

Examiners' report

GCSE

GEOGRAPHY A

(GEOGRAPHICAL THEMES)

OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in
Geography A (Geographical Themes)

J383

For first teaching in 2016

J383/03 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 3 series overview

This paper is the last in the series of three that candidates will have taken and is focused on their geographical and fieldwork skills. Candidates are supplied with a resource booklet in the examination and have to use it to complete a series of questions. They are assessed on their own understanding (AO2) and are required to apply their knowledge and understanding (AO3) to answer the questions throughout the exam paper. As this is a geographical skills examination, candidates are assessed on a range of geographical skills (AO4) including mathematical and statistical skills.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• attempted all the questions • showed their working • used the figures to support their responses • drew on their own fieldwork experiences.	• did not attempt all questions • did not show their working • did not use the figures and resources • did not have a clear understanding of their own fieldwork.

Section A overview

This section contains three questions which require in depth use of the figures. Candidates need to be clear about when they are required to use specific information from the resource, or when they should refer to it in more general terms. The shorter questions are complemented by longer, Level-based questions which enabled candidates to develop their responses. Candidates should use the space provided in the answer booklet to the fullest extent and use this as a guide for how much they should be writing.

Question 1 (a) (i)

Geographical Skills

1

(a) Look at **Fig. 1** in the Resource Booklet.

(i) Identify **two** renewable sources of energy which have seen global growth in **Fig. 1**.

- A HEP and solar power
- B HEP and wind power
- C Solar and gas
- D Solar and wind power

Write the correct letter in the box.

[1]

The correct answer is **A**: HEP and solar power.

Question 1 (a) (ii)

(ii) Which source of renewable energy saw record growth in China?

..... [1]

Most candidates were able to identify that [offshore] wind energy saw record growth.

Question 1 (a) (iii)

(iii) Using **Fig. 1**, identify **two** benefits of the increased capacity in renewable energy.

- 1
- 2

[2]

Many candidates were awarded full marks, although there were some candidates who skimmed the figure and did not read the whole extract. Instead, they read to the end of the first line in the fourth paragraph and responded 'almost entirely replace electricity generation', ignoring the final part of the extract about Russian gas.

Question 1 (b) (i)

(b) Look at **Fig. 2** in the Resource Booklet.

(i) Which graphical technique is being used to display this information?

- A Dispersion graph
- B Histogram
- C Line graph
- D Vertical Bar graph

Write the correct letter in the box.

[1]

The correct response was **C**: Line graph.

Misconception



Some candidates did not get this correct which implies that they were unable to distinguish between the type of graph. Understanding the range of graphs they could use is a key skill for candidates to practice.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should practice drawing and interpreting a range of graphs and diagrams. There is a list in the [specification](#) of all the cartographic and graphical skills that questions could be based on.

Question 1 (b) (ii)

(ii) Describe the **changes** in renewable energy generation between 2020 and 2022.

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.....

..... [4]

This question was generally answered well, with many candidates starting with the overall increase then talking about individual sources. Quite a few candidates picked up on the change in the rate of increase overall. Some candidates did not score highly because their responses were not focused on the changes – rather, they were talking about the source of the energy which was not creditworthy. Many used data which wasn't a requirement of the question.

Question 1 (b) (iii)

(iii) Suggest **one** reason for the pattern of change in renewable energy generation in **Fig. 2**.

.....

..... [1]

Most candidates were able to give a reason for the change in renewable energy, such as a lack of wind energy or an increase in the availability of renewable generation.

Question 1 (c) (i)

(c) The table below shows trends in UK trade in non-renewable energy during 2022.

	Imports %	Exports %
Coal	+33	-56
Crude Oil	+63	-6
Gas	+11	+145
Petroleum	+9	+34

(i) Calculate the **mean** percentage change in imports.

You **must** show your working.

..... % **[2]**

Most candidates were able to identify that they needed to add up the imports column and divide by 4 to get an answer of 29%.

Question 1 (c) (ii)

(ii) Calculate the **difference** in the percentage change of coal and gas exports.

You **must** show your working.

..... % [2]

While some candidates did answer this correctly, there were many who did not realise that the subtraction of negative numbers create a positive answer.

Assessment for learning



Candidates are required to show their working and there is a mark available for this. Candidates who just wrote the answer were not able to access this mark. It also allows candidates who have the correct working but an incorrect answer to be awarded a mark.

