

Our ref: GS/Geog/UL/2004

09 December 2004

To: SQA Co-ordinator
Directors of Education

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the
delivery of National Qualifications in Geography**

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update — Geography

This briefing note is intended to offer practical advice and support on the issues being raised by centre staff with SQA, and should be distributed to those staff responsible for Geography.

1 Attached Materials

In the appendices to this letter there are some materials which SQA feels will be of use to centres staff responsible for Geography. These are as follows:

Appendix 1: Environmental Interactions Survey

Appendix 1 consists of a brief survey of the Environmental Interactions topics delivered by centres. It would be of great help to SQA if you could take a moment to indicate which Environmental Issues you currently deliver within your centre at each level.

Please note that this survey is being carried out solely for the purpose of assisting our Examining teams in the organisation of post-examination procedures next summer.

Appendix 2: Exemplification of Gathering & Processing Questions

It has been noted by the Principal Assessor and Examining team that a significant number of candidates struggle with these types of question in Standard Grade examinations, particularly at Credit level but also at General.

In an attempt to clarify the approach candidates should be taking to these questions, I have provided some exemplification materials in Appendix 2. These include copies of selected questions from the 2004 examinations, each with three marked sample candidate responses, plus a commentary by the Principal Assessor on the quality of each answer, common difficulties or misunderstandings as well as points of good practice.

2 Inappropriate Presentation at Intermediate Levels

Centres will be aware that this year's examination diet yielded disappointing results at Intermediate 1 level.

The standard of the Question Paper this year was exactly the same as in previous years, having undergone rigorous quality assurance processes to benchmark it against previous years' papers and the equivalent in Standard Grade General level. This has been reflected in feedback from centres, none of which made any suggestion that the diet 2004 paper at this level was particularly demanding. The standard of performance has, however, dropped significantly this year.

Statistical data gathered within SQA strongly suggests that this is as a result of inappropriate presentation of candidates by centres. This has been echoed by the opinions of the Examining team in their scrutiny of candidates' scripts.

The observation is that many of the more able candidates, who would do very well at Intermediate 1, are being moved up to the Intermediate 2 Course, in which they often achieve C grade passes at best. It would also appear that a significant number of candidates who are currently below Intermediate 1 level in their capability were entered for the examination in this year's diet.

We are particularly concerned about those centres that have moved away from using Standard Grade and deliver only Intermediate Courses in S3 & S4, with no provision made for those candidates who would previously have been sitting Standard Grade at Foundation level. Centres are reminded that Intermediate 1 is benchmarked against General level.

Centres are strongly advised to consider very carefully their future presentations for Intermediate Courses, in light of this year's results and the consistent standard of demand at these levels.

3 Advanced Higher Studies & Issues

Markers and Examiners for Advanced Higher Geography have been greatly encouraged by the continuing improvement in the level of performance delivered by candidates, particularly with regards to the Geographical Issues. There were, however, two important points noted by the team that centres should be aware of, in order for candidates to achieve their full potential in their results:

i. Exceeding the page count

Once again I must point out to centres that the page counts in the Geographical Study and Geographical Issues **are strictly applied**.

As with previous years, a significant number of candidates in this diet were penalised by 8 marks (10% of the total available) in each of these pieces of work. In many cases, there was no need for this to happen — the removal of non-essential cover pages, the closing of large (half-page) gaps in the text or the reduction of unnecessarily large diagrams could easily have prevented this situation and allowed candidates to score the marks that their standard of work could have achieved.

Centres are reminded that **all pages** submitted in Geographical Studies and Issues are counted towards the total page count. Unlike the word count, there are **no exceptions** to this. Furthermore, diagrams and overlays that fold out to larger than A4 will be counted as the corresponding number of A4 pages (eg A3 = 2 x A4; A2 = 4 x A4).

If you have any doubts about the requirements of the word or page maxima for these pieces of work, please refer to the Course Arrangements where these are described in detail.

ii. Bibliography and referencing of sources

Candidates are encouraged to make good use of their bibliography and also to reference their sources as fully as possible throughout the body of their work. Not only is this very helpful to markers, it helps candidates develop essay-writing techniques that will be essential to those progressing onwards to Higher Education.

