

OCR Get Going: FIRST TEACHING FROM 2016: OCR New GCSE (9-1) Geography A (J383), GCSE B (J384), AS Level (H081) and A Level (H481) on Thursday, 8 December 2016: Q&A Webinar Transcript

Question: Will there be any more sample material before the real exams in Summer 2018?

Mark answered:

We are very pleased to say that there will be another set of sample assessment material – which we are calling ‘practice papers’ – for both the new GCSEs and the new A Level which will be released in the Autumn term (2017). The reason why these question papers will not be released until the Autumn is because they are being written by the same people who will be writing the ‘live’ assessment from Summer 2018 and going through the same rigorous process as the ‘live’ assessments.

In the past there have been concerns that the real ‘live’ papers have not been consistent with the sample assessment material. Having used in a number of cases the same people to write the sample assessment material as well as the practice papers and ‘live’ assessment, and providing all of our question paper team with comprehensive training on the new assessments, we are very confident that there should be no surprises when your students sit the first ‘live’ assessments in the summer of 2018.

So the practice papers are being written by the same people, being checked by the same people and going through the same process as the ‘live’ material – which should mean that these are of the same quality as the ‘live’ assessments and give you the confidence in what the ‘live’ assessments will look like. Unfortunately, it also means that they take the same amount of time to produce as the ‘live’ assessments.

Question: Can students still achieve SPaG marks even if they do not answer the question?

Shelley answered:

Thank you Mark, on the PPT (slide 4) there is reference to this, which should hopefully be helpful to you. It says the following guidance was issued in 2014 from JCQ which is provided for all exam boards, this is not just for OCR but for everybody. If candidates were to get 0 marks these are the 3 things they would be doing:

The use of 0 (zero) marks. 0 marks should be awarded when:

- The candidate writes nothing;
- The candidate’s response bears no relation to the question;

(in answer to the question above, the students need to write relevantly)

- The candidate's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.

What's written in bold at the bottom of the PPT slide says that for candidates to achieve **1 mark it has to be in the context of the question** and using geographical language as well.

Question: Do you have any suggestions as to exam and assessment practice for both AS / A level and GCSE?

Shelley answered:

So just a few thoughts and ideas, on the PPT as well (slide 6), I put a few ideas down. Within the geography team some of us have been former teachers and we were thinking about what we have done with our students.

I think the key thing that's really important is thinking about chunking up the questions, teachers ask us about command terms and Mark's going to talk about this more later, relevant to a resource that's been produced.

- It's not just about the command terms, although thinking about them in terms of what's being asked – Is it an explain question? Is it a discuss question?
- Thinking about the stem of the question for example in AS / A level, particularly A Level we use the term influence, how one thing influences another, it might be that students are having to weigh things up and give their opinion.
- Part of the question will talk about topic content, which topic does the question come from? What are the students actually talking about?
- Also the question tariff which gives an indication of how much detail the student needs to actually write about – is it a 4, 8 or 12 mark question? This gives some idea of the complexity of the response needed.

It's probably a very obvious thing to say but getting to grips with the assessment objectives is important. As a geography team we have spent a long time talking about and using them but as teachers looking for the first time and seeing how we've applied them in the mark schemes, it does take a while and lots of times of reading the questions. Obviously you can look at the questions like the students would but in the mark scheme it shows how the assessment objectives are broken down and awarded. Is the question asking the student to talk about:

- what they know – their knowledge (AO1, GCSE) or at AS / A level it is their knowledge and understanding (AO1);
- do the students need to apply their knowledge and understanding and do a bit more? (AO3 at GCSE or AO2 at AS/A Level) or;
- are they skills related questions which are AO4 at GCSE or AO3 at AS / A level?

