



AS

# Geography

7036/2 Human geography and the geography fieldwork investigation

Report on the Examination

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## Synopsis and general points

- The number of students sitting this paper in May 2024 was 770, around 100 fewer than the summer 2023 entry, and nearly 40 percent lower than the entry in 2019.
- The structure and content of the paper was similar to the 2023 paper. Again, a wide range of performance was seen but, overall, performance on the paper improved slightly since 2023. Students seemed to find some equivalent questions more accessible and, as a result, the overall mean score for the component increased by around 3%.
- Students had evidently been prepared well for the examination. Students used their time effectively and there were very few who failed to complete the paper due to time constraints. Scripts with rubric errors or with large sections of questions that were not attempted, were also rare.
- Students' ability to tackle the AO1 and AO2 based questions in section A continued to be good. There was, however, some evidence that the application of their knowledge and understanding to the question (AO2) is becoming more implicit and often was only more clearly expressed in their introduction and conclusion.
- Compared to previous years, the distribution of marks was relatively evenly spread between section A and section B and across the paper as a whole. The mean percentage mark in section A was around 56% and in section B was just below 52%.
- All individual items proved to be generally accessible to most students, with all achieving a mean mark of at least 44% of the maximum available. The only exceptions to this, that seemed to prove more challenging for students, were the equivalent option questions Q3.1 and Q4.1, which had lower mean marks of around 34% and 32% respectively.
- The relative improvement in performance in section B, compared to previous years, suggests that students are becoming more acquainted with a range of geographical and fieldwork skills. There was some clear evidence of their participation in formal and well-structured fieldwork investigations, undertaken as part of their learning. Responses to questions about their own fieldwork were generally clear, though not always detailed. Students also demonstrated their ability to apply some of their understanding of fieldwork to other questions in section B.

## Section A

Throughout the Changing Places questions, students generally demonstrated a sound theoretical understanding of the topic and applied a wide range of terminology appropriately in most cases. Students seemed to be able to relate to the concepts involved in the topic quite confidently. They were equally able to apply these to their knowledge and understanding of both local and distant places that they had studied. The only moderate criticism is that in some cases the approach used in responses relied a little too much on theory, especially on Q1.5. On some occasions, it seemed that there was an attempt to get the question to fit the underpinning theory rather than vice versa. However, the practical application of concepts to distant places for their responses to Q1.6 was usually more focused. Overall, students coped

reasonably well with the questions in section A, performing especially well on questions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and Q1.6, the 20-mark essay, though for Q1.5 it was slightly more difficult to attain higher marks.

### Question 1 – Changing Places

**1.1 & 1.2** – Responses to the multiple-choice questions provided an encouraging start as around 99% and 93% of correct answers were given for Q1.1 and Q1.2, respectively.

**1.3** – The majority of students also tackled this question successfully with over 60% gaining at least 2 of the 3 marks available. The mark scheme was broadened to include a range of valid suggestions of why place is important in the human experience. Most responses were based on a theoretical understanding of ‘place’ as a concept. They tended to focus on the psycho-geographical elements provided by place such as memories, sense of belonging or identity, emotional attachment, positive or negative feelings, etc. These responses were perfectly valid, creditworthy and were generally applied well to answer the question. Students were also rewarded for developing points for clarification, or by providing specific examples as support.