In situations where candidates have not provided specific acknowledgement of their sources, it can be unclear as to which parts of the submitted essays are derived from sources and which are the candidate's own work. In such cases it may be difficult for markers to determine how much original input the candidate has actually given to the finished work, which can in turn impact on the marks awarded.

4 Issues arising from appeals (all levels)

A variety of issues arose through the processing of appeals this year across a number of centres' submissions. Centres should take particular note of the following areas of concern:

i. Use of past/specimen/commercial papers as prelims

Centres are reminded that the use of a single pre-existing question paper, unaltered and in its entirety — whether a past paper, specimen paper or a commercially-produced paper that has been published prior the current session — does **not** constitute acceptable appeals evidence.

SQA has issued very clear advice to centres on this point. If candidates sit a question paper that has been in the public domain then that paper is deemed not to carry the same weight and rigour as an unseen examination. Prelims undertaken with a single complete past paper, specimen paper or a commercial paper that has been published prior to the current session are immediately dismissed as an invalid source of appeals evidence.

ii. Construction of prelims

Another issue that arose with prelim evidence in appeals this year concerned the proper use of secondary ‘top-up’ assessments. SQA appreciates that in many cases it will be impossible for centres to assess all parts of a Course in one main prelim, particularly if this is sat early in the session. In such circumstances it will be necessary to supplement the prelim at a later stage if full course coverage is to be demonstrated.

The problem arises where candidates are set, for example, a prelim paper that covers the first two Units of a Course, then later a separate test of only the third remaining Unit. Centres should be aware that a second assessment of this type will not be as demanding as the external assessment equivalent. Candidates would only be required to revise and prepare for that one Unit. They would not need to show long-term retention of knowledge in order to pass, nor would the exercise as a whole be of equivalent demand to a full external examination. This therefore leads to artificially inflated marks in this second assessment, which may in turn result in the production of inaccurate estimates.

Centres must recognise this danger when considering candidate performance in these top-up assessments and be aware of the reduced level of challenge in these situations. This should be taken into account when applying cut-off scores or deriving estimates from the evidence obtained.

iii. Use of half marks

A significant number of prelims and other centre evidence submitted for Standard Grade and Intermediate Courses this year had been assessed through the inappropriate use of half marks.

Centres are reminded that half marks are not acceptable at Standard Grade or Intermediate 1 and only apply under very specific circumstances at Intermediate 2 (normally for providing grid references or identifying features).

The inappropriate use of half marks can lead to candidates accumulating more marks overall than they have actually earned, which will in turn produce misleading results.

iv. Submission of appropriate evidence

Examiners were concerned to note that some centres submitted appeals evidence which was of a standard considerably lower than the grade appealed for. Examples included situations where centres appealing for a ‘B’ or ‘C’ grade submitted only a prelim showing attainment of a ‘D’ grade equivalent at best.

As stated on page 14 of the centre guidance document *Estimates, Absentees and External Assessment Appeals*:

Evidence must demonstrate attainment commensurate with the Estimate submitted.

SQA's appeals process is based on the principle of considering alternative evidence submitted by centres. Only if this evidence is found to be insufficient will original scripts be reviewed, but even then centres should note that this is not a re-marking exercise.

5 Map extracts available

SQA currently has a limited number of map extracts available from this year's diet of examinations. These maps will be distributed to centres free of charge on a first come, first served basis.

If you would like to obtain copies of any of the maps used in the 2004 diet of Geography examinations for use in your centre, please contact the Qualifications Officer, Greg Storey, at the details provided at the start of this letter.

6 Principal Assessors' and Senior Moderator's Reports

SQA would like to encourage all centre staff responsible for Geography to read the reports of the Principal Assessors and Senior Moderator for Session 2003/04 and the corresponding examination diet. These reports contain detailed and useful advice and information pertaining to candidate performance, guidance for centres and specific issues relating to individual examination questions and are available in the dedicated Geography page of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

In particular, the following areas of advice may be of use to centres:

Principal Assessor's Report: Standard Grade

- ◆ Instructions in question stems ('Describe'/'Explain')
- ◆ Repetition in responses
- ◆ Provision and marking of grid references in answers
- ◆ Inappropriate response length

