Qualification Accredited

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

GEOGRAPHY

H481

For first teaching in 2016

H481/04/05 Summer 2022 series

Version 1

Contents

Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by our moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements; identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comments on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. This report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost to other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our website.

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General overview

After the pandemic and the consequent complications for conducting fieldwork in 2020 and 2021, teachers should be congratulated for creating fieldwork opportunities that allowed candidates to develop successful and interesting Independent Investigations in 2022. Despite the obvious difficulties, the vast majority of candidates found ways to collect sufficient, valid primary data, supplemented by relevant secondary sources. Furthermore, some candidates embraced the use of virtual data collection methods, using Street View or various electronic survey methods to collect primary data.

As in 2019, the majority of candidates chose to investigate aspects of the specification related to Changing Spaces: Making Places. In a sample of 76 reports, taken from a wide range of centres and across a range of marks from 20 to 54, the percentages in each broad topic were as follows:

- Changing Spaces; Making Places 62%
- Coasts 13%
- Carbon 11%
- Water 7%
- Disease 5%
- Glaciation 3%

In some centres the sample of work contained reports that investigated similar aspects of the same geographical theme. It would be desirable, of course, to see a wider variety of topics and titles. Nevertheless, it was obvious that each investigation had been conducted independently. This was particularly noticeable in centres where the NEAs arose directly from fieldwork conducted during a residential trip. While residential fieldwork has many positive and beneficial features, it does create a challenge when fieldwork conducted during the residential is then used by candidates as the basis for an independent investigation.

Many candidates have an excellent grasp of what constitutes an effective investigation and the moderators saw numerous examples of very high scoring NEAs that were a pleasure to read. On the other hand, some candidates continue to struggle with some elements of the investigation. There are some common areas of misunderstanding where small improvements in performance could result in a much better overall mark. More will be said about each of these areas later in the report, but in summary they are:

- introductions that are too ambitious and/or unachievable
- lack of detail in the discussion and justification of a sampling framework
- lack of sophistication in data presentation
- insufficient application of wider geographical understanding to explain and interpret the aims and findings of the investigation in either the analysis or conclusion sections of the report.

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

Candidates who did well generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well generally did the following:
• provided very clear aims in the introduction and investigated at a small geographical scale • selected a valid sampling framework that was clearly justified • chose appropriate methods to represent their data, including representations of spatial data or other more sophisticated techniques • used a range of quantitative and qualitative methods to effectively analyse their data and linked back to wider theory • drew sensible, evidenced conclusions and demonstrated that they understood wider geographical theory • referenced literature sources throughout the report.	• dad unclear aims and/or tried to achieve too much or focused on too large a geographical area • named a sampling strategy but did not provide any detail or justification • used only simple methods of data presentation • described maps and graphs without using any quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis • repeated key findings in the conclusion but links to wider geographical theory were absent • referenced literature sources in the introduction only.

Administration

The majority of centres administered the NEA faultlessly with all of the essential paperwork completed correctly. Moderators are always grateful to see efficient administration which makes the process of moderation much simpler. However, a number of admin errors were seen by moderators and these errors seemed to occur more frequently than in previous exam series. The most frequently seen errors were:

- clerical errors occur where the marks on the mark recording sheets have been transcribed to the front cover incorrectly or where the mark entered on Interchange does not match that on the mark recording sheets. Please check all additions and transcriptions very carefully
- missing candidate numbers. To save any confusion it is important to record the correct candidate number on the NEA, proposal form and mark recording sheets. If candidate work is submitted using the repository, it is important to check that the candidate numbers are recorded within the scanned/electronic documents and that these match the candidate number recorded in the file name
- missing 'Candidate Record Form and centre Declaration' sheet GCW179. Geography is one of a handful of subjects where this form, duly signed by each candidate and teacher, is submitted with the sample. Moderation cannot proceed without these forms, and, in many cases, moderation had to be delayed while the moderator reminded exams officers that the forms had to be submitted.

It is also expected that centres include the Independent Investigation Proposal Form for each candidate. This form provides evidence of the planning process, and therefore, gives the moderator an insight into the level of independence achieved by each candidate.

OCR support

The candidate record and centre declaration form must be signed by the candidate and the teacher. The proposal form should be signed by the teacher to indicate the candidate has a suitable investigation.

