

AQA GCSE 2023 – Reflections from examiner webinar and report for Paper 3

This summary has been compiled by the HIAS geography advisor reflecting on guidance from the report on the exam series and the 09.01.24 webinar presented by Keith Bartlett

Most common areas to improve:

- Not addressing the command word
- Copying rather than using figures to support answers.
- Not attempting basic skills questions
- Not writing titles for fieldwork investigations
- Not responding to the aim in fieldwork questions (such as writing about data collection analysis instead of presentation)
- There were 2 key issues with the extended writing 6 and 9 markers:
 - many students wrote lots, but their explanations were weak as their writing was descriptive.
 - Or students wrote very little and didn't move to expand their answer.

Issues Evaluation Section A

- Question 2.1 – 23% of students did not attempt the pie chart completion task. In 2024 all data will be placed before the graphs as AQA recognise that some students may miss these completion tasks.

Unfamiliar Fieldwork Section B

- Question 4.4 which required students to complete the isoline map was a mystifying form of data presentation. 75% either got it incorrect or didn't attempt.
- Question 4.5 which asked to select from a choice of 4 answers a more appropriate presentation method to the isoline saw only 14% successful answers as it was either left blank or answered incorrectly.
- In general, the term pattern seemed confusing to a significant number of students.

Familiar Fieldwork Section B

- A significant number did not identify their fieldwork titles.
- Question 5.1 – more students suggested a number of reasons why the location was suitable rather than developing just one as the question asked.
- Q 5.2 - the command 'justify' was not understood by some students
- Q 5.3 – 32% scored zero marks to this 6-mark question as they wrote about data collection not as the question asked presentation
- 5.4 – overall seen as challenging by a significant proportion of students

Guidance strategies in general for preparing students for 2024:

- Ensure all teachers and students are aware of the synopticity of this paper and that both human and physical links are explored especially in the issues evaluation.
- Complete the graph activities – encourage students to cross through the question number boxes either once they have completed their answer or if they have time at the end of the exam when reviewing their answers.
- 6 SPaG marks on this paper is significant and students need to be encouraged to complete questions 3.0 and 5.4. Even if students miss the command of the two 9-mark questions and write descriptively instead of evaluatively they are still using geographical terms about the issue evaluation and/or their fieldwork and can gain these SPaG marks
- Review the skills list from the spec ([see here](#)) and look over your KS3 curriculum. Are there opportunities for students to explore these skills in Years 7-9? Is there some progression in skills over KS3 to provide the foundations for KS4? Complete a skills audit to see how often these skills are practiced over the five years and if they are being introduced/revisited at an appropriate time frame to reduce the overload in GCSE.
- Make a simplified skills checklist with tick completion boxes or RAG boxes that can be stuck at the front of exercise books.
- Don't forget the 2024 Paper 3 has an extra 15 mins to help with time to check the skills questions at the end and support students with better use of the figures in the issue evaluation.

Guidance strategies Issues Evaluation Section A:

- Students need to appreciate the importance of recognising different points of view in the issue evaluation. This is especially pertinent for the 9 marker where the quality of this discussion they have in their writing about the arguments and evidence for and against the development/proposal.
- There is no need to go beyond the booklet – 'it is all in there'. The recommendation is to link back to when you have studied the topics over KS4 to connect to that prior knowledge and understanding.
- Use past pre-release booklets with students now. Keith Bartlett described how he is working with schools who are using an issue evaluation in KS3. This has been seen across the county where some departments are using the 2019 rainforest-based issue in Year 9. This practice gets students used to interrogating resources and making judgements based on considering different points of view.
- The 6 and 9 markers about the issue are 'discussion topics' therefore the most effective teaching strategies to complete with Year 11 are:
 - Cost benefit analysis
 - SWOT analysis
 - Environmental analysis
- Support students to understand the balance in a cost/benefit approach as there is no perfect solution in an issue evaluation.
- Prepare students for the 9-marker by first considering the impacts of the proposal in an SEE grid: Socially, economically, and environmentally.
- Next break this down further to identify:
 - Winners/losers
 - Plus/minis
 - Cost/benefits
 - Advantages/disadvantages

- Physical scale – local/regional/national/international
- Time scale – long or short term
-

Guidance strategies – Fieldwork Section B:

- Go over with students what is meant by:
 - To what extent
 - Accuracy
 - Reliability
 - Validity

As these commands and terms caused a great deal of confusion for some students

- All fieldwork investigation answers need to be about the WHY? Why that location? Why that sampling strategy? Why that data presentation method? Why were your results not secure? Etc... It is vital the overarching enquiry question focused on why not how to reduce the likelihood of students giving descriptive knowledge-based answers and not being able to secure the application marks of the AO3 aspect of this paper.
- Give students a short title for their fieldwork investigation to write in the exam. Reduce your title to 4-5 words e.g. Longshore drift at Swanage. You may keep your longer title and use in lessons, have on their data collection booklet but the shorter the title the more likely students are to remember it. The info needed is place and geography which 'longshore drift at Swanage' has.
- When revising the fieldwork investigation in class give students an A3 sheet to complete. On the left-hand side have the 6 strands: suitable question, method, data collection, analysis, conclusion and evaluation. That way students can record their notes and remember the investigation on the right-hand side. Keith Bartlett suggested then laminating these A3 sheets as he has noticed when he visits schools who do this how much more value students place on it and keep it safer for more reference and use.
- Teach students that ALL fieldwork can be improved and do this when they are out on investigation collecting data.
- As geography advisor I've suggested teachers take mini videos of students using the techniques in the field and the conversations you have in the moment about the accuracy to use back in the classroom and in revision. Students could also record their own data collection and capture moments to aid memory like the 'wonky' ranging pole stuck in the sand.
- There are always questions on ADAPTING in unfamiliar fieldwork so ensure this term and knowledge is unpicked when students do their own fieldwork. E.g suggest two ways the questionnaire could be adapted to make it more useful.
- It was noted that since 2018 the final 9-mark question 5.4 on fieldwork have all had 'TO WHAT EXTENT' in the title and have all been about the results and conclusions.

The most successful answers have a clear structure.

Approach 1 – use themes for separate paragraphs	Approach 2 – have paragraphs for contrasting arguments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State decision• Consider economic impacts +/-• Consider social impacts +/-• Consider environmental impacts +/-• Develop the points made – use examples• Link to evidence, eg see Figure 3, page 6, or quote evidence ‘...’• Conclusion: ‘The points made above...’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State decision• On the one hand (positive factors)• On the other hand (negative factors)• Develop the points made – use examples• Link to evidence, eg see Figure 3, page 6, or quote evidence ‘...’• Conclusion: ‘The points made above...’

Source: Slide 37 from GCSE Geography: Feedback on the 2023 exam (Paper 3) Keith Bartlett

Geography Advisor for Hampshire:

Kate Broadribb

Kate.broadribb@hants.gov.uk

For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following details:

Tel: 01962 874820 or email: hias.enquiries@hants.gov.uk