Curriculum Connect: GCSE Geography, looking ahead to 2024

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Session overview

- **2023 entries & grading**
- **High level feedback across components based on examiners reports**
- **Key themes to improve performance**
  - AO2/AO3 question types
  - Engaging in fieldwork assessment
- **Upcoming support from AQA**
- **Recap of useful resources to support your teaching**

High level feedback on exams

Lead examiner comments based on reports

- Performance this year was comparably similar to those seen prior to exam disruption
- There was evidence of some improvement on feedback given following the 2022 series (e.g use of photographs, deconstructing 6 and 9 mark questions and more accurate use of case study information)
- In many cases, students were much more able to have a go at answering some questions that perhaps in the past they may have struggled to access
- Students demonstrated in many cases that they were able to respond appropriately to the command words in the question

Lead examiner comments based on reports

- There is still some confusion when responding to AO2/AO3 questions correctly, where students are asked to ‘use the figure and your own understanding’
- Not all required mathematical skills were carried out well, and often students missed out on marks due to avoidable errors
- The return of students own fieldwork assessment was clearly challenging for many, difficulties in recalling fieldwork titles or responding to questions with some specific fieldwork context made it difficult to access the full mark range
- In many cases, students confused different elements of the fieldwork enquiry sequence (e.g discussing data collection techniques instead of data presentation

Feedback from teachers

- It was felt generally that the papers this year continued the trajectory of improving the accessibility of questions
- Students felt more able to give questions a go
- The theme of the pre-release generally was welcomed
- Some flagged the slightly different focus of questions 1.11 compared to other 9 mark questions. Largely the performance on this question was comparable to other 9 markers and it is an appropriate way of assessing AO1, AO2 and AO3
- Although we've made some progress with reducing the number of figures using colour profiles, there were still some items students with CVD (colour vision deficiency) struggled to access

Key themes to improve performance

Paper 1&2: AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions

- These are always in the form of 4 or 6 mark questions where students are asked to “use Figure X and your own understanding” OR “use figure x and an example/case study”
- The lack of marks here available just in relation to knowledge (AO1) means that students need to take a particular approach to answering these questions (I.e. It’s not the same as answering a 9 mark question or indeed other 6 mark questions)
- They come with a figure (a ‘novel situation’) where students are required to apply their understanding to the figure presented to them
- These figures can be any form of stimulus – maps, graphs, data, text or as a combination
- Students often find themselves simply lifting and repeating information in the figure with poor development, and don’t necessarily demonstrate a good level of understanding
- Often students focus all of their attention on utilising the figure, that they forget to address the command (e.g. to what extent) which is essential to reaching level 3

Paper 2 (02.3): AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions

"As in previous years and in common with the other 6 mark AO2/AO3 questions on this paper, students struggled to respond by applying their knowledge and understanding to the new situation."

- Students often default to repeating information lifted directly from the figure
- Often the links to the theme in the question (sustainability) were only implicitly addressed
- 'to what extent' was rarely fully addressed, with few answers at level 3.
- Those who did access level 3 generally did so by properly examining the photographs and considering the carbon footprints of construction and employee transportation.

Study **Figure 6**, information about the Southampton Science Park.

Figure 6

Provides high-quality office, laboratory and meeting facilities in a healthy and inspiring environment.

72 acres of green space, lakes, walking routes and picnic spots.

27 acres are a protected conservation area.

Committed to minimising waste and making buildings more energy efficient.

0 2 . 3 To what extent are modern industrial developments environmentally sustainable?

Use **Figure 6** and your own understanding.

[6 marks]

Paper 1&2: AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions

What should you be looking for?

- **The best Level 3 answers to these questions tend to include ideas that go beyond the source or selected example/case study**
- **Some very good answers also apply detailed understanding to the figure alone and develop very thorough assessment or discussion**
- **Where there is an explicit instruction to refer to an example or case study, students must do this to access Level 3**
- **Pay attention to the command in the question and ensure that there is evidence of well evidenced judgement where required**

Paper 2 (02.3): AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions

Response B

Modern industrial developments are very sustainable. One reason why I think this is, there will be 72 acres of green space, lakes walking routes and picnic spots. This will mean that people working in the science parks will be able to exercise and get fresh air during their breaks. This will improve their quality of life and will provide habitats for wildlife in the area. Also the science park is committed to minimising waste and making buildings more efficient. This will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, reducing the damage to the environment. This will also mean that less energy and water will be needed to heat the buildings, making it more sustainable. Finally any pollution that transport into the area will cause, will most likely be mitigated by the 72 acres of greenspace.