Both forms must be included at the front of the candidate's written report, alongside the Mark Recording Sheet

It is important that each report is secure: the use of a hole punch and treasury tag is the most effective and simplest method. Loose pages should not be submitted. Please avoid using too many plastic wallets or other bulky folders.

The process of moderation is greatly assisted by effective use of the mark recording sheets by the original examiner. Comments on the mark recording sheets should:

- relate directly to specific qualitative phrases used in the marking criteria. For example, in Section 1, a plan can be 'partial or incomplete' (Level 1), 'mostly clear' (Level 2) or 'clear' and 'well focused' (Level 3)
- make direct reference to places in the candidates' report where evidence of work meeting the standard of the criteria can be found. For example, in Section 4, you might refer to 'Mann Whitney' being used on 'page 14'.

A large number of centres provided effective levels of annotation. However, in a significant number of cases, the level of annotation did not provide sufficient evidence for the moderator to do his/her job. In order to provide sufficient and effective annotation please:

- encourage all candidates to paginate their reports. Please refer to specific pages in the candidates' reports where evidence of achievement at certain levels can be seen
- provide concise qualitative statements on pages 2-7 of the Mark Recording Sheet that relate to the bullet points in the marking criteria
- where possible, provide a very brief indication on the candidates' reports to show where significant achievements have been made. If used (and these are very helpful) these comments must be summative. Never use formative comments on a candidate's NEA.

Do not use the mark recording sheets to comment on aspects of a candidate's report that are not described in the marking criteria. For example, there is no need to comment on risk assessment in Section 2.

When using the marking criteria be careful to assign comments to the correct section. For example, the effective use of a statistical test or annotated image should be given under the criteria for Section 4 (Data analysis and explanation), not Section 3 (Data presentation techniques).

If using a combination of highlighting and written comments, it is important to be consistent and not contradictory. For example, when marking Section 1, if phrases in Level 2 have been highlighted and nothing in Level 3, then it is contradictory to give a mark in Level 3.

Interpretation of the marking criteria

Marking was, in many cases, closely in-line with the published marking criteria and accurate – at least within the correct level – across all six sections.

There were some outstanding investigations, deserving of full marks. Centres should use the full range of marks where appropriate. Full marks need not necessarily mean perfection.

Where marking was inaccurate, generous application of the marking criteria was more common than severe application of the marking criteria. Generous marking was seen in all six sections of the marking criteria. Misunderstanding of the marking criteria was most commonly seen in data collection (Section 2), and analysis and interpretation (Section 4). In addition, generous marking was also commonly seen in the introduction (Section 1), data presentation (Section 3) and conclusions and evaluation (Section 5), and slightly less frequently in Section 6. A few points are worth noting:

- in Section 2, the fourth bullet point seems to be frequently ignored by markers. In order to give a mark in Level 3 the sampling framework should be 'appropriate, coherent and justified'. The moderator expects to see details such as the 'frequency, range and location choice'
- to justify a mark in Level 3 of Section 3, candidates need to have used an 'appropriate balance of simple and more sophisticated data representation methods
- in order to access marks in the upper two levels of the marking criteria for Section 4 candidates must provide evidence that they can apply appropriate methods to analyse quantitative data (such as measures of central tendency, measures of dispersal, or statistical tests) and/or appropriate methods to analyse qualitative data (such as simple text analysis, coding or effective annotation of images).

Marking was also, occasionally, found to be inconsistent. In other words, the work of some candidates was marked reasonably accurately but the work of other candidates in the same centre was marked with generosity. This results in the moderator disagreeing with the rank order of work in the sample – a situation described as an Invalid Order of Merit (IOM). An IOM is almost always caused by insufficient or ineffective internal moderation of the sample before it is submitted for external moderation.