Thinking about timing of questions as well, for example at GCSE we have the 8 and 12 markers, historically these have been 6 markers so students need to be really clear. At AS / A level for the Geographical Debates paper we have the 20 (AS Level) and 33 (A Level) markers, in terms of timing in the exam this is really critical, some teachers have said 'should

we be giving the students timed questions now?' I would be tempted to graduate those and not give them the exact timing (as they would need in the exam) as students need to practice and become confident with them. What's in brackets are the extended response and these are indicated (on the examination papers) by an asterisk (*) where students need to be writing in an essay style with a bit more structure.

At GCSE we have part answers for well developed, developed and simple responses to the questions and so with those, if you wanted students to do a spot the difference between them, they could look at the differences between them (geographical language, detail etc.). As teachers you could develop these into a full response and do something similar with the case studies which are more familiar to you.

Looking at the mark scheme levels grid, what I was referring to can be found on slide 7 – this is the AS / A level example. On the website for all the GCSE, AS and A level mark schemes you will see this generic marking guidance at the beginning of the mark schemes. The people who are writing the live question papers are going to take the wording from each of the assessment objectives (which you can see at the top of the grid, AO1 etc) and the vertical wording from comprehensive to basic, the wording within this grid will be used in the answer column of the mark scheme so the wording will be consistently used. What you could do, looking down the columns is for example for AO1 / Comprehensive there is 'wide range of detailed and accurate knowledge' for AO1 / Thorough there is 'a range of detailed and accurate knowledge' so we are losing the word 'wide' there, looking at the differences between those. Throughout the lifetime of the papers you will see reference to this wording, if you wanted to put your own mark schemes together then you could use this wording, hopefully that is helpful.

And the last bit from me on the PPT slide 'Levels of response' (see slide 8), when I was talking about chunking up the questions, this is an A level example. Thinking about what the question actually means in terms of command terms, topic area (knowledge and understanding – AO1) as well as the focus of the question (applying the students' knowledge and understanding – AO2). The student would also need to look at the question tariff, this question is 33 marks and therefore an essay where the quality of extended response will be assessed e.g. the structure and quality of the students answer (see slide 7).

Question: What command words will there be for AS and A level?

Mark answered:

Let me just bring up the PPT slide for this answer (slide 3). We have received a number of questions for some clarification about command words at GCSE, AS and A Level, we produced a website article which was released online a couple of weeks ago which you may not have seen. If you have not, then it is on the 'Geography News' section of our subject webpage – there is also a link on the presentation which will be shared with you.

In this article: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-subject/geography/geography-news/how-important-are-command-words/>

There is a definition given for a number of different command words – with the caveat that it is not important to give these exact definitions but instead to ensure that when students see

the different command words that they understand what they then need to do with their answer.

There are two questions broken down within the web article – one from the GCSE assessment and one from the A Level assessment to aid discussion of what other words within a question are important to focus on. Therefore the two questions that are broken down with command words and also key words highlighted. There will also be the Guide to the SAMs (which for the GCSEs are currently being worked up by our Creative team and for AS and A Level are currently being developed by myself) – these will break down every question in the assessments in the same way. The command words in the website article do cover GCSE, AS and A level, and there are some commands missing but ones which tend to mean the same as something else – for example, ‘how far do you agree’ can be replaced with ‘to what extent do you agree’ and these are command terms mean very similar things.

Question: Clear guidance regarding exam type questions for the AS and A Level and where we can find these?

Chloe answered:

You can access all past CPD materials on our CPD Hub – you can get to the link on our geography homepage: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-subject/geography/>

This autumn’s CPD (2016) ‘Getting to grips with assessment’ will be uploaded very shortly. As Mark said we are also developing a support guide for the sample assessment material which will be coming soon and this will take you through the papers step by step, give you details about expectations of questions and talk you through the mark scheme – that will also be available on our geography homepage.

Question: At GCSE level, do students gain any marks on the essay questions if they do not mention a specific case study?

Mark answered:

At GCSE we have signposted all questions which require case study place-specific detail. Therefore for both Spec A and Spec B any longer ‘essay-type’ questions (which we would call level-marked questions – 6 marks and over) which will require students to use their case study information have been signposted with the question.