Principal Assessor's Report: Intermediate 1 & 2

- ◆ Inappropriate presentations

Principal Assessor's Report: Higher

- ◆ Course coverage in centres and possible areas of weakness
- ◆ Loss of marks through failure to read questions carefully
- ◆ Detailed examples in answers
- ◆ Responding in lists and/or bullet points
- ◆ In-depth study of fewer countries versus summary study of many

Principal Assessor's Report: Advanced Higher

- ◆ Familiarity with techniques in the GMT Unit
- ◆ Map reading skills
- ◆ Presentation of internally produced work
- ◆ Challenging topics in Geographical Studies
- ◆ Sources of data in Geographical Studies

Senior Moderator's Report

- ◆ Clarity of marking and annotation of scripts
- ◆ Cross-marking/internal moderation
- ◆ Correct completion of the Sample Moderation Form
- ◆ Use of half marks at Intermediate levels
- ◆ Mixing of NABs 001 and 002 at Higher
- ◆ Clear and helpful presentation of fieldwork evidence at Advanced Higher

I hope that the notes above and the materials attached are of help to you. If you have any queries about these or any other Geography-related issues please contact Greg Storey, the Qualifications Officer in this area, at the details given at the start of this letter.

Yours faithfully



Keith Wright
Qualifications Manager

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ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTIONS

Information on which Environmental Interactions are delivered by centres for use in external assessment will greatly assist our Examining teams in the organisation of post-examination procedures.

Please complete the form below and return this page to SQA, for the attention of:

Greg Storey
 SQA
 Hanover House
 24 Douglas Street
 Glasgow
 G2 7NQ

Centre name: Centre number:

For each of the levels below, please tick the boxes to show which Environmental Interactions you are currently delivering. If you are not offering that Course/level this year, please tick "Not offered".

Intermediate 1 (New Arrangements)

Rural Land Degradation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Development and Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
River Basin Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Environmental Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not offered</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Intermediate 2 (New Arrangements)

Rural Land Degradation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Development and Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
River Basin Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Environmental Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not offered</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Higher

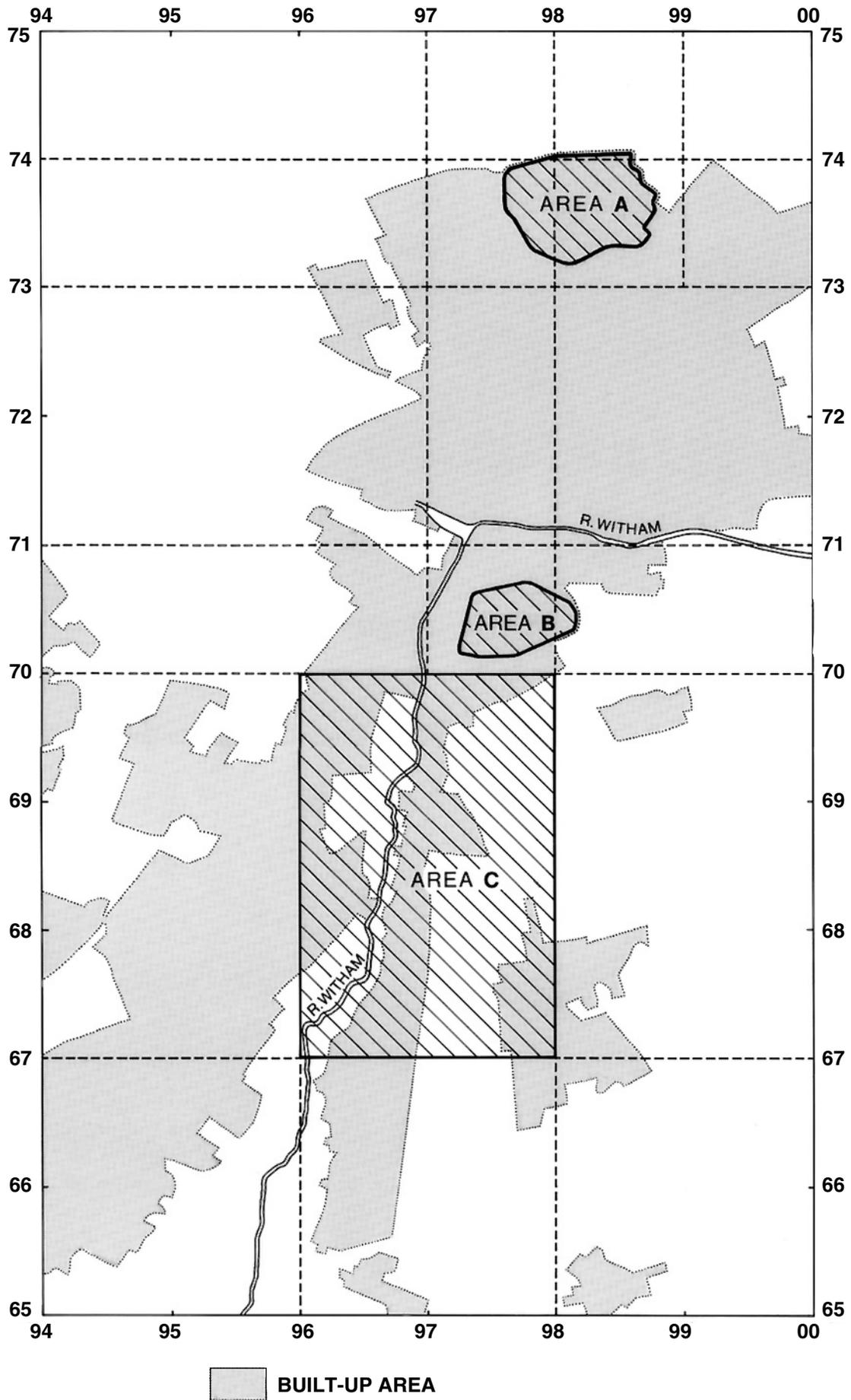
Rural Land Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Change and its Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Land Degradation	<input type="checkbox"/>	European Environmental Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>
River Basin Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Development and Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Not offered</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