If you are working in a single-person department it is not necessary to internally moderate work before it is sent to the moderator. However, if two or more people mark work within the centre it is essential to carry out effective internal moderation. To do this, the department needs to:

- involve everyone who is going to mark NEAs in a training programme so that the same standards are applied when the marking criteria are used
- begin by reviewing one or more archived pieces of work from a previous year where the mark is known. You could use one of the NEAs that has been annotated on the OCR website or a piece from your own centre if you are certain that the mark was unchanged by the moderation process and the centre report described marking as accurate. This will set a standard and allow everyone involved in the process to appreciate what is expected for a particular level in each section of the marking criteria
- select three pieces of 'live' work from the current cohort that represent a range of marks/abilities. Each member of staff involved in the marking process should mark these three pieces of work independently
- discuss the marking of the three pieces of work and choose a mark for each one that is in-line with the standard set by the archive piece and which everyone can agree to
- agree an interim deadline when the work of half of the cohort will be marked

- divide up the workload and mark about half of the pieces of work
- take at least one piece of work from each person's workload – choosing candidates that have been given a range of marks – and internally moderate these pieces. Have a meeting where you can discuss these marks. Make sure that you are all still working to the same consistent standard
- complete the marking of the rest of the cohort. In an ideal world, if time permits, sample another script from each person's allocation and check that the marking criteria are still being applied consistently.

OCR support

To support you with internal moderation the following materials are available on the A level geography qualification page:

We have **candidate exemplars** available from past exam series, these include commentary from the Senior Moderator explaining why the candidates achieved particular levels and marks, they can be found in the assessment section of our website.

A free **on-line marking course** is available on OCR Train. This can be completed in your own time and includes a series of tasks designed to ensure that you are correctly allocating levels to pieces of work

Each year we run CPD sessions on **marking and internal moderation** of the NEA, which include candidate exemplars as well as advice and guidance. You can access the materials to our latest marking and moderation course on the professional development section of our website

Commentary on the individual sections of the report

1. Planning purpose and introduction

Perhaps because of restrictions imposed during the pandemic it seemed that many more centres had encouraged candidates to focus their investigations on the local environment and fewer reports seemed to be based on residential visits or group data. This allowed candidates to develop highly individualised investigations, and many showed real flair and creativity in developing their titles. Many candidates demonstrated a keen interest in the representation of places and spaces and created some unique and wonderful investigations. On the downside, some centres adopted a somewhat formulaic approach to local investigations: with every candidate developing a comparative study of inequality or regeneration in two locations. Please encourage candidates to pursue their own interests in the independent investigation.

Key point: Developing aims

For a significant number of candidates, the aims are too broad, are too ambitious and/or the geographical scale of study is too great. Teachers should be advised to spend more time questioning or challenging candidates on this issue when the proposal form is submitted. Titles such as 'To what extent is Brighton a globalised city?' or 'To what extent has the regeneration of London Docklands been successful?' are too broad, focus on a geographical scale that is too large and, ultimately, are unachievable. These titles would have been more appropriate if focused on a smaller geographical scale, for example, The Lanes within Brighton, or Limehouse Basin within London. However, even then, titles which aim to draw conclusions about the success of a regeneration project are always difficult to conclude unless baseline data is available, or the focus is on perception of success. Furthermore, it would be sensible to focus on a specified and manageable element of globalisation rather than the whole concept of 'globalisation' as implied by some titles.

The literature review was sometimes of exceptional quality and candidates should be commended for their wide reading and understanding of the issues and theories that underpin their investigations. However, for many candidates the literature review is treated as a stand-alone essay: they fail to demonstrate understanding of relevant theories or generalisations in later parts of their report – specifically in the analysis and conclusions.

Candidates generally struggle with a valid justification for either the overall aim or the research questions they have selected: both are needed in a high-quality report. Many candidates limit their justification to simple matters such as access or personal interest. What is required is a valid reason for this particular research. For example, in a coastal investigation the justification may be related to rising sea levels and the potential for accelerated coastal change at the location. Some candidates successfully justify their research through a brief evaluation of the literature: coming to the decision that limitations in theory mean there is a need for further research. This type of justification shows clear evidence of a highly individualised and valid literature review.

2. Data, information collection methods and sampling framework

Many of the best investigations used a pilot survey before data collection. The pilot can be used to refine methods and sampling procedures.

Candidates seemed to have really made the most of a wide range of apps and GIS techniques during data collection. What3words was also a popular tool. Digimaps had been used very effectively by others. It should be noted, however, that the use of GIS is not, in itself, a sampling framework.