Response D

In Figure 6, it shows that Southampton Science Park is becoming more environmentally sustainable by creating green spaces and conservation areas which will protect wildlife and increase biodiversity. The energy efficient buildings will reduce the amount of electricity needed, however there doesn't appear to be any use of renewable energy and the use of fossil fuels is still unsustainable. Another example is Torr Quarry which has landscaped over 80 hectares of land making it more sustainable. On the other hand, it still creates lots of dust and air pollution which is very harmful and the Quarry is still producing 15 million tonnes of limestone each year (destroying the ecosystem in the process). In conclusion, modern industrial development is environmentally sustainable to some extent but there is still a long way to go.

02	3	**To what extent are modern industrial developments environmentally sustainable? Use Figure 6 and your own understanding.**	6

Level	Marks	Description
3 (Detailed)	5–6	AO2 – Shows detailed understanding of the environmental sustainability issues around modern industrial developments. AO3 – Demonstrates thorough application of knowledge and understanding to offer judgement of the example provided and the link to sustainability of modern industrial developments in broader terms.
2 (Clear)	3–4	AO2 – Shows clear understanding of the environmental sustainability issues around modern industrial developments. AO3 – Demonstrates some application of knowledge and understanding to offer some judgment of the example provided and / or the link to sustainability of modern industrial developments in broader terms.
1 (Basic)	1–2	AO2 – Shows limited understanding of the environmental sustainability issues around modern industrial developments. AO3 – Demonstrates limited application of knowledge and understanding to offer basic judgment of the example provided and / or the link to sustainability of modern industrial developments in broader terms.
	0	No relevant content.

- **Level 3 responses** will cover the figure and well-developed geographical understanding and provide a considered judgment of the link to sustainability.
- **Level 2 responses** will show reasonable understanding of the link to sustainability using the figure and clear geographical understanding or more considered judgment for just the figure or own understanding used.
- **Level 1 responses** will show simple understanding of the link to sustainability using the figure and / or simple geographical understanding.
- **Max Level 2 for figure or own understanding only.**

Indicative content

- Students may demonstrate their geographical understanding through use of a named example, although this is not explicitly asked for in the question.
- **Figure 6** shows the Southampton Science Park has an attractive setting with lots of green space and trees. It is well served by public transport and aims to minimise waste and be energy efficient.
- Reference to **Figure 6** may be inferred even if not explicitly stated through comment on the above aspects in relation to environmental sustainability.
- The figure also shows large amounts of cars parked which, along with the buses, may contribute to air pollution and congestion.
- The building of the Science Park required the removal of trees and green space.
- The command 'to what extent' requires a view to be taken on the sustainability credentials of modern industrial developments.
- Candidates may contrast their understanding of modern industrial developments with industrial developments in the past and decide whether they are now more sustainable or still have sustainability issues.
- Specific examples of either modern or past industries / industrial developments may be used to support the points raised.

Paper 2 (02.3): AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions

Response B

Modern industrial developments are very sustainable. One reason why I think this is, there will be 72 acres of green space, lakes walking routes and picnic spots. This will mean that people working in the science parks will be able to exercise and get fresh air during their breaks. This will improve their quality of life and will provide habitats for wildlife in the area. Also the science park is committed to minimising waste and making buildings more efficient. This will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, reducing the damage to the environment. This will also mean that less energy and water will be needed to heat the buildings, making it more sustainable. Finally any pollution that transport into the area will cause, will most likely be mitigated by the 72 acres of greenspace.

This is a Level 2 response.

This answer shows clear application of knowledge (AO3) in relation to the figure provided with some tentative links to social sustainability, 'fresh air during their lunch breaks....will improve their quality of life', though these would have needed to be developed better for credit. The understanding of environmental sustainability (AO2) is clearer, 'reducing the amount of waste going to landfill...will also mean that less energy...'. Whilst almost Level 3 it would have needed more detail and better judgement of the extent of sustainability, the 'to what extent' in the question, is very one-sided.