EXEMPLIFICATION OF GATHERING & PROCESSING QUESTIONS

Exemplar 1: Question 1(c), Credit Level

1.

Reference Diagram Q1A



1. (continued)

This question refers to the OS Map Extract (No 1349/EXP272) of Lincoln and the Reference Diagram Q1A on *Page two*.

(c)

“A dormitory settlement is a community where most of the residents travel to work in a larger settlement.”

Pupils from a local high school want to find out if Bracebridge Heath (9767–9867) is a dormitory settlement for Lincoln. What techniques could they use to gather relevant information?

Explain the choice of techniques.

5

Candidate response 1:

Pupils could question places of work in the city to find out how many people travel from Bracebridge Heath. They could also send surveys to the residents of Bracebridge Heath ✓ asking them where they worked. ✓ They could also count the number of cars on the A15 during the rush hour. ✓

Questioning the employees at places of work would allow them to compare Bracebridge Heath to other places people might work in Lincoln. The survey would allow them to see how many people work in Lincoln and what types of jobs they worked in.

The count of the cars would allow them to compare this figure to one taken from a similar town.

Comments and marks obtained

The first part of the answer gains no marks since the technique quoted is neither feasible nor relevant. Sending out (postal?) surveys is a relevant technique and asking about place of work are both relevant points and gain two marks. The third mark is obtained by the reference to the traffic count.

None of the justifications given are acceptable. The aims of this kind of survey do not include comparing one settlement with another. The first and last justifications are therefore irrelevant. Finding out how many people work in Lincoln is not practicable, nor is it a relevant justification.

Total marks = 3 out of 5

Candidate response 2:

They could do a survey to find out how many people live in the area but travel to work in Lincoln. ✓ This would give an accurate amount of people who commute and is easy to organise. Or, they could count how many cars people have in the area. If they all had cars, this would show that they are commuters who have to have a car to get to work.

Lastly, they could ask the employers of commuters where their staff come from. If it is from this area this would prove directly that it is a dormitory town. It is easy to arrange and gives direct results.

Comments and marks obtained

This is a very weak answer which shows a lack of understanding of the techniques that would be relevant in this study. A mark is gained for discussing the survey of people living in the settlement but travelling to work elsewhere. Many candidates make the error of making broad statements such as giving 'accurate amounts' and 'easy to organise' without providing further detail or making the statements relevant to the actual technique.