Candidates generally used a range of data collection strategies, and many seemed to be appropriate. Some candidates used data collection strategies that appeared somewhat tangential to the aim of their investigation. This seems to be an issue created by the collection of group data on a residential trip, where students have limited time to collect data independently and then struggle to create an independent title that arises from the data – rather than starting with an investigation title and then choosing the most valid methods of data collection afterwards.

The majority of candidates used a table within Section 2 to describe their data collection methods. Tables are often descriptive rather than explanatory so the use of a table can limit the quality and depth of discussion. Extended writing for this section is preferable and allows for greater discussion and justification of the sampling framework, such as details of sampling frequency or size and location choice.

Key point: Sampling frameworks

For a huge number of candidates, the important element of a sampling framework was missing from the data collection section. In the future, consideration should be given to the design and justification of the data design framework, with detailed comments on such elements as sampling frequency or size and location choice.

Many candidates show only limited understanding of sampling frameworks. Often the sampling methodology was unclear or misunderstood. This was especially apparent when candidates selected stratified sampling, without identifying the subsets and how the sampling frequency, location or size may therefore be different according to the subsets. Many candidates do not locate their sample points, and this can easily be achieved with an annotated map. Where maps of the sample sites are provided there is usually no discussion about why these locations were selected or chosen. Such maps are often left in isolation with little further use or discussion throughout the analysis and conclusion.

Misconception

Stratified sampling is not the same as systematic sampling.

Random sampling is not the same as pragmatic (or convenience) sampling.

A lot of candidates chose to use a questionnaire in 2022. Whenever a questionnaire is used it would be sensible to provide an annotated copy of the questionnaire – the annotations can be used to justify the choice of questions.

Another very commonly used data collection method was an Environmental Quality Survey. The more sophisticated EQI (in which criteria are carefully quantified) was seen much less often. When used, an EQS needs careful discussion and justification: what was assessed and why? How did this help to answer the research question(s)?

AfL

Using a pilot survey is a good opportunity to consider the ethical and social political dimensions further.

OCR support

For more information about sampling please see our Student Infographic entitled 'Designing your methodology and data collection'

3. Data presentation techniques

Data presentation is still an area of strength within the NEA. Many candidates demonstrate the ability to present data in a variety of forms – from simple dot maps and bar graphs to complex maps with layered data or located proportional symbols. More candidates seemed to use GIS packages to present data in 2022 than in 2019. This is a shame, in the sense that some of the very best data presentations are still hand drawn.

Some forms of more sophisticated data presentation are vanishingly rare: these include field sketches, flow line maps (with proportional width arrows), isoline maps and choropleths constructed using primary data.

Where candidates use Excel or GIS to create a map or graph, they should remember to add a suitable axis label, title, key and/or scale.

It seems that GIS packages are frequently used to generate proportional circles. However, the technique does not often seem to be appropriate. Proportional circles are effective when displaying data that has a very great range. If the range is small, then the circles are all similar in size. Generally speaking, a significant number of candidates still need to consider whether the graph/map they are drawing is appropriate or the best method of visualising the data. Examples of line graphs that have been drawn to represent discrete data, for example, are still commonly seen as are pie charts with numerous sectors.

AfL

One way in which to increase the level of complexity or sophistication is for candidates to collect data that can be mapped. This means that candidates need to collect data spatially. Simple sampling frameworks mean simple data presentation. Spatial sampling frameworks can mean more sophisticated data presentation.

4. Data analysis and explanation

If Section 3 is an area of strength for many, then Section 4 is an area where most improvement could still be made. For too many candidates, analysis equates to lengthy descriptions. It is possible to read several NEAs, one after the other, that make no use at all of any methods of analysis.

In the best reports, analysis

- is concise
- focuses on answering the research questions – rather than describing individual graphs
- uses a range of quantitative and qualitative methods
- uses relevant theory from the literature review to interpret the findings.

This section seems to discriminate by centre as well as by candidate. In some centres, candidates seemed to be comfortable with numeracy, including the use of measures of central tendency and dispersion, and with the use of statistical tests – usually Spearman's Rank, Mann Whitney or Chi Squared. These candidates should be commended for using appropriate methods of analysis for the quantitative data in their reports. However, it would be nice to see a bigger range of methods of analysis: for example, Nearest Neighbour Analysis or Zingg Analysis, are useful and effective methods that are very seldom seen during moderation.

