

GCE A Level

Geography

H481_04_05 Non Examined Assessment

OCR Report to Centres June 2018

About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2018 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful
- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection
- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes links and brief information on:

- A reminder of our **post-results services** including **reviews of results**
- Link to **grade boundaries**
- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

Reviews of results

If any of your students' results are not as expected you may wish to consider one of our reviews of results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#). If University places are at stake you may wish to consider priority service 2 reviews of marking which have an earlier deadline to ensure your reviews are processed in time for university applications: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/stage-5-post-results-services/enquiries-about-results/service-2-priority-service-2-2a-2b/>

Grade boundaries

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Further support from OCR

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It allows you to:

- Review reports on the **performance of individual candidates**, cohorts of students and whole centres
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(H481 Non Examined Assessment)

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H481/04/05 Investigative Geography

1. General Comments:

In this inaugural year, it was most encouraging to see the majority of centres keeping closely to the requirements of the specification for the Independent Investigation. Individuality and enterprise were present in abundance and led to some excellent and appropriate outcomes. Where candidates were allowed the freedom to choose their location, focus and techniques, true independent decision-making was possible and led to much welcome innovation and originality. Relatively less successful were those Centres too narrowly refining the nature of the location, fieldwork opportunities and task, where independence may be reduced. That is not to say such an approach is not possible, but that within such a framework Centres should encourage and emphasise the need for independence in decision-making concerning the literature research, data collection, sampling, presentation and analysis.

The choice of titles varied considerably across the whole entry and most Centres produced a range of topics across the Physical-Human divide, with Environmental topics making occasional appearances. Most candidates clearly engaged with the requirements of the specification and delivered outcomes in keeping with their abilities and the creativity shown was at times impressive. Clearly the objective of developing independent skills was delivered in abundance by most and this was a credit to Centres where such individualisation was emphasised. Some delivered their investigations entirely electronically and this is certainly to be encouraged where feasible. It was similarly encouraging to see the employment of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to deliver various elements of the submissions, particularly with data collection and presentation.

The application of the assessment criteria by Centres was reassuring in this first year, although there is a tendency by some Centres not to use the full range of marks to achieve better differentiation of their candidates. This includes using both the top and lower mark range. The individual Centre reports you will have received will identify any areas where marking and / or internal moderation may need to be addressed in future years, whilst a number of advisory points are given under the individual marking criteria headings below. Assessment should be based upon the 'best fit principle' to find the appropriate level to award candidate's work for each section of the marking criteria. It was good to see internal moderation having taken place where more than one teacher had been involved in the assessment of the investigations.

The annotation of both the candidates' work and mark sheets was appreciated where it occurred, with the best being impressive and extremely helpful at the moderation stage. An indication of evidence where a particular level has been credited is particularly useful on the actual investigations. Similarly, evidence/examples of sophisticated techniques or statistical analysis is most helpful on the mark sheets. The quality of annotation varied considerably and this is an area for potential improvement for a significant number of Centres.

There was much evidence of good practice: suffice for the moment to state that best practice by candidates involved getting the initial focus of the investigation right, involving one overall hypothesis or question for investigation backed up by rigorous and directly relevant literature research. All that followed was then both appropriate and directly relevant to the chosen focus, in a structured, succinct and progressive manner, with the candidate demonstrating their own decision-making and including a number of sophisticated techniques that best delivered their

outcomes to maximum effect. Evidence and explanation were concisely developed in sufficient detail to provide a convincing analysis and arrive at a natural conclusion within the recommended. The best certainly achieved this, producing outstanding work, and the comments on individual sections of the marking criteria that follow attempts to support teachers and candidates in future years.

2. Comments on Individual Marking Criteria:

Section 1: Planning, Purpose and introduction.

Best practice clearly involves the candidates establishing a clear and well-focused question or hypothesis for investigation. Unfortunately, a significant number of submissions this summer clouded the issue by attempting to address a number of discrete questions or hypotheses under the ‘umbrella’ of one topic. This led to overlong and often diluted outcomes because there was an attempt to do too much within the recommended word length. Each sub-question/hypothesis needs to assist the aim of the investigation, not distract from it. Candidates would therefore be far better advised to focus more directly upon one question or hypothesis and then identify a few sub-questions or sub-hypotheses that together lead naturally to a unified conclusion. Fewer are certainly better, since it allows more in-depth analysis in section 4.

Referencing was generally very good and clearly candidates had identified with the need to research the literature behind their chosen topic individually. However, many did not demonstrate the appropriate links between such theories and their own questions/hypotheses for study. The literature review was too frequently delivered as a standalone component rather than embedded within the introductory section. This can then be the substance behind the ideas to subsequently be tested and which could then be applied within both the analysis and concluding sections. The best certainly did use these theories as a thread running throughout their investigation, but for many this seldom happened.

