

Explaining the GCSE Geography ‘explain’ questions

This resource has been written to support teachers in understanding the requirements of explain questions for GCSE geography. Following a review of the first summer series (2018) these particular questions have been identified as requiring additional guidance.

This resource should be used in conjunction with:

- The themed webinar which explores the range of questions using the command term explain, this can be downloaded from the CPD hub (https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?e=fjefcbdbhgnidcponie&CATN_ID=27).
- The Examiners’ reports which can be found via the qualification pages:
<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/geography-a-geographical-themes-j383-from-2016/assessment/>
<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/geography-b-geography-for-enquiring-minds-j384-from-2016/assessment/>

What does the command word ‘explain’ mean?

‘Set out the causes of something and/or the factors which influence it.’

How do the ‘explain’ questions vary?

There are a variety of different styles of questions which use the command word explain. The differences between them include the number of marks for the question, whether the student needs to interact with a resource, if the questions are level marked but most importantly which assessment objective is being targeted.

Let’s look at a selection of questions for both GCSE A and GCSE B

The questions below require students to show their **understanding** (AO2), therefore revision is really important. If you look at the wording of the question compared to the specification they are very similar.

GCSE A	GCSE B
<u>Component 01</u> 1(bii) Explain the formation of a spit (4)	<u>Component 02</u> 4(aii) Explain how mining can affect ecosystems (3)
2(c) Explain one economic advantage of immigration into the UK (2)	<u>Component 03</u> 2(b) Rio de Janeiro can be considered a world city. Explain the characteristics of a world city (4)
<u>Component 02</u> 3(aiii) Explain how human activity creates the enhanced greenhouse effect (4)	
Mark scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2, 3 or 4 mark questions • Development in the students answers are shown with a tick (✓) as a further valid explanation • Full marks can be awarded for one well-developed point 	

The following questions assess the student's recall (**knowledge** – AO1) and their ability to be able to go into more depth, beyond simply recalling information (**understanding** – AO2), as you will see a number of these questions include *case studies*. Again, if you look at the wording of the question compared to the specification they are very similar.

GCSE A	GCSE B
<p><u>Component 01</u> 3(b) CASE STUDY – a flood event in the UK caused by extreme weather conditions Explain two causes of the UK flood event (4)</p> <p><u>Component 02</u> 2(a) Explain two consequences of rapid urbanisation in LIDCs (4)</p> <p>2(d) CASE STUDY – Trade and economic development Explain how trade affects the economic development of an LIDC or an EDC you have studied (8)</p>	<p><u>Component 02</u> 1(e) CASE STUDY – ways of life in cities For an Advanced Country (AC) city you have studied, explain how international migration has changed the character of the city (6)</p> <p>4(c) CASE STUDY – food security For a country you have studied, explain how food security is achieved by one method at a local scale (6)</p>
<p>Mark scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 4 mark questions include point and development marks, examiners annotate these as a (✓) or (DEV). For example: 2(a) Explain two consequences of rapid urbanisation in LIDCs (4) 2 x 1 (✓) for valid consequences of rapid urbanisation in LIDCs 2 x 1 (DEV) for explanation of the consequences Increase in population (✓) due to influx of large numbers of migrants (DEV)/increased birth rate associated with migrants (DEV) The 6 and 8 mark questions are level marked and they have a case study focus, therefore students are required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show their case study <i>knowledge & give place specific details</i> Develop their ideas which are relevant to the question (<i>understanding</i>) 	

Questions which require students to interact with a resource(s)

Questions which require students to interact with a resource(s) are targeting AO3, where students need to **apply their knowledge and understanding**. This is because the resource is unseen. For the summer series 2018, all of the questions targeting AO3 as a single assessment objective were all low to medium tariff e.g. 2 - 4 marks. The resources used in the examination papers will come from the geographical skills listed in the specifications.

<p>GCSE A – Component 02</p> <p>1(aii) Use Fig.1 to explain the relationship between climate and vegetation (3)</p> <p>Mark scheme</p> <p>Three marks for valid points explaining the relationship between climate and vegetation. Exemplification could come from Fig. 1 if linked to a valid point about climate and vegetation.</p>	<p>Key word in the question</p>
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<p>GCSE A – Component 03</p> <p>3(bii) Study Fig. 7 in the separate Resource Booklet, rainforest cover in Costa Rica. Explain two reasons for the changes you have described (4)</p> <p>Mark scheme</p> <p>There are 4 marks available. Two marks are for <u>valid reasons</u> for the changes described, these could include mining, farming, HEP reservoirs, population growth etc. Two marks are for the <u>explanation</u> of reasons (DEV) e.g.</p> <p>Rainforest loss may be due to cattle ranching (✓), as the land needs to be cleared for the animals to graze (DEV).</p>	<p>The two reasons are important & each needs to be explained.</p>
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GCSE B – Component 01

2(c) Study **Fig.2** in the separate Resource Booklet, a painting from 1677 of the frozen River Thames. Explain how this painting could be used as evidence for **climate change** (2)

Mark scheme

Key words in the question

Two marks for valid explanations of how the painting could be used as evidence for climate change e.g. The River Thames was frozen which we don't see now (✓)

If student's do develop their answer this is awarded as a (✓)

How do the resource interaction questions increase in complexity?