Where a question asks for case study information there are marks for AO1 (knowledge) for recalling case study information. However these level-marked questions will never have marks just for AO1, so there will always be marks associated with other assessment objectives as well as AO1 in longer questions with a case study focus.

A good rule for your students would be to always mention the case study they are discussing or even just state it on the first line. Whilst students could give place-specific details without naming the actual place or event, naming the case study will not only help focus the students when writing their answer but will also help the examiner recognise what or where the

student is discussing and enable them to recognise the points the student is making more easily.

Let's have a look at a couple of examples of 'case study' level marked questions to see how they are broken down (see PPT – slides 1 and 2)

The first shown on screen is a 12 mark question from GCSE Spec A (slide 1). The question is split evenly between AO1 (knowledge), AO2 (understanding) and AO3 (application of knowledge and understanding).

There are knowledge (AO1) marks for how migration influences the growth and character of cities – with place-specific details for the LIDC or EDC city being required. However there are also marks for both the understanding (AO2) of the concepts of migration and growth and character of cities as well as the evaluation (AO3) of how far migration influences the growth and character of cities.

For this case study, students will have learnt about the 'influence of migration (national and international) and its impact on the city's growth and character' for one LIDC or EDC city. As the question asks for students to examine how far migration influences the growth and character of cities in LIDCs and EDCs – therefore more general than just for their case study – students could discuss how migration influences the growth and character of cities in LIDCs and EDCs, the degree of this, other influences and potentially generalisations from the case study to other cities as well as case study information and still access AO1 (knowledge) marks. It's quite a wide remit for what they could do.

Secondly, here is an 8 mark question from GCSE Spec B. The question is split evenly between AO1 (knowledge) and AO3 (application).

There are marks for knowledge (AO1) of ways of life in the LIDC or EDC city and marks for evaluating (AO3) how the ways of life vary within the city. The question is related tightly to the case study and so there are not marks available here for generally talking about ways of life in different cities – just specifically about the LIDC or EDC case study city. To help students focus on their city here we have even provided a space for them to write the name of their LIDC or EDC city on the specimen examination paper. As I said before if students do not name the city then they make it much more difficult the examiner to reward them for place-specific details.

Question: Can I complete a fieldwork activity on tourism to cover the human side of fieldwork for GCSE A?

Chloe answered:

Centres must provide a written statement to OCR detailing at least two occasions where learners have been given the opportunity to carry out fieldwork (physical and human fieldwork processes and in contrasting locations). As part of the written statement alongside the date, location, environment to which it is related, numbers that participated and the main issues/questions investigated, you will also need to **explain the relationship of the fieldwork opportunities to the specification content** (how it links to the specification).

You just need to be really clear on how you are linking the tourism fieldwork to the specification content. You could potentially link it to **1.2.3** (GCSE A) as part of the case study of the consequences of economic growth and/or decline for one place or region in the UK or **1.2.6** (GCSE A) as part of the ways of life within the city such as leisure. There is nothing to say that you can't do it but that you just need to think very carefully about how it links with the specification content.

Question: Will there be any revision books to support the course?

Shelley answered:

Whilst obviously these are very important, and we very much understand why teachers and learners would want access to these, we can't ourselves at OCR produce these materials as we are an exam board. We do have conversations with the publisher (Hodder Education) on a regular basis. I understand that Hodder will be producing revision materials and I think Chloe will be talking a bit later on about the contact person at Hodder which is Ruth Murphy. So unfortunately it isn't us for the revision books and Hodder is your best bet, there may also be other providers who will also produce revision books.

Question: Issues with both the A level and GCSE OCR approved text book - is OCR going to do anything about it?

Chloe answered:

The Hodder text books have gone through an endorsement process against the specification content but not the depth, for example some areas of the specification might be explored in more detail than others. We are in regular communication with Hodder and raise any issues that we receive about the book with them directly and they are keen to receive any feedback. Shelley mentioned the name of the Ruth Murphy, the contact at Hodder and you can email her directly: ruth.murphy@hoddereducation.co.uk.