**1.4** – Students seemed to find the analysis question slightly more challenging than its equivalent on last year’s paper. Compound bar charts of population composition again provided the data to be analysed, but this was made slightly more complex by the presentation of two sets of bar charts. Students seemed less comfortable with multiple sets of data, and this possibly made them less confident about where to focus their analysis. A few approaches were feasible. The main options were to either contrast the rural and urban data in the two sets or to identify change in the composition of populations between the two years presented (or a combination of both). Given that there were only two years of data presented, it was difficult to identify ‘trends’ over time, though it was perfectly reasonable to link the two data sets and/or to pick out anomalies. Ideally, the analysis should have consisted of qualitative statements highlighting the contrasts or changes as suggested above, supported by quantitative data from the compound bar chart. Expression of qualitative analytical statements were not always clear. For example, not being specific about the year or the location (rural or urban) that was being alluded to; or stating ‘increases’ or ‘decreases’ between rural and urban when these were contrasts rather than temporal changes. On a positive note, drifts into explanation were minimal and the compound nature of the graphs was clearly understood by students. However, the scale used on the graph paper to represent percentages made data interpretation more challenging. Some tolerance was allowed for reasonable estimates, but the interpretation and use of percentage data when analysing composition, often lacked accuracy. Nevertheless, the overall mean mark on the question was 3.42 (out of 6) but just under 50% of students achieved level 2 credit.

**1.5** – This question was the one that students did least well with in section A, with a mean mark of 4.3 out of 9 marks available; only 8% attained a level 3 mark. The stem statement seemed to be clearly understood by most students. It was thought that it would prompt discussion about the success or otherwise of the ‘rebranding’ of places. Although this approach was adopted by some students, they were in the minority. Instead, many attempted a more theoretical approach in their responses, focusing largely on demonstrating their understanding of the meaning of media places. There was less emphasis on ‘place-meaning’ in many responses and the recognition of external agencies and their role was not always made clear. There was considerable crossover with the idea of media companies being the external agencies, which was an acceptable approach though this tended to steer responses away from the main evaluation being sought. Nonetheless, many clear theoretical arguments and discussions were

presented and although level 3 responses were rarely seen, 72% of students achieved level 2 credit. The better responses were clearly those using one or more examples to support their arguments but, as this was optional, it was difficult for those providing only theoretical arguments to gather sufficient substance or detail for the higher marks. A substantial proportion of students opted not to use examples to support their answer.

**1.6** – This question was, in the main, well handled by most students. Sixty-one percent attained at least level 3 credit and over 10% reached level 4 outcomes (while less than 7% were Level 1). The question gave the opportunity for many students to adapt their knowledge and understanding of the temporal changes occurring in a place they had studied. In that sense, it was a relatively ‘open’ and mainstream ‘changing places’ question that linked processes triggering change in a place, to the various outcomes in terms of social and economic characteristics. Students generally used their place knowledge well and supplied narratives that clearly identified a range of development processes such as industrialisation, migration, globalisation, re-generation and others. Many interesting narratives about past and present processes of development were presented and, in most cases, these were applied well to the distant place studied. Sometimes there was more emphasis on past rather than present (or more recent) processes or vice versa, so many responses lacked balance on this perspective, but this was less of an issue. The processes of development element in the statement that prompted change was usually covered quite well, with at least one or more process being clearly identified. However, it was the resulting social and economic character of a place that often lacked some development, support or clarity in many answers that were given. For this question, as suggested in the synopsis above, the assessment element (AO2) of responses and application of knowledge and understanding to the question was often implicit throughout the essay, rather than more clearly expressed. The implicit nature of some responses was nonetheless still effective and creditworthy in stronger, more sophisticated responses which integrated their application (AO2) alongside their AO1 content and provided substantial development, elaboration or support. However, in weaker responses, the application element did not always come across as clearly, if implied, and some students relied heavily on only basic evaluative statements in their introduction and in brief, limited conclusions to gain their AO2 credit for this question.

It should also be noted that, as on last year’s paper, a noticeable minority of students used more than one ‘distant place’ in their response, which went against the rubric of the question. In these cases, as usual, the whole response was considered but only one place (that was better used to address the question) and any general points were credited. Students should be made aware of this when seeing questions that clearly ask for only one place to be included in their answer.

## Section B

### Question 2 – Geographical fieldwork skills

**2.1** – This question seemed accessible to the majority of students, who were able to identify an appropriate ethical issue relating to collecting data from an interview. Over 50% of students attained the development mark for clarifying why the issue they had identified for the first mark was an ethical issue. Nearly 90% of students managed to secure at least one mark from the two available for this question.

