



AS

Geography

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Report on the examination

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Synopsis and general points

- The number of students sitting this paper in May 2025 was 600, around 170 fewer than the summer 2024 entry, and over 50 percent lower than the entry in 2019.
- The structure and content of the paper was similar to the 2024 paper. Again, a wide range of performance was seen but, overall, performance on the paper was very similar to 2024.
- Students had been prepared well for the specification content included in this component. Students used their time effectively and there were very few who struggled to complete the paper due to time constraints. Scripts with rubric errors or with large sections of questions that were not attempted, were also rare.
- Students' ability to tackle the AO1 and AO2 based questions in section A continued to be effective. There was, however, some evidence that the application of their knowledge and understanding to the question (AO2) has become more implicit and was often only more clearly expressed in their introduction and / or conclusion. Students should ensure that they focus on answering the question set, throughout their response and not simply in the conclusion.
- As with previous years, the distribution of marks showed a stronger performance on section A and a less successful performance seen in section B. The mean percentage mark in section A was around 58% and in section B was 48%.
- More students chose to complete question 3 (77% of entries) than question 4. However, there was no discernible difference between performance on the two options. The mean percentage in question 3 was 51%, with 53% in question 4.
- The knowledge and understanding of fieldwork techniques in section B and C suggests that students are becoming more acquainted with a range of geographical and fieldwork skills, compared to recent examinations. There was some clear evidence of their participation in formal and well-structured fieldwork investigations, undertaken as part of their learning. However, it was also clear that some students were not always able to apply different aspects of the fieldwork study (AO2) or evaluate their studies effectively. Responses to questions about their own fieldwork were generally clear, though not always detailed.
- In Section C it was pleasing to note that most students were able to use the resources effectively, referring to the resources in their responses. This allowed them, for example to noted limitations of the sampling strategy in question 3.2.

Section A

Students generally demonstrated good theoretical understanding, effectively applied subject-specific terminology, and showed confidence in discussing both local and distant place contexts. However, a recurring finding was the over-reliance on place-based knowledge rather than using it to support the arguments made in response to the question. This was particularly evident in question 1.6. A small number of students chose the same place for the local place in question 1.5 and a distant place in question 1.6. These were both credited. However, students should be discouraged from only focusing their revision on one place, as they could be asked to make a comparison in future series, as with previous series. Overall, students coped reasonably well with the questions in Section A, performing especially well on questions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4 and Q1.6, the 20-mark essay.

Question 1 – Changing Places

1.1 & 1.2 – Responses to the multiple-choice questions provided an encouraging start as around 90% of correct answers were given for Q1.1 and Q1.2 respectively.

1.3 – This question was generally unsuccessful in terms of the quality of responses. This was an AO1 knowledge question, taken from the section on quantitative and qualitative skills. Just over a quarter of students did not access any marks.

However, it did differentiate well and nearly a third of students gained at least 2 out of 3 marks. The mark scheme was broadened to allow credit for a generic advantage of quantitative data. Credit was also given for a general overview of what quantitative data can measure in terms of change, for example changes in housing types. The higher-level responses tended to be those that were able to link a source of quantitative data to the context of an actual example of how it showed change over time, for example considering the usefulness of census data in showing how occupations had changed. Less successful responses frequently dealt with the question in a very generic manner, not going beyond the idea that quantitative data is objective or unbiased.

1.4 This question proved slightly more accessible than 1.4 in 2024. Over 50% of students accessed Level 2 on this paper, but half of these were at the lower end of L2. Fewer than 5% got all 6 marks. Most students attempted to seek connection between the two maps noting the variations in London for example compared to the northwest of England. Most students were also able to consider spatial patterns shown in Figure 1a. The more successful answers look at an overview of the patterns in 1a and then drilled down to consider the variations in the spatial pattern in Figure 1b, for example noting that the east of England had the highest change in 1a, but this was not clearly demonstrated in 1b with only one area showing the highest population change. Many used accurate data manipulation in support. Lower-achieving students were still too reliant on straight lift of data, alongside a pedestrian description of population change in each region, often gaining little credit. These students often neglected to use any data in support, simply stating that Wales had the lowest population change for example. Some students also used data inaccurately, for example not understanding that each colour represented a band of change, stating that one area in the

southeast of England had a 23% increase. On a positive note, drift into explanation was minimal and the compound nature of the graphs was clearly understood by most students.