4 marks

- **Showed clear engagement with the figure**
- **Demonstrates good understanding of sustainability and uses relevant evidence from the figure**
- **Links to sustainability are there, however are not thoroughly explored**
- **The 'to what extent' in the question isn't as strong and although balance within the argument isn't necessary to reach level 3, some awareness of the counterargument is really purposeful**

Paper 2 (02.3): AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions

Response D

In Figure 6, it shows that Southampton Science Park is becoming more environmentally sustainable by creating green spaces and conservation areas which will protect wildlife and increase biodiversity. The energy efficient buildings will reduce the amount of electricity needed, however there doesn't appear to be any use of renewable energy and the use of fossil fuels is still unsustainable. Another example is Torr Quarry which has landscaped over 80 hectares of land making it more sustainable. On the other hand, it still creates lots of dust and air pollution which is very harmful and the Quarry is still producing 15 million tonnes of limestone each year (destroying the ecosystem in the process). In conclusion, modern industrial development is environmentally sustainable to some extent but there is still a long way to go.

This is a Level 3 response.

This answer provides a considered judgement of the link to sustainability (AO3) and links this to both the figure and their own example throughout the answer. The conclusion follows well from the argument presented and addresses the question in a measured fashion, 'to some extent but...'. The detailed AO2 is evident in both the understanding of the figure, 'will protect wildlife and increase biodiversity' and in the use of a relevant supporting example, Torr Quarry, 'on the other hand it still creates...'

6 marks

- **Detailed use of the figure using relevant evidence to support judgements**
- **Application of knowledge and understanding well demonstrated through the bringing in of a learned example**
- **Consideration of 'to what extent' is evidenced throughout with an acknowledgement of the counterargument**

Paper 1&2: AO2 & AO3 stimulus questions - improving performance

Some key points to consider when reflecting on your teaching:

- **Ensure that students are able to look for triggers in the question to recognise them (eg “use figure x and your own understanding” OR “use figure x and an example/case study”**
- **Listing the many examples of these question types across past series’ can help, and create similar questions yourselves that use those recognisable phrases**
- **Practice approached to avoid simply lifting information from a figure and instead using evidence from the figure to support students understanding more appropriately (this can also help students make better use of the pre-release as well)**

Engagement in fieldwork assessment

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork

- **Summer 2023 saw the return to full fieldwork assessment for the first time since 2019, where students answer questions based on their two fieldwork investigations (human and physical) that link to various stages of the enquiry sequence**
- **It's clear that equity of access to good quality fieldwork is a challenge in many schools, and this can be seen in the way students respond to this part of the assessment**
- **If you require some support with fieldwork planning, being creative about the fieldwork you chose in reference to the specification, or guidance on students unable to access planned fieldwork, please refer to our guidance**

Assessment objective recap

AO3: **Apply knowledge and understanding** to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues to make judgements (35%, including 10% applied to fieldwork context(s)).

- **Fieldwork almost exclusively assesses AO3 (application) and AO4 (skills). There are only a few marks for AO2 (understanding)**
- **There are NO AO1 (knowledge) marks at all in Paper 3. This means that questions cannot appear that ask students to tell us things like 'what they did' or 'how they did it', Instead questions focus on the 'why'**
  - Why did you choose this location to carry out your investigation?
  - Why was systematic sampling the most appropriate sampling technique?
  - Why is it important to carry out a risk assessment?

Section B Qn4 Unfamiliar fieldwork

16 marks (12 marks AO4, 4 marks AO3)

Maximum tariff is 4 marks

Tests students' fieldwork skills that are not related to their own enquiry

Familiarise yourself with the skills checklist (page 29-32 in the specification)

Section B Qn5 Familiar fieldwork

23 marks (20 marks AO3, 3 marks SPaG)

One 6 marker, one 9 marker

Related to the students own physical and human investigations

Paper 3: The enquiry sequence (pg 27 & 28)

3.3.2 Section B: Fieldwork

Students need to undertake **two geographical enquiries**, each of which must include the use of primary data, collected as part of a fieldwork exercise. There should be a clear link between the subject content and geographical enquiries, and the enquiries can be based on any part of the content addressed in units 3.1 and 3.2.