Tip: more might consider using (spider) diagrams to show the various relevant research ideas to be investigated.

Geo-location was precise and achieved by most, but candidates should reflect more on what scales are appropriate to usefully identify their investigation’s precise location. The lack of contextualisation around a specific place and choice of location was another relative weakness. Why the chosen area was appropriate for the topic under investigation should have been given more emphasis, rather than merely presenting maps at a variety of scales and stating here is my location.

Section 2: Data, information collection methods and sampling framework.

Whilst it is recognised that many Centres wish to carry out data collection within the context of an organised field course, nevertheless some personalised research should still be undertaken by candidates. It was noticeable that some included group data collected that was not directly relevant to their individual topic for investigation and which proved a distraction to the outcomes.

There were some impressive personalised data collection strategies and many had devised their own questionnaires, environmental surveys and ways of measuring physical characteristics. Unfortunately, for a few, there was over-reliance upon virtually one major data source, usually a

questionnaire, whilst others went for the opposite approach and utilised every method they could think of and included it irrespective of whether it really helped further their investigation. Hard data was by far the main type of data collected, whereas qualitative methods, such as interviews, were rarely employed.

Both primary and secondary data sources are required for the top two levels of this section and most certainly utilised both. However, many did not recognise the full range of sources utilised in their method section, often omitting the use of their own photographs or the various websites utilised for data.

A number of methodologies were overlong and many more candidates than at present could produce more concise methodologies. One possible strategy could be the use of a table. Employing a tabular form allows the utilisation of bullet points and can emphasise the detail of matters such as sample size, whilst small photographs of equipment can communicate effectively the equipment used. This would avoid the overlong descriptions of techniques that characterised a significant number of this year's investigations. It is important however, that candidates remember to justify their methodologies and outline limitations.

Candidates need to ensure they effectively outline their sampling strategy. Both size and type were often hard to identify and even when mentioned the justification for them was minimal. Basing judgements upon as few as four locations is hardly convincing in terms of testing any question or hypothesis and candidates would be better advised to collect data for meaningful sample sizes to make their outcomes reliable. Similarly, a questionnaire based upon ten respondents for example is equally an inappropriate number upon which to make sound conclusions. Would not fifty be possible?

For those assessing the impact of a particular development, the sampling strategy was often disorganised and candidates would be better advised to adopt a systematic approach of choosing sampling points at set distances from the development and in a variety of directions. One study of this type chose to collect data only at four locations, whereas collecting data at say thirty points would be so much better, enable the later use of isoline maps, and establish the impact with distance and direction.

There were some good attempts to deal with the requirement to communicate the ethical and socio-political dimensions of their research. Some did this under a separate sub-heading, which was fine, but others managed to address it equally as well within the justification of those methods to which it was relevant. Some candidates ignored it altogether, however, and it should be noted that it is a requirement in some capacity for each of levels 2 and 3.

Section 3: Data presentation techniques.

First and foremost, a considerable number of candidates did not fully integrate their various presentation techniques within Section 4 so that the commentary did not go alongside the diagrams to which they referred. This made it far more difficult to follow the general thrust of the investigation.

Strong investigations linked the data presentation directly to the actual questions/hypotheses set very well. However, for many more careful planning and thought was needed to achieve a more logical order of diagrams and which should be included. Too many presented data that although collected, later proved irrelevant to the analysis. For example, just because a candidate had

collected age and sex data did not mean it was relevant and it might have been better to exclude it altogether.

Use of ArcGIS to map results was particularly impressive in a number of Centres, but a disappointing number of candidates did not map their data appropriately. Surely the starting point of the analysis should be a spatial display of the overall results?

Key words in the marking criteria here are *appropriate*, *selective*, *range* and *sophisticated*, if level 3 of the marking criteria are to be met. Whilst the best clearly delivered these, whom there was an over-reliance upon simple graphs, often of a repetitive nature and with insufficient regard as to what was the most appropriate way of displaying such data for a surprising number. More should consider the spatial display of results with further diagrams superimposed upon the map, such as proportional symbols, pie charts or radar plots. It was good to see some candidates appropriately use dispersion graphs, box and whisker diagrams, pictograms or kite diagrams, but it would be good to see more in the future. More enterprise by more candidates would be most welcome.

Incidentally, a recurrent theme was the absence of scales and north compass points on many maps and missing or inappropriate labelling of graph axes.

The quality of annotation varied considerably. Good annotation can reduce the need for such dense text (reducing the length of the written report) and be most effective, but a significant number of this year's candidates either included numerous photographs without annotation or merely offered labels that little in the way of explanation.

Section 4: Data analysis and explanation.