1.5 – Generally, students did not perform as well on this question as question 1.6. However, performance was much stronger than question 1.5 in 2024. More than double the number of students achieved L3 compared to 2024. The stem statement seemed to be clearly understood by most students. The stem was meant to prompt discussion about the importance of factors affecting attachment to place. Although this approach was adopted by some students, they were in the minority. Instead, many attempted a more theoretical approach in their responses, focusing largely on demonstrating their understanding of the meaning of place attachment. They tended to focus on the psycho-geographical elements such as memories, sense of belonging or identity, media perception, emotional attachment, positive or negative feelings, etc. There was far less emphasis on the assessment of factors that make people feel attached to places. Many students did not focus on their choice of place but gave generic reasons for place attachment, which whilst creditworthy, did not aid clarity of argument. Nonetheless, many clear theoretical arguments and discussions were presented in the context of the local place and over 80% of students achieved Level 2 credit. The more successful responses were clearly those using their local place examples to support their arguments suggesting two or more factors that affected place attachment and then using a strong conclusion to weigh up the importance of the factors.

1.6 – This question was, well handled by most students, with a slightly stronger performance than that in 2024. 66% attained at least Level 3 credit and over 12% reached Level 4 outcomes. Less than 5% achieved Level 1. The question gave the opportunity for many students to adapt their knowledge and understanding of the impact of economic or demographic change on the present-day characteristics of a distant place they had studied. In that sense it was a relatively 'open' and more typical 'changing places' question that linked processes triggering change in a place, to the various outcomes in terms of place characteristics. Students generally used their place knowledge well and supplied narratives that clearly identified a range of relevant economic and demographic processes such as de-industrialisation, migration, globalisation, regeneration and others. Many interesting narratives about past and present processes of development were presented and, in most cases, these were applied well to the distant place studied. Sometimes there was more emphasis on a historical narrative, with a lack of consideration of present-day characteristics. The process of economic and / or demographic change was usually covered well. However, it was the extent to which these determined present-day characteristics of a place that often lacked some development, support or clarity in many answers. For this question, as suggested in the synopsis above, the assessment element (AO2) of responses and application of knowledge and understanding to the question was often implicit throughout the essay, rather than more clearly expressed. The implicit nature of some responses was nonetheless still effective and creditworthy in stronger, more sophisticated responses which integrated their application (AO2) alongside their AO1 content and provided substantial development, elaboration or support. However, in lower-level responses, the application element did not always come across as clearly and some students relied heavily

on only basic evaluative statements in their introduction and in brief, limited conclusions to gain their AO2 credit for this question.

Students were required to choose either economic **or** demographic change, however many chose to cover both. Sometimes they used one as a counterargument, a perfectly creditable response to the question. However, some considered both as separate accounts. Credit was given where the change could be considered as both economic and demographic. These accounts tended to lack a sustained line of reasoning and were unable to achieve the higher marks. It should also be noted that, as on last year's paper, a noticeable minority of students used more than one 'distant place' in their response, which went against the rubric of the question. In these cases, as usual, the whole response was considered but only one place (that was better used to address the question) and any general points were credited. Students should be made aware of this when seeing questions that clearly ask for only one place to be included in their answer.

Section B

In these sections, students are required to apply geographical skills and techniques to unseen resources and a geographical investigation, alongside showing knowledge and understanding of their own fieldwork. As in previous series, students performed less well on this section. Centres are reminded that Section B accounts for 50% of the marks and it is important to ensure that students are well prepared for this section, having conducted two days of fieldwork as well as having covered all the skills listed in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of the specification.