Fieldwork **must** take place outside the classroom and school grounds on at least **two** occasions.

The two enquiries must be carried out in contrasting environments and show an understanding of both physical and human geography. In at least one of the enquiries students are expected to show an understanding about the interaction between physical and human geography.

Students' understanding of the enquiry process will be assessed in the following two ways:

1. questions based on the use of fieldwork materials from an unfamiliar context
2. questions based on students' individual enquiry work. For these questions students will have to identify the titles of their individual enquiries.

Students will be expected to:

1. apply knowledge and understanding to interpret, analyse and evaluate information and issues related to geographical enquiry
2. select, adapt and use a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions and issues and communicate findings in relation to geographical enquiry.

Geographical enquiry strand	Application of knowledge and understanding, and skills
1. Suitable question for geographical enquiry	The factors that need to be considered when selecting suitable questions/hypotheses for geographical enquiry. The geographical theory/concept underpinning the enquiry. Appropriate sources of primary and secondary evidence, including locations for fieldwork. The potential risks of both human and physical fieldwork and how these risks might be reduced.
2. Selecting, measuring and recording data appropriate to the chosen enquiry	Difference between primary and secondary data. Identification and selection of appropriate physical and human data. Measuring and recording data using different sampling methods. Description and justification of data collection methods.
3. Selecting appropriate ways of processing and presenting fieldwork data	Appreciation that a range of visual, graphical and cartographic methods is available. Selection and accurate use of appropriate presentation methods. Description, explanation and adaptation of presentation methods
4. Describing, analysing and explaining fieldwork data	Description, analysis and explanation of the results of fieldwork data. Establish links between data sets. Use appropriate statistical techniques. Identification of anomalies in fieldwork data.
5. Reaching conclusions	Draw evidenced conclusions in relation to original aims of the enquiry.
6. Evaluation of geographical enquiry	Identification of problems of data collection methods. Identification of limitations of data collected. Suggestions for other data that might be useful. Extent to which conclusions were reliable.

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork

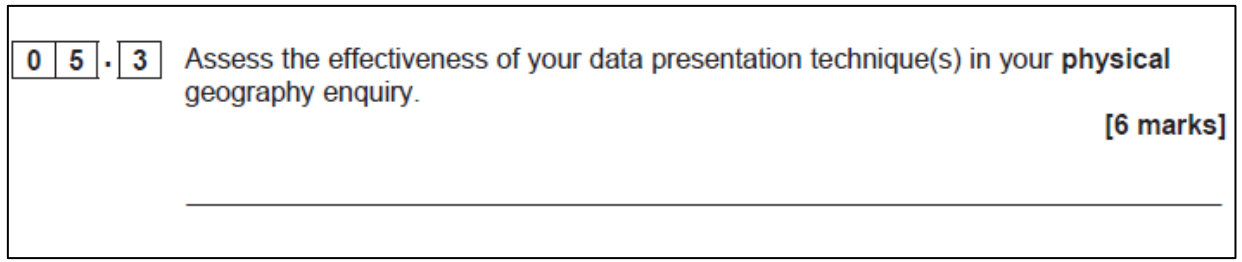
- **Fieldwork is almost always the section of the exam where students don't perform as well**
- **Typically performance is much lower compared to Paper 1 and 2**
- **This shift from the 'why' as opposed to the 'what' contributes to that, as it's very difficult to award marks to students who just describe what they do.**
- **Students who do better in this section are continually practising being able to justify their investigation, methods and evaluate what they found out, and what they could do better**

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork

Engaging in the enquiry sequence

“The questions will always relate to elements of the Geographical Enquiry table (Strands 1 to 6) found within the geography specification.” you can also refer to our guidance on the enquiry sequence.

“A significant proportion of students talked about data collection techniques rather than data presentation techniques and consequently many students either failed to score any marks or did not attempt the question.”


0 5 . 3 Assess the effectiveness of your data presentation technique(s) in your **physical** geography enquiry.

[6 marks]

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork (05.3)

Response D

To a large extent our data presentation techniques were effective. We used bar charts to show the change in height and the percentage of vegetation. This was effective as we could easily see and calculate the change inland, however it was not 100% effective as we had to do two graphs which meant that we could not see our data from just one.