Question: Is the Nile Delta sufficient as a case study for the A level low energy coastline?

Shelley answered:

We've had a small number of teachers email in via our Customer Contact Centre to ask us about this particular case study within the textbook as this is for a low energy coastline. In terms of what's in the textbook there is nothing wrong with the content of the textbook or the case study. Teachers have asked us whether there is sufficient information in terms of the case study particularly for the final two bullet points in the specification where it discusses the inter-relationships of a range of landforms. In the textbook it does mention other landforms in terms of bars, lagoons so not just the Nile delta but other depositional landforms. Also the fourth bullet point within the specification talks about changes over time in terms of these landforms. If teachers have asked us about any additional information they felt this hasn't been covered sufficiently, it has actually been hard to find information on this case study 'The Nile Delta' – Chloe and I spent quite a bit of time looking at this, as it has been difficult to find that information. I did find a resource (see PPT slide 5) which talks about

depositional features on the Alexandria coastline, so it is not just talking about the delta at the mouth of The Nile.

I have just noticed that a teacher has asked about deltas not being in the specification. In the Coastal landforms / landscapes section of the spec we have talked about individual landforms (features) that we want students to know about in terms of the examination and you are absolutely right deltas is not listed as one of those. However it does not mean you can't cover it within the case study if you want to and it is appropriate for that case study, it's up to you. If you want to choose a low energy coastline that covers all of the landforms (features) covered in 2a – beaches, spits, on-shore bars, tombolos and salt marshes that's absolutely fine too.

We've had conversations where teachers have asked if they don't do the Nile Delta case study, what else could they do? When asked I've just commented that the Louisiana coastline would be fine if you were interested in doing that, as it has some interesting things about the Gulf of Mexico and a range of landforms as well. So the textbook is fine in essence as it covers low energy coastlines, if you want to develop the case study in more depth to really go in search of some of those bullet points then absolutely, I certainly would use the textbook as a basis of information and I would go in search of additional information.

Mark had up on the PPT slide the Nile Delta – AS / A level, the link for the Alexandria coastline (also below), showing a low energy coastline, which has a good range of landforms and you can get the interrelationships information from that, which I think would be quite helpful.

http://www.isesco.org.ma/ISESCO_Technology_Vision/NUM04/doc/Rakiby,%20Yousif%20...pdf

Questions: I have previously taught AQA and at A Level there was a command term in the exams of 'comment on' which meant they had to apply their own geographical thinking and it was described as giving them the opportunity to 'think like a geographer' and required students to identify causes, implications, consequences and effects related to the resource. I feel this describes the expectation for AO2, am I right?

Mark answered:

You are indeed. One of the ways students might need to apply their knowledge and understanding is to a resource. So 'comment on' a resource would very much be applying knowledge and understanding, so it's fantastic that you have highlighted that as a great example.

Question: Could you clarify what a research framework means for the A Level Independent Investigation.

Shelley answered:

In terms of a framework, one of the things we have talked about with teachers is the idea that when students are beginning their independent investigation, the advantage that we have as teachers and people with geography degrees is we understand a lot more holistically about the route way with some of these investigations. The idea of the research framework is to encourage students to think about what the whole picture looks like as much as they can do that. It would be about saying okay I want to do some research, back ground reading, here's the area of geography I am interested in having a look at and it might be 'Disease Dilemmas' (as I am particularly interested in that), they might want to do something on HIV and AIDS and from that it would be a case of thinking:

- What would my question be?
- How am I going to find information out?
- What primary data can I collect?
- What secondary data can I collect?

So what the students are starting to do is think about the route way and evolution of their project. A framework suggests something a little more formal, in the sense of, one of the things we've had feedback on for the controlled assessment is that sampling (for example) is not always done particularly effectively. The framework idea would be to say – this is what I want to research, this is the primary data I am collecting, so if you are using qualitative or quantitative data it would be a case of:

- How much do you want to collect?
- Where are you going to collect it from?
- What techniques are you going to use?