Question 2 – Geographical Fieldwork Skills

2.1 This question is a good example of why it is important to ensure that all the geographical skills in 3.4 of the specification are covered. Many students simply did not know what coding was or understand how it might be used in a field study. Nearly one fifth of all students did not even attempt this question and only around 15% scored two marks. Over a third of students attempting the question were unable to achieve credit. Those who did access marks were able to describe how you might highlight words and classify or group them. Some students went on to suggest how this might be used, considering frequency analysis or use of word – clouds.

2.2 This question also proved challenging for students. They needed to suggest sources of background reading and suggest how these would be useful. Over 40% of students were unable to access marks as they did not identify a source, simply stating for example 'it would be useful to know the number of tourists', or they just stated the source without stating its usefulness for example 'a newspaper'. Students should be encouraged to make sure they address all parts of the question. The most successful answers were where they were able to draw on their own fieldwork experience and suggest good sources of background reading, for example 'Census data would allow us to see the occupations of the local population'.

2.3 Most students were able to access this question, with over 80% of students scoring at least one mark. Again, this question illustrates the importance of reading the question carefully as some students neglected to realise that this was sampling in relation to questionnaires and wrote about sampling pebbles for example. A few students didn't understand the concept of sampling and wrote about the method of constructing a questionnaire instead, therefore they were unable to score marks. The most successful answers included more than one sampling technique with clear justification of why it was an appropriate technique, drawing on their own experiences for inspiration. It was possible to gain full marks using only one technique but most students choosing only one, did not develop their answers fully enough to secure more than one or two marks. Students should also be discouraged from writing 'it was quick and easy' without any further elaboration. In such questions, it must be clear why the technique was quick and easy and why that was relevant to the fieldwork data collection.

Questions 2.4 and 2.5 – Students' own Fieldwork

In general, there appeared to be an improved understanding of the structure of their own fieldwork among students, compared to relatively recent years. Most students were able to articulate a clear aim that was rooted in a specific location. In recent series there has been a more obvious grasp of the different elements that make up a geographical investigation and how they are linked. However, in 2025 they performed less successfully than in 2024, particularly on question 2.5, where they were less secure on the planning of fieldwork and how this linked to outcomes.

2.4 Questions concerning geographical ideas / theory often seem to be more challenging for students, as they often think they need to provide an elaborate theory or model to link this to, rather than just reflecting on their expectations and aims. In this question they simply needed to consider the extent to which their findings / conclusions matched what they expected to find. The mean mark for responses to this question was just 3 out of the 6 marks available, with nearly two-thirds of students scoring Level 1. Less successful responses were unable to make the link between conclusions and geographical ideas. Higher-level responses to this question were able to make that link with the best considering the extent to which their conclusions matched their expectations. Successful students had a good grasp of the outcomes of the fieldwork and the extent to which their conclusion was what they expected. They were able to articulate their conclusions linked to the fieldwork location, referring to specific results, suggesting how this matched their aim and ideas.

2.5 Some students found this question to be quite challenging and this may be because many were not involved in planning the fieldwork. It is important for centres to involve students in all stages of the fieldwork and to reflect on the whole process in terms of evaluating its success. Planning encompasses many aspects of what is done to prepare for fieldwork. Students considered a broad range of planning research in the answers, for example background reading, risk assessment and pilot studies. Over 80% of students achieved at least Level 2 but only around 10% achieved Level 3. To attain these higher marks, students must include specific details about their fieldwork and evaluate, in this case by considering the extent to which effective planning to generate successful outcomes. Too many students

wrote about their fieldwork in a very generic manner, so it was difficult to ascertain where it took place or the specifics of what was done. Many students also stated that their fieldwork was 100% successful and whilst this may be possible, given the nature of variability in fieldwork, this is unlikely. The most successful responses talked about how planning led to a successful outcome but couldn't account for the exact situation on the day. For example, some students talked about how they used OS maps to plan pedestrian accounts but in hindsight they should have used land-use maps as well, as they were unable to tell whether it was retail and this had an impact on results. Students should also be encouraged to use specific results in their responses as this aids clarity and depth.