Question 1 (d)*

“To reduce our reliance on imports we must fully use our North Sea gas supplies.”

(d)* To what extent do you **agree** that reducing UK energy imports is **more** important than moving away from non-renewable energy?

Use **any resource from Question 1** and your own understanding to answer.

.....

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.....

..... **[8]**

Candidates found this to be a challenging question; therefore, it was approached in different ways. The mark scheme was opened up to allow candidates to be credited for the variety of responses with reasonable and plausible development that were seen. This was a synoptic question, which means candidates needed to draw relevant information from at least two topics.

Most candidates approached this question from the position that there was a compromise to be made; namely that the UK could focus on being energy secure by increasing the use of domestic gas or moving away from non-renewable energy by focusing on renewables, with an implication on combatting climate change.

Candidates were asked to refer to the resources and their own knowledge, drawing on a range of information to present a coherent argument. The best responses took a discursive approach, evaluating each option and why they would or wouldn't be best to pursue. Some candidates were able to draw on previous data, e.g. when talking about the need to pursue renewable energy. Level 2 responses recognised the difficulties of relying on other countries as well as the impact on climate change if we continue with non-renewable energy. Many also referred to the Russia-Ukraine war in their responses and thought carefully about the impact of this in relation to dependency on importing energy.

Exemplar 1

I believe that reducing the use of non renewables is much more important. Fossil fuels such as ~~coal~~ gas, coal and oil when burnt to produce energy produce greenhouse gases such as CO_2 , methane and nitrogen which significantly contribute to climate change and the earth's changing characteristics e.g. rising sea levels and increased extreme weather events. If the UK invested in the infrastructure to support renewables it would mean the UK can rely on them to supply the energy. As now we rely on fossil fuels as the reliable. If the number of wind farms increased and the government introduced more grants for people installing solar panels the reliability would increase if the use more of the infrastructure in place. This means we wouldn't have to rely on other countries or fossil fuels and the amount of ~~any~~ greenhouse gases produced would decrease helping to meet the net zero target. As the renewable energy capacity in Europe could almost entirely replace electricity generation powered by Russian gas it would benefit the environment and countries as well giving them independence instead of relying on other countries. [8]

This is a very detailed response which makes synoptic links to the impact of burning fossil fuels on carbon emissions and global warming impacts. The candidate has well-developed ideas on why there is a need to rely less on energy imports. With thorough evaluation throughout and logical reasoning, it was awarded full marks.

Question 2 (a)

2 Look at **Fig. 3** in the Resource Booklet.

(a) Which of the countries has the **highest** child mortality?

- A Mali
- B Niger
- C Pakistan
- D Solomon Islands

Write the correct letter in the box.

[1]

The correct answer was **A**: Mali. Candidates generally answered this well. Some candidates got confused between highest child mortality and highest annual rate of natural population increase, or the biggest sized dot.

Erratum notice

Turn to **page 4** of the **Resource Booklet** and look at **Fig.3 Relationship between child mortality and natural population increase**.

At the **bottom** of the page, cross out **South America** in the key.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Using the trends from the graph in **Fig. 3**, what would be the **most** likely child mortality for a country with a natural increase of 4%?

- A 1%
- B 3%
- C 5%
- D 12%

Write the correct letter in the box.

[1]

The correct answer was **D**: 12%. There were many incorrect answers, with **A** being the most common, possibly showing that candidates mixed up the axes.

Question 2 (c)

Fig. 3 uses proportional symbols to display some of its information.

(c) Using data from the graph, explain what the proportional symbols show.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Most candidates recognised that population was shown by the size of the circle, but very few extracted data from the figure for the second mark.

Question 2 (d)

Look at **Fig. 3** in the Resource Booklet.

(d) Describe the relationship between natural population increase and child mortality.

Use information from **Fig. 3** in your answer.

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.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [4]

Many candidates identified the relationship correctly. Some then repeated the same point in reverse, giving the opposite. This was not creditworthy. The most successful responses used countries and their data to articulate the trend. The most common misconception was mainly around candidates stating that as infant mortality increases, there is a natural decrease.

Question 2 (e)

(e) Suggest **one** reason for the relationship shown in **Fig. 3**.

Explain your answer.

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.....

.....

..... [3]

Many candidates found it hard to explain the reason for a link between high child mortality and population growth. Candidates were able to explain the reason for just one of the variables. Many reasoned that lack of development would lead to poor healthcare. More successful responses gained the second development mark for ideas such as 'children are more vulnerable to diseases'.

