlier deadline to ensure that you have time for your marking and internal standardisation.

Page 70 of the specifications details the two ways that samples can be submitted. Samples can be submitted through the OCR repository (where you upload electronic samples) or via postal moderation (which would be paper copies through the post).

The forms which need to be completed are the Learner/teacher authentication form, the Investigation proposal form and the mark recording sheet and these are outlined on page 65 of the specification. These forms are now available on our AS/A Level Geography H481 webpage. The interactive versions are still being made 'website ready' and will hopefully be made available soon.

Question 2: Can students conduct their fieldwork together?

Chloe answered:

Page 56-57 of the specification provides a description of the level of independence at each stage of the investigation. For primary data collection collaboration is allowed, meaning that primary data collection may be carried out individually or in groups. Learners can do it either way, but it will depend on what data they need to collect and what is the most appropriate way of doing so for their own independent investigation.

Question 3: Can they go on class fieldtrips to collect data and then have their own individual comparison sites?

Mark answered:

This will very much depend on student's titles and how they want to conduct their investigations. If you are offering two fieldwork locations then students can either choose to use those locations for their independent investigations or not. Students may even choose to do a comparison of this location and another if that is what they want to focus on for their investigation. But that should come about after you have defined the scope (e.g. where you will be offering fieldwork trips) and then the student has independently defined their title, it should not be the case that fieldwork is completed and then students decide their title based on data collected.

Question 4: Does their fieldwork (independent data collection i.e. with parents in summer holidays) count towards their 4 days?

Mark answered:

Fieldwork associated with a student's Independent Investigation can count towards the four days of fieldwork requirement for the specification. During the four days there must be fieldwork included which is associated to both physical and human fieldwork geography subject matter, so you just have to ensure that is covered as well as the four days.

Question 5: Are there a set range of questions the students can choose from, or is it open choice as long as geographical?

Mark answered:

Students must independently choose their own title and so there should not be a range of questions offered to students. There should be open choice, with titles having to be linked to an element of the specification, but you can provide broad parameters for students investigation proposals including themes from the specification (e.g. you could ask only for investigations from areas of the course being studied over the two years), locations that you will offer fieldwork, availability of equipment and time constraints.

Question 6: Please could you outline some suggested fieldwork topic areas where you would anticipate there being fieldwork projects on. Bearing in mind that most centres will have only taught half of the course by the point they write their projects. I believe that there are actually only a very small and finite number of possibilities.

Shelley answered:

The fieldwork requirements at AS and A level are that students undertake both physical and human geography (including any relevant processes). The fieldwork topic areas are completely up to centres and may depend on the topic areas covered. Students do not have to do their Independent Investigation on topic areas taught, as long as there is a link to the specification.

Fieldwork offers the opportunity to consolidate (topic) learning and any relevant geographical skills 'in the field.' In terms of the Independent Investigation the fieldwork offered to students is an opportunity to cover a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and data collection techniques from which students can then choose any that may be pertinent to their own investigation.

As the students' investigation is independent it is important to think about how this is maintained when fieldwork opportunities are planned for whole groups of students. If teachers are looking to take students on fieldtrips and then students choose their investigation from this, there needs to be a clear link to the specification and of interest to the student. Don't forget that topics could be cross referenced, for example students could look at local perception of coastal management. This example includes reference to the Coastal landscapes and Place content. So in summary you can basically do fieldwork on any of the topic areas, it is totally up to you.

Question 7: How closely do the questions have to link to the syllabus?

Mark answered:

The titles must link to the specification but there is no definition as to the degree to which they must link, for example they could be linked to multiple key ideas all the way to an individual bullet point. However, there must be a clear link to the specification and in the proposal form students are asked to explain how the title links to the specification.

Question 8: For larger centres how different do all of the titles have to be?

Mark answered:

The key for this question is that this is an Independent Investigation and the title must be independently formulated by the student. That means that the student must have come up with the title themselves. Therefore it is fine for students to have similar or the same titles so long as each student came up with their own title independently. This can be showcased on the Proposal Form and you and the student will need to sign a declaration to confirm that the work is the student's.

If everyone on this webinar was to be given a location for fieldwork and a set of equipment to work with then there is a high probability that even if you all independently came up with titles, there would be similarities between them or even some would be the same. This is also potentially what may happen with students.