It's about thinking about and spelling out the journey the students are going to take to put their research together and I think that's the big picture thinking that can sometimes be quite challenging. At the end of the day if they can't get sufficient data – and when I use the term 'data' I'm not just talking about numerical data but anything they can find out relevant to their independent investigation – it's having a think about how all those things connect together. If they are going in search of some information for their question and they are doing some back ground reading – what data are they actually going to collect out in the field? What does that look like? If the students are going to do questionnaires for example, how many people do they think is a representative sample for what they want to find out? What can happen is once they are out in the field and they start to collect their data these things can start to change and what's brilliant if they can reflect on that in their analysis and evaluation – 'my sample size was going to be this, however when I went out into the field ..' – they are keeping a dialogue with themselves. When we talk about a research framework the research bit is actually what they are finding out relevant to their title, once their title has been decided by them.

Question: How much time do you recommend students spend writing up their fieldwork collected at GCSE Level? How much detail considering they won't be assessed on it until their examination in Year 11?

Chloe answered:

The short answer is there is no right way to do this. I've had discussions with teachers on a whole range of ways this could be done. I think the thing that you've got to remember as stated on page 15 (GCSE A) and page 19 (GCSE B) of the specification, you have got six things on which fieldwork can be assessed both within familiar and unfamiliar contexts. You've got to make sure whatever fieldwork you are doing – and we here we are talking specifically about GCSE – is that students have got to understand fieldwork in the context of those six criteria. I would also be tempted, if I were still teaching, to be embedding these types of fieldwork questions within teaching where possible and I think that's also potentially quite important. The short answer is there is no right way to do the write up.

Mark answered:

When talking to teachers there's been so many different ways that teachers might have students write up their fieldwork such as posters, projects, notebooks – whatever way their students would best access the information when it comes to revision time.

Questions: How will case study knowledge be assessed at AS / A Level? Will they be incorporated into shorter answer questions or the longer extended response questions? Will they be signposted clearly as you have said they would be at GCSE?

Mark answered:

Where there are essay questions at AS and A Level it won't state to use case studies but they will always be broad enough that students would always be able to bring in one of their case studies for those essay questions. Even though on those it won't state 'use case study information' it will always be a requirement / expectation. In the mark schemes that we've got online you can see that it is always a requirement – and this will also be in our 'Guide to the SAMS' as well. So what I would say is that when it comes to the AS Level with the 14 markers in Landscape and Place and the 20 markers in the Geographical Debates, and then at A level the 16 markers in the Physical Systems and Human Interactions papers as well as the 33 markers in the Geographical debates – do make sure students incorporate case studies as and when they can.

We may have questions on case studies in smaller questions than that – 6, 8 and 10 markers for instance – but for these we will highlight on those questions where students would need to use case study information. Obviously students could choose to use case study information whether the question asks for it or not to help pad out their answer and to show their knowledge and understanding. On these questions which are not quality of extended response questions we will highlight it for students; this was part of our communication given to our assessment writers when they are creating the exams.

Question: When are the 'Guides to the SAMs' being released?

Mark answered:

The honest answer is as soon as we can. The new GCSEs 'Guide to the SAMs' have been produced and they are currently with our internal creative team. We hope to have these up early in the New Year. The next priority for myself is to get the AS Level 'Guide to the SAMs' completed, I have started work on this and we really want to make sure that's available in good time for the examinations but because they have to go through a vigorous sign off internally we can't give a date at this stage. The A Level 'Guide to the SAMs' will be started as soon as the AS Level ones have been signed off internally. Unfortunately we can't give exact dates but the GCSE ones should very soon.

Question: For the AS/A Level, will there be any marked examples to show exactly what is required for the AO2 application marks and how this differs from knowledge and understanding?