Question 3 (a)

3 Look at **Fig. 4** in the Resource Booklet.

Fig. 4 uses choropleth shading to represent patterns of world population growth.

(a) State **one** reason why a choropleth map like **Fig. 4** can be inaccurate.

.....

..... [1]

It was pleasing to see many candidates answer that the map does not show variations in the country. Many candidates said that the colours on the map were inaccurate, which was not creditworthy.

Question 3 (b)

- (b) Using information from **Fig. 4**, state whether country **A** or **B** is more likely to be a Lower Income Developing Country (LIDC).

Justify your choice.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Most candidates correctly identified country B and gave at least one reason.

Assessment for learning



Centres are reminded that the form of how the response should be written is often stipulated in the question.

In this case, the candidates are asked to state whether country **A** or **B** is likely to be the LIDC. This then leaves two marks for them to justify their choice. Only giving one piece of justification would therefore get 1 mark, so candidates can infer they need to have two developed points.

Question 3 (c)

(c) Describe the pattern of world population growth seen in **Fig. 4**.

Use data in your answer.

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..... [4]

Many candidates answered this question well. More successful candidates looked for general patterns, e.g. highest in Africa, declining in Eastern Europe. Many were able to use data. However, some candidates just listed data, e.g. Europe is mostly...%, Asia is mostly...% which only gave them the development (DEV) mark for using data.

Exemplar 2

Countries in Africa tend to see the highest growth in population, whereas countries in east of Europe tend to see the lowest. According to the data, ^{all} countries in Africa have a population growth ranging from 1% to 4%, whereas eastern Europe has a population growth consistently at -2%. The global average appears to be about 0 to 1%, but there ^{could be} an outlier as Greenland 'no data' is shown for Greenland.

This exemplar contains two aspects of the patterns: countries in Africa have the highest growth and countries in Eastern Europe have the lowest growth. The data mark is for 1% to 4% (range in Africa). The response is communicated in an appropriate and logical order with two ideas about the pattern, so the communication mark was given.

Question 3 (d)

Look at the extract below.

Cities must prepare for climate migration

As climate change impacts the world, migration will increase. Urbanisation is a key impact of climate change, as people seek both work and safety in cities.

Rapid growth, poor infrastructure, limited vegetation, and high numbers of people make cities vulnerable to climate change hazards. Low-income populations are particularly at risk as they often live in high-risk areas and have limited means to recover. In many of the most affected regions, cities lack adequate housing, infrastructure, education, food, water, and health facilities to adapt to rapid population growth.

- (d) Assess whether climate migration will have a **greater** impact on the growth and character of LIDC/EDC cities or on cities in the UK.

Use the extract and your own understanding.

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.....

..... [6]

It was common to see candidates referring to both AC/LIDC cities as the cities that climate change migration will have a bigger impact on – both of these approaches were acceptable. Some candidates misunderstood the question and instead focused on the climate change impact on the area, e.g. greater in LIDCs as they rely on farming – they missed the focus on migration and the impact on cities. The most successful responses talked about the rapid growth and inability to provide and thus growth of informal settlements where disease could spread, for example. Many focused on the negatives, so it was pleasing to see at times positive impacts considered.

Section B overview

The second part of the examination was focused on fieldwork and required candidates to use their skills as well as experiences to answer the questions. There is one section on human geography fieldwork questions and one on physical geography fieldwork questions. There were still mistakes made where candidates wrote about the wrong type of fieldwork; centres must make sure that candidates understand the differences.

A few candidates had clearly not been on fieldwork. The specification says 'Centres must provide fieldwork opportunities for their candidates. This does not go so far as to oblige centres to make sure that all of their candidates take part in the fieldwork.' There is always a risk that an individual candidate may miss the arranged fieldwork, for example because of illness. Candidates who do not take up the opportunity may be disadvantaged, as there will be questions on fieldwork in the exam. Therefore, should a centre have candidates who have been unable to participate in the offered fieldwork for any reason, there should be a concerted effort to make sure that those candidates still understand the processes and can potentially access the examination questions.

Question 4 (a)

Geographical Fieldwork

- 4 Some Geography students have been conducting **human geography** fieldwork in London. They were investigating the impact of urban redevelopment.

Look at **Fig. 5a** in the Resource Booklet.