As I have said, the important thing is that students come up with their own titles independently and so you should ensure they have the freedom to do so.

Question 9: How many variables are students expected to comment on in the research question? Would it be acceptable for a student to draw on a relationship between two variables (e.g. 'is there a relationship between morphology and deprivation in ...?') or should the research question be more complex (e.g. 'is there a relationship between morphology and land use, and socio-economic deprivation in...?')

Shelley answered:

There are no parameters on the number of variables in a research question. It is fine for students to draw on a relationship between two variables. What is important is that the students come up with a question for their investigation that is accessible to both the marking criteria and there is a clear pathway for their data collection. There are so many different types of questions it is challenging to talk generally on this. Some questions for example could look relatively basic as students develop them independently and in their own language e.g. How has the quality of life in Whitechapel changed over time? When this question is unpacked it is significantly more complex than it may originally seem e.g. what does quality of life mean (factors can be identified), what area of Whitechapel will be covered in the data collection? and then over time, the student would need to identify a time period which means they can use secondary data for reference. So this question has the potential to narrow down key terminology for research (around quality of life), have a spatial hook (deciding where in Whitechapel you want to do your fieldwork) and define a time period (10, 20, 30 year period).

The students' research question is not the only important aspect of their investigation as they are likely to have sub-questions / sub-hypotheses / aims and so this will refine the title again and break it down.

Question 10: Does it need to be evaluative in nature (i.e. there is no 'definite' answer, or should it be answerable with a 'yes' or 'no'? For example, would it be preferable for a student to ask 'to what extent is there a relationship between morphology and deprivation in...?' or 'is there a relationship between morphology and deprivation in...?'

Shelley answered:

It is best to avoid yes / no questions as this gives little opportunity to analyse and evaluate especially in the latter sections of the investigation write up where the weight of the marks are held. To what extent gives much more flexibility in terms of discussion and analysis. Sub-questions and / or sub-hypotheses could be a little more directed however I would still try and avoid yes or no style questions.

Question 11: How much class time would you recommend giving over to this?

Chloe answered:

As detailed in the specification, learning hours are not specified because the process of writing the report is an independent process. 3000-4000 words are recommended as a guideline and its worth 20% of the overall qualification. A lot is dependent on context here. For example, have you done the AS? Are you doing 2 days of human and physical in preparation for the Independent Investigation? If I was teaching this I would want to be doing lots of preparation in advance of any fieldwork so learners have a really clear idea of the process of the investigation and have a clear plan. We have spoken with teachers about having regular catch ups with learners, where they keep a brief journal to keep track of where they are. In terms of class time this will depend upon how much contact time you have in the first place and the context that you are preparing for the Independent Investigation in.

Question 12: What counts as primary data e.g. twitter etc.?

Mark answered:

In the specification we define primary data as 'unmanipulated data, either collected in the field or an untouched dataset' (page 73 of the specification).

Therefore, searching twitter for key terms would be considered as primary data collection as twitter is essentially an untouched dataset. For example, searching #cambridge for a place investigation might lead to analysis on how positive or negative tweets were to give an idea of place representation and this would be primary data collection.

But if the student used twitter to find a link to go through to a website or blog then that is not primary data collection, it is just research to find a secondary source of data. The key is whether the data is unmanipulated at the point of collection this means that large datasets downloaded, for example census information or ocean temperature information, would count as primary data as long as the datasets are untouched. If they have been manipulated in any way for example put into *tables already then they would be secondary data sources.

*published tables that have been refined for a particular purpose e.g. in a report

Question 13: Do they have to collect both primary and secondary data i.e. if they want to do a study on the geography of crime or disease where it is difficult to collect primary data can they collect only secondary? Do students need to use primary data?

Chloe answered:

Learners need to collect both primary and secondary data; the balance of these within a project will depend on the question being investigated. Some projects might lend themselves to be more secondary based, but these types of projects would also need to include some primary data collection to be able to access the marking criteria. Section 2 of the marking criteria refers to “personalised methodologies and approaches to observe and record primary data and phenomena in the field and to incorporate secondary data and/or evidence, collected individually or in groups”. For topics such as disease, oceans or food where going out and collecting primary data is more challenging, learners can also use unmanipulated primary data sets (defined on page 73 of the specification) as part of their primary research, as well as, for example, conducting an interview with a key stakeholder. Learners need to make sure they do both primary and secondary data collection to access the marking criteria.