Shelley answered:

We currently haven't got any marked examples and we are not looking to do that at the moment. We have talked about this and the difficulty is that because nobody has been through the examining process (as this doesn't happen until the summer of 2017 for AS or the summer of 2018 for A Level) it means there are no standardised examiners. If we start putting out marked examples of answers, it means we are starting to set the standard for AS and A Level. One of the things we are developing are full answers to particular questions – we have talked about this particularly for the Geographical Debates paper with the 20 (AS level) and 33 mark questions (A Level) or doing detailed essay plans, we can show where case studies can be flagged within these.

I can talk a little bit about the AO2 application marks having written some of the mark schemes myself – which as a former teacher has been a strangely enjoyable process as it gives you a really good idea of the question styles. If you look at the knowledge and understanding in the AS and A Level mark schemes, what happens is they are separated out (the assessment objectives). So the AO1 marks for knowledge and understanding; will appear at the top part of the answer, if AO1 and AO2 are being assessed within a question (which they are in the essays). What you notice with those and one of the key rules that we had was that a lot of the wording will come directly from the specification, so if you look at the wording of the question for AO1 marks it will come from the spec itself in terms of the bullet points or key ideas. The mark scheme will take wording from the question and it will be exemplified with examples, factual information, things we think teachers might have covered within their teaching.

The difference with the AO2 is that, for example, if the question is asking you to 'discuss' then the students will need to do some analysis, evaluation and make a judgement. What you'll notice about the AO2 bullet points within the mark scheme is (this is something Ofqual (the regulator) came back to us and said) that we want you to be answering the question within the AO2 bullet points. So, although that isn't a full answer you'll notice that they are much more detailed than our current / legacy qualifications. Feedback we have had from

teachers and Ofqual is that they were very pleased with the level of detail and so were our internal teams. Each of those bullet points answers an aspect of the question in an AO2 style – so they are analytical, evaluative, making a judgement on something.

So if the question is focused on 'discuss', 'influences of' or 'to what extent', where the student starts to write 'the extent to which' or 'where this influences this more than this' then they are starting to get to grips with what that question is looking at. On the PPT there's a really good example of this (slide 8) where the student needs to say about opportunities compared to threats, so hopefully as you look through the mark scheme it shows the differences between knowledge and understanding (AO1) which is what you've taught them and they need to go away and revise whereas the application of knowledge and understanding (AO2) is much more about twisting that information, making it relevant and pertinent to the question. Where students put quotes in or back up information from case studies, what they've got to do is twist it into what the question is actually asking and that's the application side of it.

Although the assessment objectives might have changed in terms of wording, where students are applying their knowledge and understanding there has to be a difference where they are not just regurgitating what they know, that's what we are asking for in terms of the students applying their knowledge and understanding. What you might have noticed is that AO2 is often measuring more of a holistic style question (essay style questions) and manipulating the information they know to actually answer the question with a bit of a twist.

Question: Can we use a local area study for rivers etc. which are not written up in usual places (magazines, texts etc.) e.g. a small stream / tributary of The Thames?

Shelley answered:

I am assuming this is aimed at GCSE as there are some fantastic links in the spec to use a river study in terms of a physical geography fieldwork but for AS / A Level that's a lot more challenging and we would be talking about Earth's Life Support Systems. Assuming its GCSE, as Chloe said earlier there needs to be clear links to the specification, that's the key thing with fieldwork. In terms of rivers a small tributary of the River Thames would be absolutely fine as long as it's showing the characteristics you actually want to measure.

The fieldwork questions in the examination will come from the specification, what I'm referring to is what's written in the spec (for GCSE A on page 15 or for GCSE B page 19), for example from (i) understanding the kinds of question capable of being investigated through to (vi) reflecting critically on fieldwork. So for example if you were looking at river processes or you wanted students to look at a landform and how processes influence that landform, it would be absolutely fine. Students wouldn't have to write it up fully as it's not a controlled assessment as long as they've got something they can draw from for revision, how they might write it up could be in a brief form for them to reflect on.