Key point: use methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis

In future exam series, candidates should be encouraged to provide evidence within the report of the whole process of conducting a statistical test: stating the hypothesis and null hypothesis, showing the working out, referring to critical values and explaining the significance of the result.

Candidates probably need greater confidence in their numeracy before they begin the NEA so that they know which methods are valid with which data. Examples were seen where there was insufficient data to conduct a test. Spearman's Rank needs at least ten pairs of data to make the test valid. Knowing this, a candidate can justify that they need at least 10 sample points on their transect when they are discussing the sampling framework.

Where statistical tests were used, evidential steps in the process were often missed by a significant number of candidates. For example, tests were started without stating a hypothesis or null hypothesis. Frequently, the result of a test was stated, without presenting the data or providing any evidence of calculation. Some candidates relegated their statistical tests to an appendix. Please encourage candidates to put this important evidence in the main body of the report.

One positive area was in the use of simple coding: it seems that the number of candidates using coding effectively has increased slightly since 2019. However, many candidates also seem to lack confidence when analysing qualitative data. It was noted that opportunities for qualitative analysis were sometimes missed, for example, many candidates include interesting photos on their reports. Specific elements of these photos could have been annotated to provide evidence of a valid method of analysis of qualitative evidence.

5. Conclusions and investigation evaluation

The conclusions and evaluation are an area where moderators see a wide range of styles of response. Many candidates successfully answer their initial research questions using evidence from primary and secondary data and, crucially, relate these findings back to the wider geographical theory that underpins their investigation. However, many more candidates find the conclusion a tricky area of the report. These conclusions often do little more than repeat key findings without demonstrating that the investigation has shed any light on wider geographical understanding.

Many candidates still present a conclusion to each sub-question without reaching a final overall conclusion.

The majority of candidates seem to reach very firm conclusions. If the validity of the data is considered properly one might expect to see more tentative conclusions.

Evaluations tended to focus on the issues with data collection and a greater concentration is required on the success of the whole investigation.

6. Overall quality and communication of written work.

The quality and communication of written work remains high. Most candidates stick to a recognised structure with suitable headings. This aids moderation and, indeed, where an unusual structure is occasionally adopted it can confuse the reader/moderator.

The majority of candidates should be commended for diligence in paginating their reports and adding suitable contents pages and figure numbers. A significant number of candidates also use a recognised method for referencing their literature sources.

The majority of reports are over-length. Please encourage candidates to plan the word count for each section as well as the content. Your candidates should be encouraged to write more concisely and edit the write-up of their investigation before submission so that they are more closely aligned to the recommended word length. Where candidates have submitted particularly lengthy reports, this should be acknowledged on the mark recording sheet.

Please encourage candidates to use formats that make the marking and moderation processes as smooth as possible. In particular, please ask candidates to use:

- A4 portrait pages. Larger pages or A4 landscape pages should only be used occasionally and for good reason, for example, to include a map.
- Text must be legible. Font size 11 would be helpful.

In addition, please make sure that candidates present their maps, graphs and other images in a format that is legible. A significant number of reports in 2022 included pages where an image, such as an excel graph, had been screen shot and incorporated into the text at a size that made it impossible to read the graph or the labels on the axes.

Misconception

Data collection tables do little to enhance the reports of many candidates in the upper and middle rank order of the cohort. It would be nice to see less candidates using methodology tables and more candidates using extended writing, with suitable sub-headings, to discuss and justify their sampling frameworks.

Common misconceptions

The use of sampling strategies is poorly understood. The issue seems to discriminate by centre.

Methodology tables are used by the majority of candidates, but they often lack the detailed discussion and justification that is required at this level.

Avoiding potential malpractice

The collaborative and independent phases of the investigation are clearly understood by the vast majority of centres and candidates. However, issues of similar titles, data presentation and data analysis are occasionally seen, and this seems most commonly to arise after residential fieldwork. To avoid this, residential trips would be best used for providing a fieldwork experience and teaching methods of data collection, sampling, data presentation and analysis (quantitative and qualitative). Independent investigations are best developed independently of residential fieldwork – usually in a location close to the candidate's centre.

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