Question 14: Can you clarify how to carry out an interview transcript in terms of primary data collection?

Chloe answered:

The key thing here is for learners to come up with open questions that enable the interviewee to provide an extended response that can be analysed. A good interview needs thought and careful planning to ensure that the learner elicits relevant data from it. Learners will need to think carefully about what they want to get out of the interview and this in turn should help formulate their questions. Interviews can take different structures and learners will need to think about which is the most appropriate in the context of their research, for example structured or semi-structured. Interviews should be recorded and transcribed, where the learner writes the recording out word for word. A thematic analysis can then be completed identifying key themes from the interview and then coded to provide a basis for analysis. There are different types of coding, but fundamentally it's about making sense of the data by identifying ideas, themes, categories for example that help organise and interpret the data.

Question 15: In terms of statistical analysis please can you outline the minimum requirement / level? E.g. will range and averages suffice?

Shelley answered:

It is important that any analysis is fit for purpose and related to the title, key questions / sub-hypotheses. There is no minimum requirement however students should be aware of the different levels within the marking criteria, for example level 4 in section 4 of the marking criteria it says ‘when appropriate to the topic, statistical analysis and significance testing are used accurately and proficiently for both the data and topic of investigation’. If these techniques such as range and averages were used alongside others e.g. correlation graphs (which could be annotated) they could be suitable as analysis tools however on their own the techniques suggested are quite basic, even at GCSE. If however these were fit for purpose and students justified them then they could be used.

Page 48 of the A level spec list quantitative skills and these include techniques such as mean, median, mode, range and then potentially more sophisticated techniques such as standard deviation, spearman's rank which would enable a deeper analysis of data collected.

Question 16: How should they demonstrate geo-located data and GIS in their coursework? And any suggested software / apps?

Chloe answered:

The specification refers to geo-located data rather than GIS in the marking criteria. Geo-located data does not mean that it has to be done online, it can be locating graphs on a hard copy of a map for example. If you have access to GIS and the students have the skills that's great, but for the Independent Investigation it is not necessary in terms of accessing the full range of marks. We use ArcGIS online which has good functionality and is quite accessible, but this does require a subscription. There are also lots of free versions available such as magic maps online.

Question 17: Could you give some guidance on style/formatting of writing up the NEA i.e. Should it be written in chapters reflecting the stages of an enquiry from Stage 1 - Identifying a question through to the evaluation stage or using the titles of the marking criteria which are slightly different to the text book? Should it be typed or hand written? Does it matter? What referencing system is required? Harvard? Presumably pages should be numbered and data collection sheets kept in appendix as evidence.

Shelley answered:

It is important the work is clear and accessible to the reader and so headings and subheadings direct the reader and will potentially make it more straight forward to mark. The student could use chapter headings, the marking criteria headings; it would be up to them. It is important that there is a logic to their headings / subheadings and this could be somewhat directed by their title and any sub-questions / sub-hypotheses. The students plan at the start of their investigation could help them decide on their route way through their layout. Overall, it is a good idea to have clear headings and/or subheadings.

The students' project can be typed or handwritten, if it is handwritten it may be more challenging to proof read and amend. In terms of a referencing system, as students will be pre-University, it would be an excellent idea to use a referencing system and we would recommend the Harvard referencing system, there are some good online tools to help students put their reference lists together. It would be clearer to have numbered pages for reference when marking. The students could include a contents page as their pages are numbered. Appendices should not be huge and there needs to be a filtering process to be relevant e.g. data collection sheets and a summary table (not everything needs to be included).

Question 18: Have you got any exemplar questions/titles? Are there any examples?

Chloe answered:

There are three exemplar projects that we are aiming to have available online shortly which cover coasts, glaciation and place. These are old style projects that have had the new Independent Investigation marking criteria applied to them. Each project will have a commentary on each section of the mark scheme including ideas on what could have been included to access higher levels of the marking criteria. These are not perfect projects; the purpose of them is to show how the marking criteria can be accessed.