- (a) Suggest **one** way that the data collected might be improved.

..... [1]

Quite a few candidates got this wrong and did not come up with a point that linked to the data collection that occurred, e.g. many wrote 'to ask more questions'.

Question 4 (b)

Look at **Fig. 5b** in the Resource Booklet.

(b) Select an **alternative** way that this data might be presented.

Justify your choice.

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.....

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.....

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..... [3]

Almost all candidates were awarded full marks, saying bar chart and listing two reasons which were primarily clear to read and easy to understand. It was rare for candidates to get this wrong and name anything other than a bar chart.

Question 4 (c)

Look at **Fig. 6** in the Resource Booklet.

(c) Identify **two** features in the photograph that show the site's environmental quality.

1

2 [2]

Most candidates referred to the amount of greenery. A common error was stating the area was clean, which wasn't given credit unless they referred to the lack of litter. Candidates should be careful not to repeat the same idea, e.g. plants and then trees.

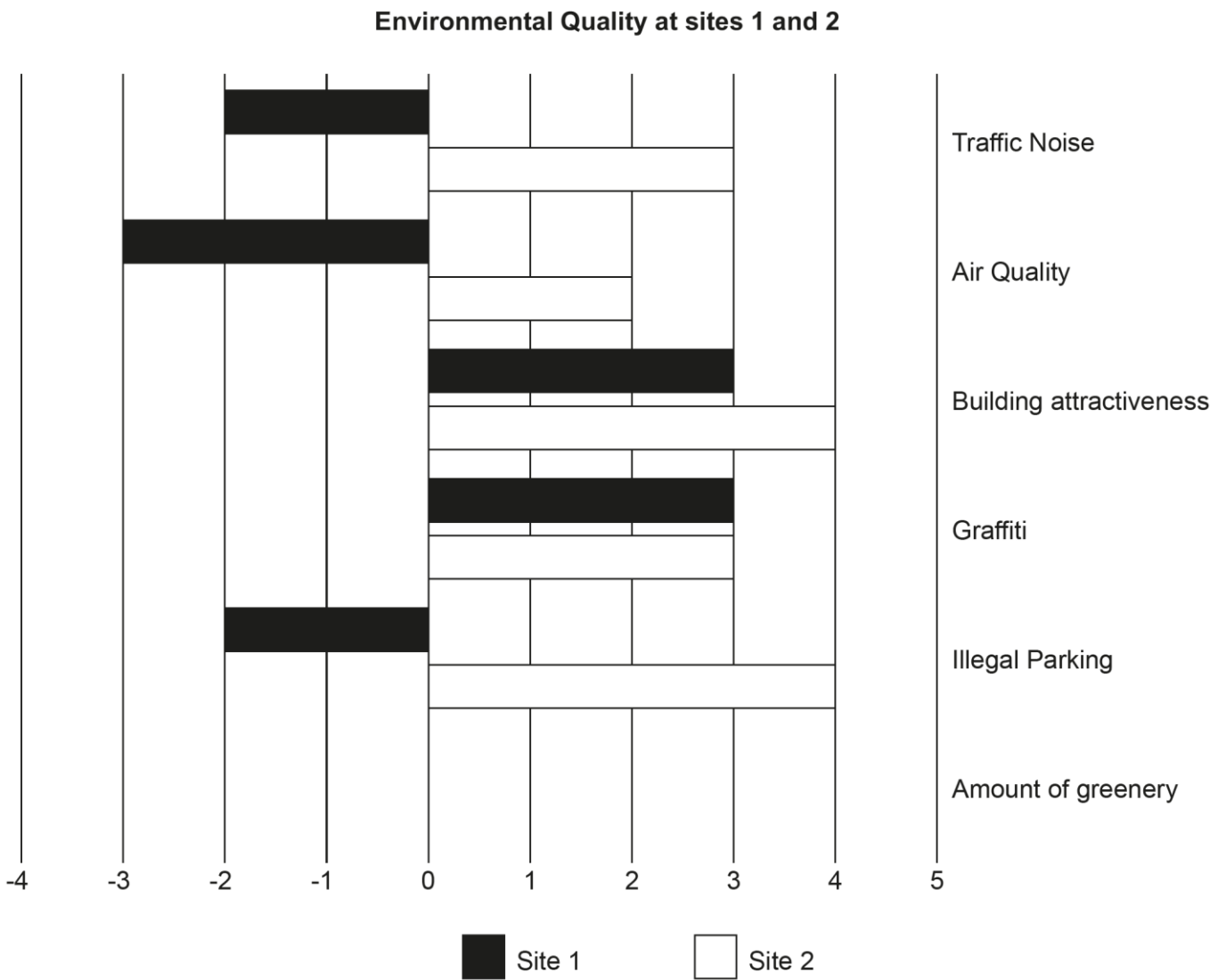
Question 4 (d) (i)

(d) The students completed environmental surveys at two sites.