Response E

I believe our data presentation methods were rather successful in presenting the data we had collected. We used a bar chart to record our recordings of depth. This was effective as it was easy to read and display and easy to be able to notice trends-such as how an anomaly occurred where there was bridge over the river. However, the bar chart alone, though effective, required additional information as it did not display the location of the sites in relation to each other. Therefore, we also used a located cross-section map to demonstrate the cross-sections of the different locations and where they were located in relation to each other. This showed the width and depth of the river which was useful in being able to compare with the Bradshaw model. However, it was difficult to display all our data on one sheet, and the located cross-sections were harder in comparing results with each other. Therefore, I believe our two data presentation techniques were arguably rather effective when combined together.

Assess the effectiveness of your data presentation technique(s) in your physical geography enquiry.

Answer must relate to the **physical** geography enquiry.

Level	Marks	Description
3 (Detailed)	5–6	AO3 – Offers detailed assessment of effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s). AO3 – Makes detailed judgements about the effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s) with reasoned observations.
2 (Clear)	3–4	AO3 – Offers clear assessment of the effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s). AO3 – Makes clear judgements about effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s) with reasoned observations.
1 (Basic)	1–2	AO3 – Offers basic assessment of effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s). AO3 – Makes basic judgements which show some awareness about the effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s).
	0	No relevant content.

- **Level 3 (detailed)** detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the identified data presentation technique(s).
- **Level 2 (clear)** clear evaluation of the effectiveness of the identified data presentation technique(s).
- **Level 1 (basic)** limited evaluation and/or description of a data presentation method(s). Basic reasoning of the use of the technique linked to aiding presentation of data.

Max Level 1 for reference to **human** geography data presentation techniques.

Max Level 1 if presentation technique is not specified ie a generic assessment of presentation techniques.
No credit for consideration of results.

The command word is 'assess' therefore there is an expectation that the candidate provides a rationale or gives reasons for the effectiveness/appropriateness of the data presentation technique(s) in presenting the data.

Any method of data presentation technique(s) is acceptable but the presentation technique(s) selected must relate to a **physical** geography fieldwork investigation. The most likely techniques to be used are graphical and cartographical techniques eg scattergraphs, bar graphs, pie charts etc.

Description of the data presentation techniques(s) may be present but is not required. The focus should be on the effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s) used.

Features within the presentation technique will be discussed in terms of the effectiveness in helping to present data clearly and/or interpret data and can also be discussed in terms of the techniques being effective or ineffective:

- Sectors of graphs such as pie charts, proportionality applied to data so that it could be presented on a map to show variation, distribution and spatial differences across a map.
- Sectors of bar graphs to help accurately show proportion.
- Data plots on scatter graphs to help clearly indicate trends in relationships between variables with the addition of a best fit line to show the correlation between variables.
- Cross-sections/profiles drawn to scale to highlight changes in gradient and location of particular physical features over a distance.
- Use of field sketches, annotated photographs to identify characteristics of landscape and some of the physical processes that take place in river/coastal environments.
- Dispersion graph to show the degree of clustering or spread of values around the mean.

Assess the effectiveness of your data presentation technique(s) in your physical geography enquiry.

Answer must relate to the **physical** geography enquiry.

Level	Marks	Description
3 (Detailed)	5–6	AO3 – Offers detailed assessment of effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s). AO3 – Makes detailed judgements about the effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s) with reasoned observations.
2 (Clear)	3–4	AO3 – Offers clear assessment of the effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s). AO3 – Makes clear judgements about effectiveness of the data presentation technique(s) with reasoned observations.
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- **Level 3 (detailed)** detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the identified data presentation technique(s).
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- **Level 1 (basic)** limited evaluation and/or description of a data presentation method(s). Basic reasoning of the use of the technique linked to aiding presentation of data.

Max Level 1 for reference to **human** geography data presentation techniques.

Max Level 1 if presentation technique is not specified ie a generic assessment of presentation techniques.
No credit for consideration of results.

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork (05.3)

Response D

To a large extent our data presentation techniques were effective. We used bar charts to show the change in height and the percentage of vegetation. This was effective as we could easily see and calculate the change inland, however it was not 100% effective as we had to do two graphs which meant that we could not see our data from just one.