We are creating a student support guide which will take learners through the process of the investigation from coming up with titles, data collection techniques through to ideas for analysis and conclusions, which again we hope to have available online shortly. We are also working with the other exam boards in producing a frequently asked questions document and exemplar proposal forms. There is CPD specific to the Independent Investigation which you can book onto through our CPD hub on our website, "Tackling the Independent Investigation" and "Marking the Independent Investigation" – after the last course has been delivered all course materials are available to download from the CPD hub.

Question 19: Please could you outline what support will be offered by OCR for the projects - e.g. guidance on writing style and framework?

Shelley answered:

We do not have any guidance on this in our specification; however we have guidance on this in the joint board work in the FAQ document. We don't want to be specific in terms of font sizes, as one of the things that we have said is that students can submit their investigations in a variety of formats, for example story maps, and so therefore if they are producing something in a different style (digital format) we didn't want to be formulaic in the way that it is presented. As long as it is clear, broken up and navigable for you as a teacher then that's the thing that's really important, look at what is in the marking criteria, because that's what needs to be applied to the project for students to access the marks and for you to be able to mark them.

Question 20: For a small class can they all do the same topic e.g. the place unit, they choose an area within that unit that interests them? And can they all do the same location? E.g. place unit in Margate but some of them look at different parts of the topic?

Mark answered:

The key thing, which I mentioned earlier on, is that students are independently coming up with their own titles. You need to offer them greater scope than just Place, you can't say to students that you just want investigations on Place. But if every student decides that is the area of the content that most interests them and they all decide to do investigations on Place – and they have independently come to that decision and they have independently come up with their own titles – then that is absolutely fine. The key thing is that students independently come up with their title and that they can justify why they are doing that title and how it links to the specification.

One of the things is that if students don't independently come up with their own title they will be less passionate about it and therefore less likely to do well in it. It's something that we're really keen to make sure, that the reasons for this becoming an Independent Investigation when it was coming through from ALCAB was that it wasn't just to gain the skills needed for HE, but it's also to make sure that there is part of the Geography qualification that they can do something in depth on, something that they really are passionate about. If it happens to be that the same small class all choose Place then as long as it is an independent decision by people then that is absolutely fine.

Question 21: With the constraints you mentioned just now (site, location, equipment, fieldtrip, coverage) there is actually a very finite range of possible topics. Whilst the textbook offers some examples of fieldwork but these are very few and far between. I wonder if there is any chance that OCR could provide some example topics within the specification that would help centres advise pupils as to their specific title?

Shelley answered:

I think that because we are asking quite a broad range of things there in terms of the type of investigation that students might end up doing, it is actually quite challenging in terms of providing a list of topics because the fieldwork requirement in the AS / A Level is either the two or the four days and it depends on how you want to set up that fieldwork and in relation to the Independent Investigation. So if you were taking the students out, for example, to do their four days fieldwork and you were doing physical and human fieldwork, if I was still teaching I would be very tempted to do that linked to the topic areas I was delivering as far as possible within the specification. So it might be that I was doing Coasts, obviously I have to do Place and it might be that I would pick up on other areas within topics that would be relevant to fieldwork. Because what you want to do is cover a range of quantitative and qualitative skills for students.

In terms of the students Independent Investigation it depends how much you are willing to let the students loose in terms of choosing any areas of the specification because, if they are armed with a range of skills, then actually if they are doing their own investigation outside of fieldtrips you take them on they can literally do anything. So in some of the exemplar proposal forms that we are putting together, all of the exam boards have written three each, one of the ones that I have developed is based on a student doing fieldwork within their own street – as in their home where they live – and so fieldwork and the Independent Investigation can be done on any scale. It can be extremely local, it can be very small scale in terms of primary data collection, it can have a little bit of primary data and largely secondary.

If the students are really keen to do say something on Oceans or something on Disease then in terms of fieldwork that could be quite challenging. So, what we have said is that there needs to be some element of primary data collection so what they could do, if they wanted to do something say on Disease, on HIV, they can look at unmanipulated data banks for primary data. What they can then do is have an element of primary data collection which might mean getting in touch with organisations, doing an interview, sending them a questionnaire so they have got something to analyse, but they don't necessarily have to be physically out collecting data on a large scale. So, it could be qualitative from that sense. Oceans, they could look at oceanographic data from the United Nations, from the

oceanographic institute down in Portsmouth, however they want to do that and then they could get in touch with them and ask them more specific questions.