Some of the explain questions are looking for students **understanding** (AO2) and for them to **apply their knowledge and understanding** (AO3). These do involve the students interacting with a resource (s) and for two of the following examples they are also synoptic.

These questions clearly signpost two aspects for students:

- The fact they need to refer to a resource (s) – here they are **applying their knowledge and understanding** to an unseen resource (**AO3**)
- They need to use their own **understanding** – (**AO2**)

GCSE B – Component 03

2(c) Study **Fig. 5** in the separate Resource Booklet, statistics for Rio de Janeiro and Brazil.

Using **Fig. 5** and your own understanding, explain why Rio de Janeiro has experienced rapid urban growth (6)

Mark scheme

Interaction with a resource – AO3

Indicates AO2

Students need to demonstrate their **understanding** of urban growth (AO2) as well as **interpreting** from the resource (AO3)

A number of ideas for rapid urban growth are listed in the mark scheme which could be linked to migration or natural increase.

This question is level marked and to achieve a Level 3, students need to have well developed ideas about rapid urban growth and evidence from the resource to show why this is evident for Rio de Janeiro.

Synoptic questions

Synoptic questions are those that link two topic areas (GCSE B) or themes (GCSE A) within the question.

GCSE A – Component 03

3(d) Explain how the **management of tropical rainforests** can **influence** the **sustainable development of a country** (6).

This question links **Ecosystems of the Planet (2.1)** with **People of the Planet (2.2)**

Mark scheme

The students are being assessed on their **understanding** of the two identified parts of the question, as highlighted above (AO2). The word influence within the question shows that students need to **analyse** the link between the two highlight parts (AO3) e.g. how the management of tropical rainforest (TRF) can influence the sustainable development of a country.

For a Level 3 it says 'clear and explicit' synoptic links between content from different parts of the course of study.

1(d)* Study **Figs 3 and 4** in the separate Resource Booklet, beach management strategies used in Brazil and a sketch showing impacts of beach nourishment (beach replenishment) at Copacabana Beach.

Using **Figs 1, 2, 3 and 4** and your own understanding, explain how challenges in the city of Rio de Janeiro affect the coastal landscape (12).

This question links **Topic 5 – Urban Futures** with **Topic 3 – Distinctive Landscapes**. This question requires interaction with multiple resources and requires an extended response from students, indicated by an asterisk on the question paper (12 marks).

Mark scheme

The students are being assessed on their **understanding** of challenges in cities (AO2). The students need to **interpret** the resources (AO3) and make reference to them in their answer. As this is a synoptic question the students need to analyse how challenges in the city affect the coastal landscape (AO3).

For a Level 4 it says 'clear and explicit' synoptic links between content from different parts of the course of study.

As this is an extended response question, there is a sentence on the mark scheme which indicates to the examiner they need to look at the organisation / structure of the students answer as well as the quality of what is written e.g. level of development, relevance of the information and evidence used. Whilst students do not get a mark for this, it is a tool examiners can use to differentiate candidates within each level.

If you would like to see how your students performed on the 'explain' questions then please use Active Results as this will show you their marks against the national cohort of OCR candidates. This will enable you to target revision to particular types of questions.

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/active-results/>

Appendix

The grids below show all of the explain questions for the Summer Series 2018.

GCSE A- Explain questions (2018)

Component	Question	Marks	Resource	Assessment Objective/s
J383/01	1bii	4		AO2
J383/01	2biii	4		AO2
J383/01	2c	2		AO2
J383/01	3aii	2		AO2
J383/01	3b	4		AO1 (2) & AO2 (2)
J383/02	1aii	3	diagram	AO3
J383/02	2a	4		AO1 (2) & AO2 (2)
J383/02	2d	8		AO1 (4) & AO2 (4)
J383/02	3aiii	4		AO2
J383/03	2bii	3	map	AO3
J383/03	3bii	4	map	AO3
J383/03	3d (synoptic)	6		AO2 (3) & AO3 (3)

Case study questions

GCSE B - Explain questions (2018)

Component	Question	Marks	Resource	Assessment Objective/s
J384/01	2c	2	Painting	AO3
J384/02	1e	6		AO1 (3) & AO2 (3)
J384/02	4aii	3		AO2
J384/02	4c	6		AO1 (3) & AO2 (3)
J384/03	1d (synoptic)	12	GIS Maps / Photographs / Information / Diagram	AO2 (6) & AO3 (6)
J384/03	2b	4		AO2
J384/03	2c	6	Table	AO2 (3) & AO3 (3)
J384/03	3aii	2	Photographs	AO3 (1) & AO4 (1)

Case study questions



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