This is a Level 2 response

A data presentation method was identified and the reason for its use described, offering some clarity of purpose. This offered the opportunity to make a relatively simple judgement about the effectiveness of the selected presentation technique. The final point may have given the answer some additional value had it been more clearly reasoned.

3 marks

- **This example shows the minimum requirement to get into level 2**
- **Simple description of data presentation methods with a good analysis of their effectiveness**
- **Students need to demonstrate an understanding of the technique and its limitations**

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork (05.3)

Response E

I believe our data presentation methods were rather successful in presenting the data we had collected. We used a bar chart to record our recordings of depth. This was effective as it was easy to read and display and easy to be able to notice trends-such as how an anomaly occurred where there was bridge over the river. However, the bar chart alone, though effective, required additional information as it did not display the location of the sites in relation to each other. Therefore, we also used a located cross-section map to demonstrate the cross-sections of the different locations and where they were located in relation to each other. This showed the width and depth of the river which was useful in being able to compare with the Bradshaw model. However, it was difficult to display all our data on one sheet, and the located cross-sections were harder in comparing results with each other. Therefore, I believe our two data presentation techniques were arguably rather effective when combined together.

This is a Level 3 response

This response clearly identifies presentation methods and outlines how they were used to present specific data. It then goes on to offer evaluative observations about both the usefulness ("easy to read and spot anomalies") and limitations ("did not display the relative locations of the data collection"). The response made it clear how the data and presentation methods were relevant to the enquiry and this was expressed by mentioning the "width and depth" of the river and considering this in relation to the Bradshaw model. While this was clearly a Level 3 response, developing the final point by suggesting why the located cross sections made it harder to compare results would make the response more secure at this level.

6 marks

- **Top of level 3 goes some way further to demonstrating a critique of the method and what else was needed for it to be effective**
- **Very little description of data presentation, the focus is largely on evaluating its effectiveness**
- **The context provided by the student showed that the methods were relevant to the specific enquiry**
- **It's useful to see an example where a student doesn't rely on one single method of data presentation, the comparative context helps to support the evaluation**

Paper 3: Familiar fieldwork - improving performance

Some key points to consider when reflecting on your teaching:

- **Consider referring back to the 6 strands to the enquiry when planning your fieldwork delivery and revision**
- **Make sure students see the clear differences in enquiry strands and use these strands to guide your structure**
- **Developing manageable fieldwork titles that are easier to remember**
- **Encourage students to give some context, as much as they can in the exam if they cannot recall their fieldwork titles**
- **When marking mock exams, put yourself in the shoes of an examiner that has no insight into the fieldwork you've undertaken, and consider if the student is giving you enough information and accurate context**

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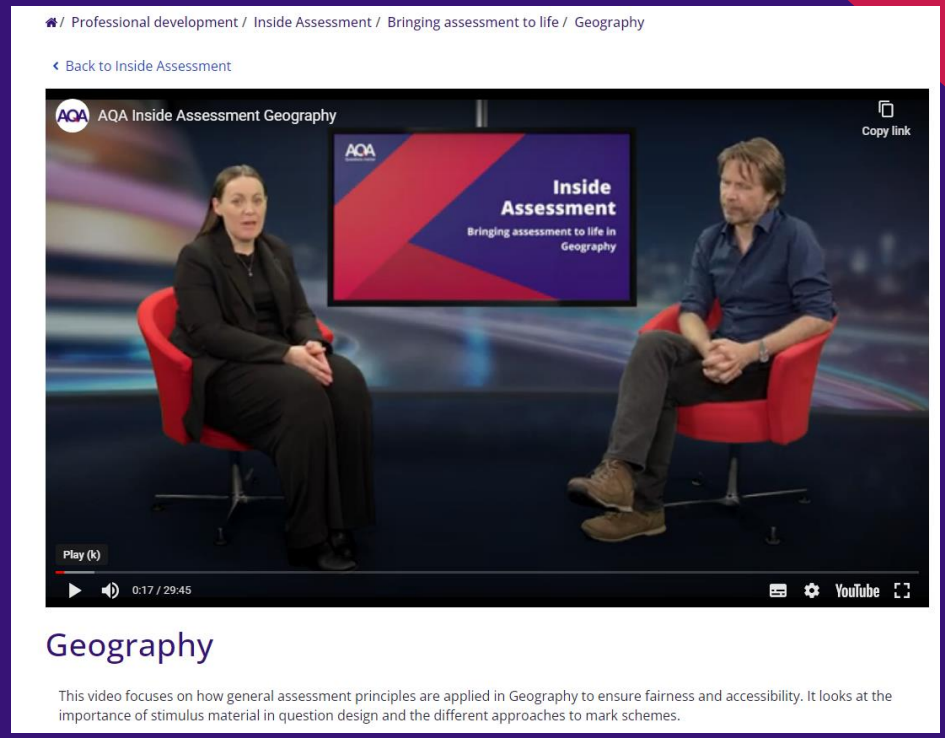