Whilst a traffic count of cars entering and leaving a settlement is acceptable, simply noting the number of cars in a settlement provides no evidence of the commuting function of that place. Asking employers about workers is once again irrelevant and impractical. Many candidates unfortunately gave this kind of answer without thinking what this kind of survey might entail. Final comments on 'easy to arrange/ direct results', are inappropriate.

Total marks = 1 out of 5

Candidate response 3:

They could interview the residents of the area because this will give them a good idea of the local opinions of the people. ✓ They could go to the council and ask to see the original plans for the area, these would show what the settlement was supposed to be used for. They could also go to the library and look at maps of the area, because maps show the area clearly and make it easy to understand.

Comments and marks obtained

Unfortunately this candidate does not understand the concept of commuting. The vague reference to interviewing local people is just sufficient to gain a mark, but asking about local opinions does not merit further credit.

Asking for plans of the settlement and using unspecified maps perhaps hints at settlement function. However the statements are not explicit or detailed enough to gain further marks. Had the candidate made reference to the main function being 'residential' and 'a lack of industry' being evident from analysis of a specified O.S. map, then these comments might have gained additional marks.

Total marks = 1 out of 5

EXEMPLIFICATION OF GATHERING & PROCESSING QUESTIONS

Exemplar 2: Question 5(b), Credit Level

5. **Reference Diagram Q5B: Other Data for the two Farms**

	Farm A	Farm B
Area	1904 ha	444 ha
Workers	3 full time	5 full time 13 part time/seasonal
Machinery	2 tractors 8 other machines	6 tractors 14 other machines
Land use	80% sheep grazing 13% beef cattle grazing 7% barley, turnips and hay	87% arable—mainly wheat and barley with some potatoes, raspberries and strawberries 13% beef cattle grazing

- (b) Describe other techniques which could be used to present the land use data shown in Reference Diagram Q5B.

Give reasons for your choice of techniques.

5

Candidate response 1:

*A comparative bar chart✓ as it quick and easy to draw, easy to read and gives a good visual comparison.✓
Pie charts✓ (one for each row) could be used as it gives a good proportionate view,✓ is easy to read and is quick to draw.*

Comments and marks obtained

The references to comparative bar charts and pie charts merit a mark each, as do the comments on 'visual comparison' and 'proportionate view', both relevant to the techniques listed. However candidates should avoid making highly general statements such as 'easy to draw', 'easy to read', 'quick to draw' etc. which are not specific enough to gain any further marks. Comments such as these have never been awarded marks in these types of questions.

Total marks = 4 out of 6

Candidate response 2:

You could use a barograph. This can be drawn very easily and is easy to read. You could also use pie charts✓ which are good for percentages.✓ Finally you could show the figures in line graphs and use different colours to show different figures.

Comments and marks obtained

Unfortunately the candidate has confused bar graphs with barographs which are quite a different technique and gains no marks for this. As noted under candidate response 1 (above), comments such as 'easy to read' and 'easy to draw' are not acceptable since they could apply to a wide range of techniques.

The reference to pie charts is appropriate, especially since it refers to charts rather than one individual chart. The vague reference to percentages also merits a mark. However the last statement on line graphs is inappropriate in this instance. The reference to colour would be appropriate in other instances but since the technique is inappropriate, unfortunately so also is the justification on colour.

Total marks = 2 out of 6

Candidate response 3:

You could put a bit of info into a separate pie chart✓ and do the same for each farm, because pie charts are good for giving percentages✓ and a good way to compare the two farms.✓ Do divided bar graphs✓ for each bit of info again and put them above each other for each farm so it is easy to compare the two. You can colour code these as well which makes them easy to read.✓

Comments and marks obtained

The first three statements on using pie charts gain three marks – for correctly identifying an appropriate technique, for giving an accurate statement about the technique (percentages) and finally for stating how it can be used, namely 'to compare the two farms'.

