



Geography

Guidance on Advanced Higher Geography for session 2020–21

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Introduction

The following guidance and advice was produced by the Principal Assessor and the Depute Principal Assessor for Geography, both of whom have many years of experience in delivering the Advanced Higher Geography course.

Guidance

The Advanced Higher Geography course requires candidates to 'demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of gathering and processing techniques in the context of research and/or fieldwork, and the analysis and/or evaluation of data which may be obtained as a result of using those techniques' (course specification, page 5). The question paper samples from the list of skills and techniques indicated in the course specification, pages 5 and 6. This content is examined in the 'Gathering and processing techniques' question in the question paper.

Centres deliver this part of the course in a variety of ways, including:

- ◆ the use of fieldwork centres
- ◆ virtual fieldwork
- ◆ within the school grounds
- ◆ within the local environment
- ◆ through classroom-based activities
- ◆ using fieldwork methodology texts

The current situation with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the use of fieldwork centres, however, all the gathering and processing techniques listed in the course specification can be taught using the other methods listed above.

The Advanced Higher Geographical Study enables candidates to 'demonstrate the application of their skills, knowledge and understanding through undertaking independent research', allowing them the opportunity to demonstrate:

- ◆ 'independent research and/or fieldwork
- ◆ applying a wide range of geographical methods and techniques
- ◆ integrating a wide range of geographical skills'

There is no specific requirement in the course specification for candidates to use fieldwork in their Geographical Study. Page 10 of the course specification states that candidates should demonstrate 'independent research and/or fieldwork' and 'plan and carry out detailed research, which could include fieldwork'.

The Advanced Higher Geographical Study can therefore be based on primary data and/or information, secondary data and/or information, or a combination of primary and secondary data

and/or information. Detailed marking instructions are available on [our website](#), but the following instructions are specific to gathering data and/or information:

B — Plan and carry out detailed research, which could include fieldwork

C — Evaluate the research techniques and the reliability of data gathered

Instruction B includes the guidance ‘Research can, but does not have to, include fieldwork. Where appropriate, candidates can gain full marks for the project–folio without carrying out fieldwork’. Candidates, therefore, are always able to access the full range of marks, regardless of how they collect their data and/or information. The important point is that candidates gather enough relevant data and/or information to complete all the requirements of the assessment.

As indicated in the general marking principles, marking is always positive. The 2021 diet will be no exception and the utmost care will be taken in applying the marking instructions to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged by the current situation.

Advice

When researching their Geographical Study, there are some areas of fieldwork that candidates can use in the current situation, for example within a ‘changing places’ theme:

- ◆ land use surveys could be conducted to collect data, while allowing for physical distancing measures
- ◆ data gathered, either first-hand or by using online tools such as Google Street View, could be used for comparison with other data

Other techniques such as the use of questionnaires to collect qualitative data on how people have adapted their lifestyles, how they perceive risk, or on mitigation strategies, could be conducted using digital survey tools such as Survey Monkey, Smart Survey, Google Forms or video conferencing tools that avoid face-to-face contact.

Other suggestions to help candidates prepare for the ‘Gathering and processing techniques’ examination question, and in researching their Geographical Study in the current situation, might include the use of virtual or digital fieldwork examples, webinars, online talks, digital and outreach packages, and so on.

The above suggestions could be applied to a range of topics. Many are explored on various websites and are available for candidates, teachers and lecturers to share. The websites for the following organisations may provide useful advice, web links and resources:

- ◆ Geographical Association
- ◆ Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers
- ◆ Field Studies Council
- ◆ Royal Scottish Geographical Society

- ◆ Scottish Association of Geography Teachers
- ◆ ArcGIS

Teachers, lecturers and candidates should be reassured that both primary and secondary data are acceptable for the Geographical Study, and that they are valued equally.