Environmental Quality	Site 1	Site 2
Traffic Noise	−2	3
Air Quality	−3	2
Building attractiveness	3	4
Graffiti	3	3
Illegal Parking	−2	4
Amount of greenery	−1	3

−5 most negative score
+5 most positive score

The results of the environmental surveys are shown in the graph below.



(i) **Complete** the Environmental Quality graph above to show the Amount of Greenery at sites 1 and 2. [2]

Almost all candidates who attempted this question were awarded full marks. It is important to remember that shading is necessary to identify the two sites. However, some candidates did not attempt this question, likely because they missed the instruction and did not realise there was a task to complete.

Question 4 (d) (ii)

(ii) State whether **Fig. 6** is a photograph of site 1 or 2.

Justify your choice.

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.....

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..... [2]

Many candidates were able to recognise that it was site 2, but not all gave justifiable reasons why. The most successful responses referred to the high amounts of greenery, which would cause the score of 3 and couldn't be -1.

Question 4 (e)

(e) Using evidence from **all** the fieldwork data provided, examine whether urban redevelopment has had a **positive** impact on the area studied.

.....

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..... [6]

Some candidates compared the two sites, whereas the most successful responses looked at all the data and explained how the improvements to various aspects of the environment were positive. Many candidates just wrote a list of what was good about the place such as good greenery or no traffic. The best responses developed their ideas to consider why this would be beneficial for the local area and people.

Question 5 (a)

- 5 You will have taken part in fieldwork in a **physical geography** environment. Examples might include a river or coastal study.

State your fieldwork question for investigation:

.....
.....

Location of study area:

- (a) Evaluate **two** fieldwork techniques used in your investigation.

Fieldwork technique 1

Fieldwork technique 2

.....
.....
.....
.....
..... [6]

Almost all candidates were able to talk about their fieldwork techniques – many did longshore drift/river studies. Most were able to consider issues with their methods which meant they were unreliable. However, many candidates simply described the methods rather than evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

Question 5 (b)*

(b)* Assess the strength of the conclusions reached in your investigation.

.....

.....

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.....

.....

..... **[8]**

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology **[3]**

This was a challenging question for many candidates – some did not refer to their conclusions which resulted in 0 or very few marks. It was clear that many candidates may never have actually written up an evaluation of fieldwork conclusions or had done so long ago and not revisited it.

Many candidates spent their time rehashing the evaluation of methods, rather than looking at how their results, in light of their methods, may have influenced their conclusions and whether their conclusions were valid or not.

Some candidates were able to get to Level 2, 3 marks, with reference to a conclusion and some acknowledgement of why their data collection wasn't ideal and thus their conclusions were not strong. Even with the more successful responses, there was often a lot of unnecessary information.

Exemplar 3

Our hypothesis ended up being true and there was a lot of issues such as the fact that the river was too long to sample the entire river but we still made a valid conclusion.

Firstly, we ~~saw that~~ didn't take readings over multiple days, which meant that our data didn't give an average representation of the river characteristics on a typical day. The day that we sampled data may have been different to a typical day. Secondly, we didn't sample the entire river basin, ~~mean~~ we only did the upper course. This meant that we couldn't see how river characteristics differed in the lower course which also meant that we didn't assess the river on a large scale. Lastly, ~~the~~ the weather was quite bad while we sampled data which forms slight inaccuracies for example, when we measured width, ~~the~~ the measuring tape was shifting.

However, when we plotted the graphs, it helped us ~~And~~ see a reasonable [8]

This candidate had an evaluation of the strength of the conclusion in paragraph one. They developed their idea about not sampling the entire river basin which affected the accuracy of their results. There is reasonable analysis and consideration to achieve Level 2, 5 marks. In order for this response to reach Level 3, the candidate would have had to develop their evaluation further, perhaps by discussing another element of their investigation.

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