So what we're saying is, it makes it sound like it's really open and you can do what you want. In terms of fieldwork I think it's really important that that's quite structured and that you offer students a range of things in terms of links to the spec and topic areas and what we will have is a fieldwork guide that is coming out that gives you a range of suggestions. That guide is going to run from GCSE through to AS / A Level, so you will have some opportunities there. If you are teaching in an 11-18 school, if you are looking at doing AS, for example, there isn't a great deal of difference between GCSE and AS in terms of fieldwork opportunities and therefore that can also be a precursor to the independent investigation and looking at a range of fieldwork you could do with students to get them skilled up ready.

So, in terms of providing a list of topics, in a very raw sense it's what's in the specification and obviously therefore some of its going to be more challenging to do fieldwork on than others. So it is up to you and we don't really want to be specific because obviously students can do their fieldwork on anything in their investigation at any scale, and we have got some centres who are doing it completely independently and other centres where they are taking students out and are being a little bit more prescriptive with them to get them ready for the Independent Investigation. So, obviously with a wide range on centres it's quite difficult to pin that down. So anything within the spec would fit that you are happy to do fieldwork on.

Question 22: How many sub questions/hypotheses do you suggest they should explore as a maximum/minimum?

Shelley answered:

In some of these circumstances it is very difficult, and having recently completed a masters dissertation I remember having a similar conversation with my tutor, it is very difficult to say because there is no maximum or minimum, it is very much about what is fit for purpose. I would say for a 3,000-4,000 recommended word length and if you really wanted to break a title down there is nothing wrong between 2 and 5. Obviously the more you have the more it is narrowing down parts of your title down, whereas in the analysis you might do the analysis by your sub questions, by your sub hypothesis, but bear in mind that in the conclusion and evaluation you have got to bring it all back together. So it completely depends on the type of project that students want to do and the logic behind why they have got so many sub divisions.

The sub questions/sub hypothesis have to be related to the title and they are sub questions of that, if that makes sense, because sometimes they can end up taking the title off in a different direction and this is where the planning is absolutely critical. You have got your title, you have got your statement, you have got your questions underneath, your sub hypothesis and its basically how are you going to collect data for them, what analysis are you going to do and how do you actually see it fitting together. In some senses they almost want to have an answer to their question even though they haven't investigated it to have some idea of the route of journey they are going to go through. It totally doesn't matter if they end up with something different at the end and they end up tweaking them it depends how comfortable you are with that as a teacher. For me, having done my dissertation I ended up tweaking my sub questions at the end after I had done my data collection because actually it made a bit

more sense. I didn't completely change them, but I tweaked them. So, minimum you can't really have one can you because that would be a bit odd potentially, so two through to potentially about five but there has to be logic behind it.

Question 23: You mentioned previously to today that exemplar investigations (re-worked old A level investigations) for us to see... both physical and human - when will these be available?

Chloe answered:

We are working on these at the moment and they have been created in partnership with the principle moderator and the OCR subject specialist team here. I would love to be able to confirm an exact date as to when these are going to be available online, they are getting closer and closer to being completed and I wish I could confirm exactly when that might be. What we will do is make sure that we update you as to when these go online, if you follow us on Twitter keep an eye out on there, e-alerts etc. We will let you know and communicate to you as soon as they are available for use.

Question 24: Is coding really just counting the number of times something is mentioned? Could we have examples of coding - not something routinely used. Can you clarify what you mean by coding or give an example? Are there some examples of coding as this seems like a very useful primary data technique...?

Shelley answered:

What this has emphasised is that it would be good to have a blog article on it, which appears in our Geography news section because it seems that a few of you are interested in this. Coding is not just about counting the number of times that something is mentioned. So, if you do a questionnaire or if you do an interview as Chloe explained earlier and you transcribe that, what you are looking for is patterns in the sorts of things that are being said.