**2.2 and 2.3** – Responses to both questions using the Figure 2 transcript proved to be slightly more challenging for students. While they understood the context of the transcript clearly and the fieldwork that might emanate from this more generally, responses seen were often either not specific enough or not fully developed. The overall mean mark for Q2.2 was less than 1 mark of the two available and only

around 28% of students attained both marks. Students fared slightly better on Q2.3 with around 80% gaining at least 2 marks but only 5% attained full credit.

**Q2.2** – The map type being sought needed to be specifically identified and also related to use in the preparation stage of a geographical enquiry of the area in the caption. This was missed by many students and responses were often quite generic. Credit was given for identifying an appropriate map type that might be used to support a geographical investigation more generally. A development mark was awarded for suggesting a valid way that the named map might be used.

**Q2.3** – The ‘aim’ part of this question was generally quite well answered for one mark. Most students demonstrated their ability to phrase an enquiry aim, either in the form of a statement or a question. (Hypothesis statements were not accepted as they are distinctly different from a general aim.) The three marks available for outlining a primary data collection method proved more challenging. Although many students collected one mark for suggesting that a questionnaire or interviewing people would be used, the idea was rarely developed to gain more credit. For example, further credit was available for suggesting a sampling strategy or for outlining the specific nature or content of the questionnaire.

### **Questions 2.4 and 2.5 – Students’ own Fieldwork**

In general there appeared to be an improved understanding of the structure of their own fieldwork among students, compared to relatively recent years. There was a more obvious grasp of the different elements that make up a geographical investigation and how they are linked.

**2.4** – Questions concerning secondary data often seem to be more challenging for students, as their main memories of fieldwork enquiries are based on their collection of primary data. The mean mark for responses to this question was just less than 4 out of the 9 marks available; although nearly 65% of students attained a level 2 mark or above and there were many clear answers provided. Better responses to this question were clearly able to identify secondary data sources that were linked to the stated aim. Credit was awarded according to how clear, or detailed, the assessment of the usefulness of these secondary data sources was to the investigation. Students were usually able to identify at least one or a few relevant secondary data sources. Often however, the evaluation of their usefulness could be quite basic, such as ‘census data providing general background information’ or similar. Stronger responses were often those able to refer to the complementary role that secondary data played in combination with their primary data and evaluation of the relative usefulness of each. This was also an opportunity to include their primary data in the responses of those students who were less confident about the value of their secondary data, providing there was some mention and underlying evaluation of secondary data. Only around 8% of students attained a level 3 mark on this question and their detail usually included a relative evaluation against the usefulness of primary data collection.

**2.5** – A similar level of student performance to question 2.4 was observed on this question. The overall mean mark was just under 3 out of the 6 marks available and only around 36% achieved level 2 credit. There appeared to be some understanding of the data presentation and analysis strands in a fieldwork investigation and the link between the two. (Though there was still a noticeable minority of students who referred primarily to either data collection or to data analysis methods only, in their responses, for which it was difficult to give credit). However, while some specific responses were seen, there were many of a more generic nature. These responses usually identified various presentation methods that were used but students were less able to assess why they were useful in the data analysis stage. For example, for many graphical methods, students referred only to the clear, visual representation of data that these

provided, without going into more depth of how they were used for analysis and therefore to assess their overall usefulness or otherwise. It was perfectly valid to argue that some presentation methods were of little use for analysis, providing the link was made.

### **Questions 3 and 4 – Unfamiliar fieldwork investigation optional questions**

Of the unfamiliar fieldwork options, Q3 remains by far the most popular option chosen by a ratio of more than 5 to 1. As the corresponding questions in each option are identical, it may be that many students opt for the first one presented to save reading time, recognising that the fieldwork investigation content is of less importance. This also suggests that only those with a definite preference for physical geography topics opt for question 4. The comparability of the two options is reinforced by the statistics which show that student performance was almost identical on each corresponding item in each question, except for a slight difference between Q3.2 and Q4.2.