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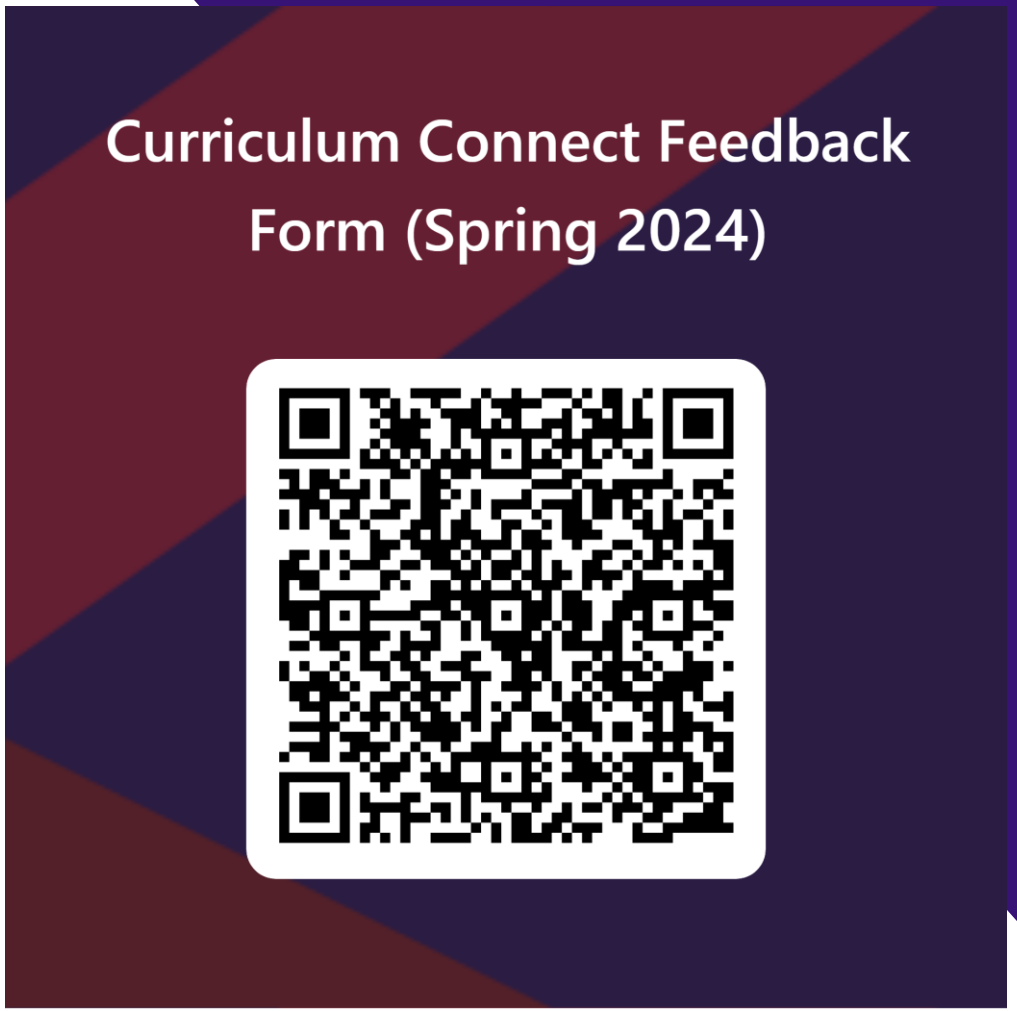

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