So, when the student has their title, and they do some reading around their title and start to have their sub questions (or probably not their sub hypothesis if it is a qualitative data technique). If they have got some sub questions, having read around it, what they would want to do is say right, I am going in search of these things and it could be for example, perception of place, I'm just picking that as an example. With that, they would need to define what they meant by perception, when people talked about perception when they were collecting their data they would then give each of the things that they classed about perception a code, now you can do this by a number, a letter, colours, and so therefore what you do is highlight according to the categories you have put together, your table of codes, you highlight where those have appeared in the text and the context of where those have appeared. Now if you start to count the numbers of times they have appeared you turn that coded data into a quantitative value which is fantastic and that's a mixed methods analytical approach.

So when I did my MA dissertation I coded the transcripts of the five interviews that I did, these were colour coded and you can do this as sophisticatedly as you like. So I took my three key questions I had as part of my dissertation, I had categories under each of those and sub categories and I coloured the sub category and literally highlighted those in the text and then I looked for patterns when they appeared. So, who was saying it, why were they

saying it, and incidents and occurrences so you can do a frequency analysis there. I have got some quite good reading materials on that and I know Chloe has put some materials together when people have e-mailed into the Customer Contact Centre. So, coding you can use as a qualitative tool, you can also use it as a quantitative tool and it is a fantastic technique to use, so I am happy to put some materials together on that and we can post some materials online so do keep an eye out on our Geography News.

Question 25: We are considering using ArcGIS story mapper as a possibility of presenting data for our students. Would you see this suitable? Could their whole project be on story mapper?

Mark answered:

What I would say is that if you are going to use ArcGIS Story maps and do the whole project via a story map, one of the great things about how it's evolved is that you can now have large pieces of text on there. So, extended writing which is a requirement in the conclusions is now very much able to be done on there. We do quite a bit of work with ESRI who look after ArcGIS online and story maps and we create some story maps ourselves. Our principle moderator David Holmes is somebody who is also very keen on ArcGIS online and story maps and I am sure that he would be very pleased to see some students using that. For that you would obviously need to work out how to send it in, which would be done by OCR repository and you would just have to make sure that the students know how to share their story map appropriately, so that when the moderators see it, it comes through nice and clearly. But there is no reason whatsoever why they couldn't use it and I am sure there could be some very good Independent Investigations done on there.

Question 26: Can you clarify exactly what feedback we are allowed to give them please?

Shelley answered:

In terms of feedback it's relatively straightforward, page 76 of the specification onwards, so its Appendix 5.e, examples of specific guidance and general guidance. We have talked about this a huge amount with the other exam boards and what we mean by specific guidance that is not permitted by teachers and general guidance is permitted. I think the very easiest way to think about it is, if you are directly making comments to students, sending them in a particular direction, giving them information which is pertinent to their project only, to their investigation only, than it's likely to be specific guidance. So if you start tweaking a student's title, if you start saying to them 'look at this website, look at this website have you thought about this, use this data collection technique' then all of that is specific to the student's own Independent Investigation.

I always think of it as more as being the "guide on the side" as they sometimes say or you are the coach, the facilitator. The idea there, is it says in the spec onwards, exploring focus, give learners a list of titles from which to choose, so it says you are not permitted to do that or you're not permitted to give learners an area of specification content that they must focus on in their investigation, so the whole spec is supposed to be open to them. So I would say have a good read through that, but we spent a long time trying to make it really clear on what we thought was okay and not okay in order that we met the Ofqual guidance and DfE guidance as well as an exam board and so we tried to put this all together in our appendices

at the back to try and make it clear. If it's not clear after you have had a good read through that then please do come back to us about it.

Question 27: Does there need to be a Literature Review?

Chloe answered:

If we just have a look at section one of the marking criteria, so we are referring to "planning, purpose and introduction". If you look at the last bullet in level three it looks for "clear evidence of valid and individual literature research that defines and contextualises the investigation through an appropriate combination of wider geographical links, comparisons, models and theory" so in answer to that, then yes they are going to have to looking at literature that is relevant to their questions.

Question 28: Does the Independent Investigation Proposal Form get submitted to OCR prior to the pupils starting their investigation or just simply submitted as an appendices to their write up?

Mark answered:

Simple answer is it gets submitted with their write up. It doesn't have to be an appendix so it will just come through with the other bits of the form that come through from your student. It doesn't get submitted to us prior, one of the main reasons behind this is because by the time that it gets sent into us, for timeframes that could cause issues for doing fieldwork. What I would say is that when you are starting to have a look at the proposal form, if you have got any questions in terms of if you don't quite understand what things mean, Subject Specialists are here to answer your questions, so please do send them in.