Questions 3.1/4.1; 3.2/4.2 and 3.3/4.3 on this year's paper were all numerical in nature and asked students to construct and manipulate the data available for analysis in each investigation. Students were not fazed by the calculations required and seemed to find these questions more accessible than corresponding items in previous years. However, despite students' improved ability to grasp and link the different elements of an investigation in their own fieldwork, this was less evident when applied to the unfamiliar fieldwork context. Consequently, most students found Q3.4/Q4.4 more challenging, so performance on these items was weaker as a more holistic approach that linked the data was needed.

**3.1/4.1** – The calculation of the median value presented little difficulty for most students, with around 70% gaining both marks available. Erroneous responses were caused by incorrectly calculating the mean rather than the median value, using the wrong town or by selecting one of the two middle values of ranked order, rather than dividing them by two. Students were awarded one method mark for ranking the data and correctly identifying the sixth and seventh values.

**3.2/4.2** – Plotting points on the dispersion graph proved even more accessible for students. However, interestingly the fewer students selecting Q4.2 performed significantly better with 96% gaining both marks compared to 86% on Q3.2. This may be a reflection that 'physical geographers' feel more adept with graphical based tasks. ,

**3.3/4.3** – The calculations required to complete the table presented in Figure 6 and ultimately to find the standard deviation value, were generally completed successfully. Nearly 60% of students (on both options) gained full marks and the overall mean mark was over 3 out of the 4 marks available. The errors leading to dropped marks were usually made in the second part of the calculation and related to the substitution of incorrect values into the standard deviation formula.

**3.4/4.4** – Despite the mostly successful attempts to complete the mathematical tasks on the previous three items, this question proved to be much more challenging for students. Very few students attained a level 3 mark and only 40% gained at least level 2 credit on both options. Students were required to provide an evaluation of the data presented and statistical evidence calculated in the preceding figures. Ideally, their evaluation should have been integrated and linked to the investigation as a whole, including the hypothesis set out in Figures 3/7. Many students' answers were either piecemeal (looking at the statistics in each figure individually) or more generic in their approach, and often not linking their response to the investigation. In order to reward clear evaluative approaches, credit was given for any valid evaluation of the statistics in each of the figures. However, there was often either an underlying uncertainty or erroneous interpretation of the significance of the data presented. In particular, there was

a lack of understanding of the purpose of the standard deviation value. Those responses rewarded with higher marks were those that clearly evaluated at least one part of the data sets, and that went on to make clear links to the investigation's hypothesis that was to be proven, or otherwise.

### Key suggestions for improvements in Paper 2

In section A:

- In pure 'analysis' questions, where a range of data is provided, focus on key features of the data, whether this be changes or trends over time, or contrasts between places (or times) and always look for anomalies. Express qualitative statements of analysis clearly as well as providing accurate quantitative data manipulation to support these statements.
- Practise making valid links between different sub-topics within Changing Places and applying these to both local and distant places studied.
- Though there is evidence that this is already happening, increasingly integrate learning of theoretical concepts relating to place, as part of understanding the past and present characteristics of local and distant places studied.
- Read question instructions carefully. In particular, if asked to use an example of **a place**, then focus on using only **one place** in the response given.
- When applying knowledge and understanding to extended questions, express the application elements as explicitly as possible by relating points or supporting evidence back to the question.

In section B:

- Practise all geographical skills in the skills checklist thoroughly, preferably as part of a fieldwork investigation, but otherwise as an integral part of the learning of other topics.
- Be conscious of the sequence of individual strands that are involved in a fieldwork investigation, from planning and preparation through to conclusion and evaluation. At the same time, consider the links between the different strands and see the investigation from a holistic perspective based on its aim and/or hypothesis.
- Make detailed notes during fieldwork investigations and revise these just as thoroughly as a more theoretical topic. Especially consider more critical evaluation by recognising good practice and by suggesting where improvements could increase the reliability of results in meeting an aim.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.