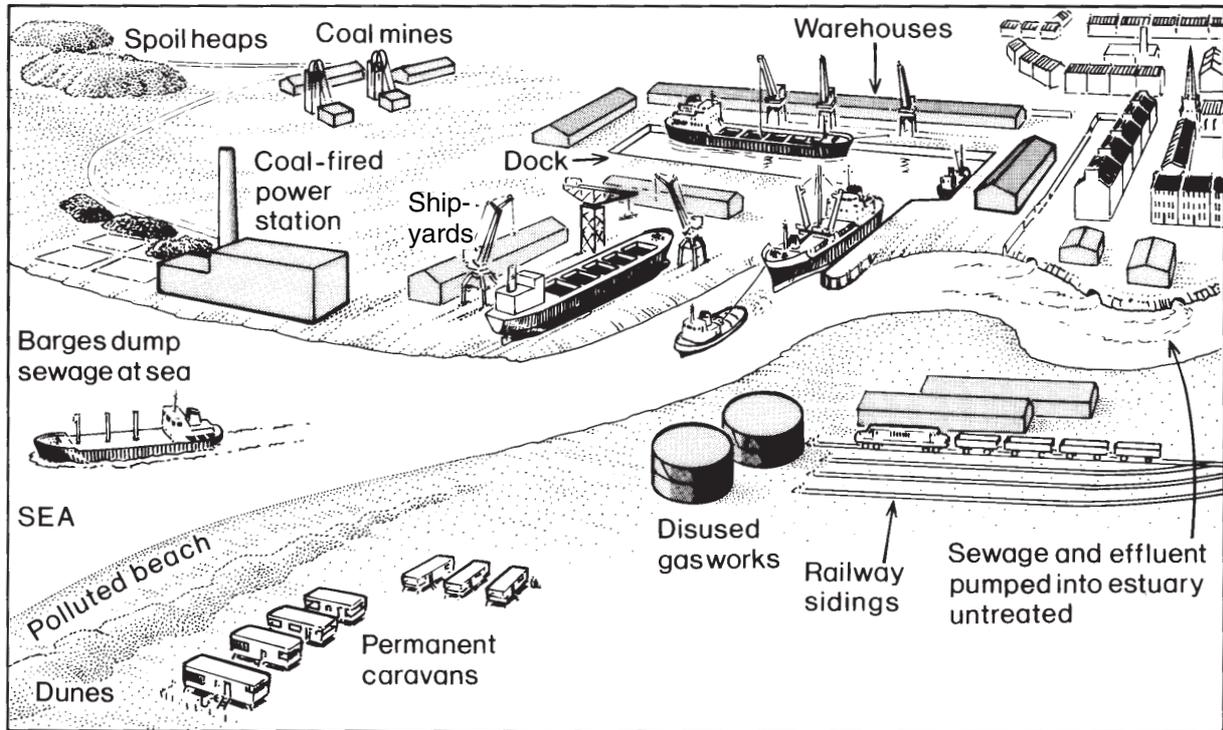
Identifying divided bar graphs is correct for one mark, but the following justification repeats that already given for pie chart namely 'comparing the two' and gains no further mark. The final statement on 'colour coding' which explains how to enhance the basic technique is worth a final mark.