Question 29: Do students need distinct headings e.g. Intro - Method - Data Presentation etc? Thanks

Shelley answered:

So I think we covered a little bit of that earlier, but yes I would say that would be a really good idea. Partly because I can't imagine what 3,000-4,000 words would like if it was just dense text. I think in terms of layout of the project it clarifies the students thinking, so if they have got a clear title and they are writing underneath that title and they are planning each of those sections it really helps to hone what is it I need to write about, what does the marking criteria say, what are the sorts of things I am including within that section. So I think breaking it down as much as possible really, because there is nothing to say that they can't put lots of sub headings in there you know, clearly label everything and I think that will make it much more navigable in terms of you marking it as well.

Question 30: Will OCR be endorsing any Skills/NEA/fieldwork material created by a publisher, such as hodder, etc?

Mark answered:

Basically, no we won't because when we endorse something we are checking it against the specification. So Hodder wouldn't put in for endorsement on those kinds of materials. What we would say though is we are in communication with them if they have any questions on

things. We are happy to bounce ideas around with them and we have to make sure they have got things correct from that point of view, we are always there to answer their questions but there won't be an official endorsement as there is with the subject content part of the textbook.

Question 31: Presumably it's OK for them to do their work on somewhere outside the UK?

Chloe answered:

Well the short answer is yes that's absolutely fine. Obviously it goes without saying that if you are doing it outside of the UK you don't have the luxury of potentially going back and doing data collection again, but overall it's not a problem to do something outside of the UK.

Question 32: Should students do their Independent Investigation based on a topic they have studied?

Mark answered:

The answer is that it's kind of up to them, what I would say is that as a teacher you might want to say that students might not want to look at options not studied in the course because that might be stuff that you may not be as familiar with. But the whole of the specification is open to students from a technical standpoint in terms of what it says in the specification and so they can do it on a topic that they haven't studied if they so choose. It might be that they have a real passion for food security but that's not one of the Geographical Debates that you are doing and so that might be the discussion in terms of whether they can do that.

Question 33: Where will you get unmanipulated data on HIV when you have said that when it is presented in a table etc it is classed as secondary data?

Shelley answered:

I might answer two questions in one go because there is something about research in there as well. So in terms of HIV data, just because the data is presented in a table is absolutely fine and we wouldn't necessarily class that as secondary data. So what I am suggesting is that unmanipulated basically means that the data is raw and so it hasn't been changed into a percentage or averaged so it's the actual numbers itself like you would get on the Office of National Statistics census data. So it can be in a table, that's absolutely fine. For HIV the World Health Organisation has some fantastic links. I just had a quick look on there and there is for example, global health observation observatory data base and that has some really good HIV/AIDS data. Sometimes that's a skill isn't it, honing it down.

Question 34: It is asking a lot of students to know specific websites that might be useful for a particular area that we might not cover in a more general session.....indeed I only know some having gone on INSET...

Shelley answered:

I think that this is really about research skills and students being taught the ability to be able to go in search of information. Chloe talked about a literature review, they have got to read around and have a look at the topic area, narrow it down to an area of interest to them and

the more specific the title, the more that is going to be helpful for them to be able to do that. That's about research skills and I don't think it's asking a lot of AS / A Level students, once they are off to university they are expected to do that all the time so I think that's actually a fantastic skill for them to have. Having taught IB students, they did extended essays and actually they really got quite good at that and found some really quirky and very interesting information.

Question 35: If they're handing in work online, would they need to write out interview transcripts, or could it be a sound file?

Mark answered:

As long as you can get the sound file to work properly in terms of it coming through then that is a potential option, although I would say that an interview transcript will be a lot safer and a lot better way of doing that to make sure that it all works okay. I would say personally get students to write out the interview transcript as a suggestion in your preparation when you're getting students prepared for their potential Independent Investigation.

Question 36: What will be the sample size for moderation? If we had a group of 12 students, for example.

Mark answered:

The sample sizes should be as they currently are, so 1-10 students it would be all, 11-100 it would be up to 15, so 12, you would be sending off all through probably, 101-200 would be 20 or so and more than 200 probably 25 so that it what the current rules are.