Impressive investigations displayed a clear, in-depth knowledge of the topic and its findings. Furthermore, this was supported within the analysis by the presence of detail from the data collected and the findings identified by the diagrams and statistical analyses. However, overall the standard of analysis was variable. Description of outcomes was generally very good and the majority backed up their findings with detailed evidence, but far less convincing were the explanations offered. Many did not embed such explanations with evidence collected, instead speculatively asserting something to be the reason for the outcome(s).

The structure of the analysis should be driven by the aims, objectives and theories identified in the introductory section. Unfortunately, many of this year's candidates instead utilised the different data collection methodologies to deliver this section or the individual questions of a questionnaire. This inevitably led to an unfocused approach and left the reader unclear as to how exactly the argument was being developed to arrive at a natural and clear conclusion by Section 5. Many would benefit considerably from keeping far more closely to the point of their investigation in this section and discarding all the data collected that is not directly relevant to their focus. That way it would be far easier to see the 'wood for the trees' and lead to far greater clarity.

The reference back to the geographical ideas being tested within the analysis was largely ignored by many candidates or, at best, happened superficially. This is where the ideas introduced in Section 1 should have been carried forward through the subsequent sections and used to form the clear structure for what was collected, presented and analysed. As such the key ideas of use from the literature search should be a crucial part of the explanations arrived at,

adding to the cohesiveness of the investigation. Where this happened, the candidate was able to flourish and clearly reach the top level.

The use of statistical techniques varied considerably. Best practice saw the use of techniques such as Mann-Whitney, Chi-squared and standard deviation used appropriately and selectively. Whilst it was quite noticeable that other Centres had not included anything more sophisticated than the Spearman's Rank Co-efficient and then quite frequently this was applied several times to a variety of paired variables. Whatever techniques are applied they should be fully interpreted with critical values, significance and confidence levels quoted and a clear interpretation given of what this means. As ever, not all candidates appeared comfortable with the use of statistics, but this should then be reflected more obviously in the assessment marks credited.

Section 5: Conclusions and investigation evaluation.

The most impressive candidates produced concise conclusions that were a mirror-image of the introductory section, with clear, succinct feedback on the aims, objectives and theories that were to be investigated. They then supported their conclusions effectively with specific evidence. However, for many the conclusions lacked this precision with only superficial focus upon their goals and only passing or no reference to the literature sources whose geographical ideas they were testing. Some introduced new material into this section, whereas nothing in the conclusion should be a surprise; it should be a natural summary of the findings previously presented and analysed.

Evaluations by contrast were generally much better and a relative strength in this year's investigations. However, these did tend to focus more upon the equipment or techniques utilised rather than the validity and reliability of the outcomes in terms of the sampling framework or other factors and taking a more holistic view of the success of the whole investigation. There was on occasions an assumption that data from published sources was free from bias and this simplistic approach is something needing more rigorous evaluation.

Section 6: Overall quality and communication of written work.

One of the level 3 criteria refers to communication being **concise**. For this to occur, it is highly probable that the candidate will have kept within the suggested word guidance of between 3000 and 4000 words. Indeed it is in the interests of teachers (and moderators) that candidates keep to this guidance both to enable fair comparison of submissions and to make their assessment less time-consuming. Please note that appendices should be used selectively as they are not always necessary and certainly, there is no requirement to submit all raw data sheets or copies of literature sources.

Most candidates correctly proof-read their investigations and wrote it in the third person and so achieved the clarity and effectiveness of communication desired. The best also structured their report with appropriate use of sub-headings and page numbers, together with accurate reference to and integration of diagrams and literature resources. However, as indicated above, this remains an area for development for many.

The majority of candidates included a bibliography or list of references and many of these were most impressive. All were helpful, as it helped summarise the literature sources utilised at the close of the written report. Tip: more Centres could provide guidance on how to present a bibliography following a recognisable format e.g. Harvard Referencing.

Administration:

The prompt delivery of work for moderation was much appreciated. Clerical errors were rare, but Centres are urged to ensure that an independent check of submitted marks is made before final dispatch. This avoids a delay in the process. You are also reminded that there is an option to upload candidate investigations to the repository, something only a minority of Centres currently avail themselves of but which is considerably smoother in terms of the moderation process, by avoiding the need for postage of bulky materials.

The best practice for presentation of the completed investigation is to attach it, together with all relevant paperwork for that candidate, using a simple treasury tag. Please avoid the use of plastic and card wallets and other bulky folders. The Independent Investigation proposal forms included should all have a teacher comment in the space provided; it was quite noticeable that a significant number this summer did not. This is the one time that teacher input is encouraged and presents an opportunity to try and ensure the candidate progresses within the parameters of the specification. You are urged most strongly to make use of this opportunity for future sessions.

Finally, despite the numerous references to how the written report might improve for future years, please reflect on a most successful first year of Investigating Geography. The standard was refreshingly good and by far the majority displayed some outstanding geographical skills and knowledge, together with the ability to work both independently and to a high level. An excellent achievement for both candidates and Centres alike.

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