Total marks = 5 out of 6

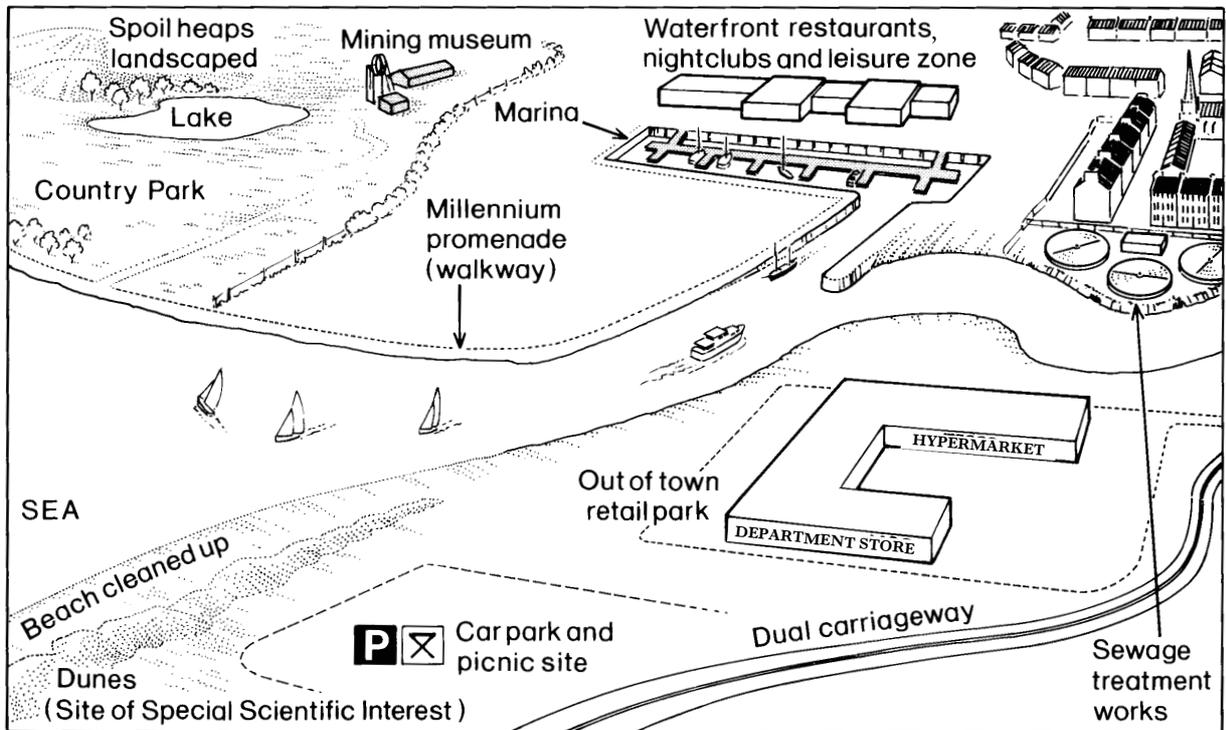
EXEMPLIFICATION OF GATHERING & PROCESSING QUESTIONS

Exemplar 3: Question 6(a), General Level

6. Reference Diagram Q6A: The Inverfirth Estuary in 1974



Reference Diagram Q6B: The Inverfirth Estuary in 2004



Candidate response 1:

Techniques

They could have collected 2 maps and laid them on top of each other.

Reasons

This would allow the pupils to see how much the two sites differ and see how the land is put to use.

Comments and marks obtained

Unfortunately this candidate makes the common mistake of confusing 'gathering' with 'processing' techniques and therefore the answer is completely inaccurate. Had the candidate suggested that 2 maps from different points in time were compared and differences noted, this might have been sufficient to merit 2 marks. Clearly the candidate is thinking about map overlays, which is more relevant to processing land use data by illustrating relationships between relief and land use.

Total marks = 0 out of 4

Candidate response 2:

Techniques

Look at old and new photos ✓ and maps. ✓ Send out questionnaires. Take a field sketch and compare it with old photos and maps. ✓

Reasons

The photos and maps will show clear differences. ✓ The questionnaires can ask specific questions and get the answers from people who have seen the changes. ✓ The field sketch is useful because you can pick on a certain part of the area. ✓

Comments and marks obtained

The candidate correctly identifies three techniques, namely comparing old and new photos and maps and making a field sketch, and gains 3 marks. Simply mentioning a questionnaire without elaboration is insufficient for a further mark on identifying the technique.

A further mark is obtained for correctly justifying the use of the photos and maps to 'show clear differences'. The statement on the questionnaires obtaining information from people who have 'seen the changes' would be worth another mark for justification if the candidate had not already acquired full marks by this point. Similarly, if it was required, a sixth mark would have been obtained for stating that in a field sketch it is possible to 'focus in' – or, as the candidate puts it, 'pick on a certain part of the area'.

Total marks = 4 out of 4 (reduced from 6 to meet maximum mark)

Candidate response 3:

Techniques

They could have compared old and new pictures. ✓ They could also ask workers what they thought about it. ✓

Reasons

They would get an idea on how much the land use has changed.✓ They would also be able to see what buildings are new and what ones have been there all the time.✓

Comments and marks obtained

This is a fairly basic answer but it contains just enough detail to merit full marks. Comparing old and new pictures (photographs?) and asking workers in the area about the area are basic gathering techniques, although the candidate could have expressed themselves better.

Reference to changing buildings by comparing new and old pictures is relevant for a mark. Obtaining information first hand, presumably from the workers interviewed, is also sufficiently relevant to award a final mark.

Total marks = 4 out of 4