

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Geography

Stretch and Challenge



STRETCH AND CHALLENGE

Both of these aspects are addressed at A2 within this specification in Units 3 and 4, although candidates are prepared for them with more opportunities for extended writing at AS, particularly in Unit 1.

At AS

Within each of the questions in Unit 1, 15 marks of the 30 marks available are reserved for a piece of extended writing. This is the only part of each question where the marking extends to Level 3, where the criteria for awarding that level are to:

- display a detailed understanding of the topic
- make several points with support of appropriate exemplification and/or application of principle
- give a wide range of characteristics, reasons, attitudes etc.
- provide highly detailed accounts of a range of case studies
- respond well to more than one command
- demonstrate evaluation, assessment and synthesis throughout
- demonstrate a sophisticated style of writing incorporating measured and qualified explanation and comment as required by the question and reflecting awareness of the complexity of subject matter and incompleteness/ tentativeness of explanation
- demonstrate a clear sense of purpose so that the responses are seen to closely relate to the requirements of the question with confident use of specialist vocabulary
- demonstrate legibility of text, and qualities of spelling, grammar and punctuation which contribute to complete clarity of meaning.

At A2

Stretch and Challenge

Assessments at A2 will provide greater stretch and challenge for all candidates. This includes the use of more open-ended questions which require the responses to be structured by the candidates.

Specifically, this will include:

- use of a variety of demanding stems in questions – for example discuss, analyse, evaluate, justify
- connectivity between sections of questions
- a requirement for extended writing in all units
- use of a wider range of question types to address different skills – for example open-ended questions and the use of case studies.

For example within Unit 3, the command words “discuss” and “evaluate” are used in Sections A and B, and in Section C the further demanding stems of “critically evaluate”, “analyse” and “assess” are used. Furthermore the use of open-ended questions such as “To what extent do you agree....” provides opportunities for thorough, well-developed and critical responses. In Unit 4A, similar command words are used, and in Unit 4B, the further high level command of “justify” is used in the issue evaluation context.

Analyse

This requires a candidate to break down the content of a topic into its constituent parts, and to give an in-depth account.

Discuss

Candidates are expected to build up an argument about an issue, presenting more than one side of the argument. They should present arguments for and against, making good use of evidence and appropriate examples, and express an opinion about the merits of each side. In other words, they should construct a verbal debate.

Evaluate / Assess

These command words require more than the discussion described above. In both cases an indication of the candidate's viewpoint, having considered all the evidence, is required. 'Assess' asks for a statement of the overall quality or value of the feature or issue being considered, and 'evaluate' asks the candidate to give an overall statement of value. The candidate's own judgement is requested, together with a justification for that judgement. The use of 'critically' often occurs in such questions, for example 'Critically evaluate'. In this case the candidate is being asked to look at an issue or problem from the point of view of a critic. There may be weaknesses in the argument and the evidence should not be taken at face value. The candidate should question not only the evidence itself but also where it came from, and how it was collected. The answer should comment on the strengths of the evidence as well as its weaknesses.

Justify

This is one of the most demanding command words. At its most simplistic, a response to this command must include a strong piece of writing in favour of the chosen option(s) in a decision-making exercise, and an explanation of why the other options were rejected. However, decision making is not straightforward. All the options in a decision-making scenario have positive and negative aspects. The options that are rejected will have some good elements, and equally, the chosen option will not be perfect in all respects. The key to good decision making is to balance the pros and cons of each option and to opt for the most appropriate based on the evidence available.

Synoptic assessment

The definition of synoptic assessment in the context of geography is as follows:

Synoptic assessment involves assessment of candidates' ability to draw on their understanding of the connections between different aspects of the subject represented in the specification and demonstrate their ability to 'think like a geographer'.

For this specification, synoptic assessment will be included in each of the A2 units.

Examples of synoptic assessment are:

- Decision making/problem solving/issues evaluation exercises requiring candidates to draw together relevant knowledge, understanding and skills of the specification, to tackle a decision, problem or issue that is new to them.
- An essay question covering geographical issues or problems that would require candidates to draw together and apply relevant integrated knowledge, understanding and skills of the specification.

- An essay question exploring key geographical concepts through linkages between physical, human and environmental geography.
- An assessment on a particular region or area, which is on a scale which allows candidates to draw together and apply relevant knowledge, understanding and skills of processes or concepts of the specification.
- Reporting of a fieldwork enquiry which has encompassed a variety of themes and issues.