Question: The AS and A Level specifications were updated on the 18th October 2016, what exactly were the changes?

Chloe answered:

This was just a small admin change to the specification to confirm that students are permitted to use a graphical or scientific calculator for their examinations – that reference can be found on page 69 of the A Level and page 42 of the AS Level specifications.

Question: What do you suggest we do with GCSE students who miss a fieldwork opportunity provided for them?

Mark answered:

The key thing in terms of the specification is that you are offering them the opportunity. With AS / A Level they must do 2 or 4 days however at GCSE you need to sign off to say you've offered the opportunity for fieldwork to all. The fact that you're offering the opportunity is great and you are covering the requirements of the specification but then the key thing is that you catch the students up if they miss an opportunity. The students would then know what happened on the fieldwork trip so they can access the 15% of marks on fieldwork in the exam and the questions could ask them about the fieldwork trip they missed.

In the fieldwork questions at GCSE there will always be questions on the students own fieldwork experience and in unfamiliar contexts (so there will be resources in the exam paper or resource booklet for these). Make sure you get the students caught up; you could show them the techniques on school grounds if you can't get them out to the location again or the student's peers could show them what was covered on the fieldwork trip – this will help to embed their knowledge as well, so having students teach the other students would be fantastic.

Question: We are finding we are rushing through the GCSE B topics particularly global hazards and climate change but we are taking longer than your suggested timings. Can you give us any advice about the level of detail required? Is the information in the Hodder textbook sufficient or should we be going into more detail? We struggling to cover the information in the textbook in the time suggested.

Shelley answered:

With the GCSE B specification I can understand that as there is a lot of information to be covered. Reflecting back historically, I know Chloe and I have talked about this a few times, I think I worked out I've been through three qualification changes I always felt I over taught things the first time through. There was always such a fear – what if we missed something out or the students were asked particular things in the exams? I remember so many conversations about whether we were pitching things at the right level of detail, without seeing what you are teaching I am sure you will be absolutely fine.

You may be aware that the government have said that they want the GCSEs to be more rigorous however the AS / A Level standard has not changed at all. Our new GCSE

examinations reflect that as we have 8 and 12 mark questions for example and some of those are bigger questions than you would expect with the current GCSEs. I would say it is not just about the level of detail you are teaching but the accessibility to the different style of question and more demanding style of question in the exam where obviously the students are going to need to write a lot more.

The Hodder textbook has got to be written more at a higher end than a lower end, if you were to write it at the lower end then teachers would think this is the level expected, so therefore the textbook is in a lot of detail. We had a lot of discussions with the authors, for example if we were thinking about the world's climate - do we need to know about the Hadley and Ferrel cells? Sometimes you need to teach around the information to make a point, one of the things we have tried to do with the specification is ensure there is no hidden content so we are not expecting you to cover lots more, the exam questions can only come from the specification. If you are therefore looking at the textbook and thinking is that in too much detail then it might be that sometimes you need the extra detail to put context to something – spatially, geographically, contextually etc – but sometimes you may not feel it is necessary. But remember we can only ask questions from the specification.

Also people teach across different types of schools with very different types of learners from very low ability to extremely able and so one textbook is never necessarily going to fulfil everything for every learner and every teacher. I would say pick the things that are going to be suitable for your learners, it's difficult without seeing what people are doing but go for it.

Mark commented:

We have the Schoology group set up if you want to share resources with other teachers, seek support and / or ask questions, if you are not a member then we have an article with details of how to join (<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-subject/geography/geography-news/the-new-ning-ocr-schoology-groups/>) can be found in our Geography News section on our geography homepage.

Chloe commented:

Shelley and I were just thinking about that last question and one other thing in terms of timing is to bear in mind that because there's no controlled assessment now and fieldwork can be written up in a very different way as we were discussing earlier that also gives a bit more flexibility in terms of the time you have available.