Questions 3 and 4 – Unfamiliar fieldwork investigation optional questions

Of the unfamiliar fieldwork options, Q3 remains by far the most popular option chosen by a ratio of more than 4 to 1. As the corresponding questions in each option are identical, it may be that many students opt for the first one presented to save reading time, recognising that the fieldwork investigation content is of less importance. This also suggests that only those with a definite preference for physical geography topics opt for question 4. The comparability of the two options is reinforced by the statistics which show that student performance was very similar on each corresponding item in each question.

3.1/4.1 These questions proved very accessible for most students with the mean mark averaging 1.4., with just under 90% of students gaining at least one mark. Most students were able to suggest how the risk was managed for one mark but about third of students did not gain a second mark, often because they didn't identify the risk, simply stating the hazard. A small number of students were unable to access any marks, as the risk was not relevant to the field data collection shown in the figure.

3.2/4.2 Students who had a knowledge and understanding of sampling strategies were able to access marks on this question with ease. Over 30% of students achieved 3 or 4 marks on this question. The focus of this question differed from question 2.3 in that the focus was on how the strategies described in the figures could be improved. Some students were unable to score credit as they wrote about the disadvantages of different generic sampling strategies. Others were unable to score credit as they described how the method of measuring pebbles or counting pedestrians could be improved. The more successful students carefully considered the information presented and suggested improvement which were developed well from a critique of the strategy. For example, in Figure 5 many noted that only one road was sampled, and this would give a narrow range of results, so more roads should be sampled. In figure 9, many noted that the sample size was not identical, and this would make it difficult to conduct a statistical test such as Spearman's rank, so each site should have the same number of data collection points.

3.3 /4.3 This was another accessible question, where students were able to score well. Most students are familiar with using photographs on fieldwork, so they were able to draw on this experience to apply it the geographical investigations in Q3 and 4. As a result over three-

quarters of students achieved at least one mark. Most students focused on the advantages of having a visual aid, either to support quantitative data collection, or as a memory aid back in the classroom. Some went on to add clarity by expressing what photos could show in terms of characteristics of the study area.

3.4 / 4.4 Despite the mostly successful attempts in answering the previous three questions, this question proved to be more challenging for many students. Around 12% of students attained a level 3 mark but just under a third of students only accessed Level 1 marks. Students were presented with a lot of information to help them evaluate the data presentation techniques in Figures 6 and 10. However some students simply lifted the information and did not develop any points beyond that given in the figures. This impacted their ability to gain credit. The most successful answers used the information from all figures to evaluate the usefulness of 2-3 of the presentation and processing methods. They referred specifically to the studies. For example, in Q4, a number of students discussed that Spearman's Rank would be a problematic method as the data sets were different sizes. Standard deviation would be useful as it would tell you if there was a large range in pebble sizes or whether they were more sorted. This would show whether coastal management was affecting the sorting of pebbles by wave action.

Key suggestions for improvements in Paper 2

In section A:

In pure 'analysis' questions, where a range of data is provided, focus on key features of the data, whether this be changes or trends over time, or contrasts between places (or times) and always look for anomalies. Provide accurate quantitative data manipulation to support these statements.

Students should practise making valid links between different sub-topics within Changing Places and applying these to both local and distant places studied.

It is a good idea to practise using place knowledge to answer the specific question, not as a standalone description.

It is important to read question instructions carefully. Answer all parts of the questions.

When applying knowledge and understanding to extended questions, students should express the application elements as explicitly as possible by relating points or supporting evidence back to the question. They should explicitly integrate AO2 into longer responses, not just in introductions or conclusions.

In section B:

Students should:

Ensure all skills in the specification (particularly qualitative analysis techniques) understood and practised

Reinforce understanding and evaluation of sampling methods

Planning and evaluate fieldwork – including reflection on unexpected outcomes.

Be encouraged to use specific data in evaluation, not just general observations.

Make detailed notes during fieldwork investigations and revise these just as thoroughly as a more theoretical topic. Students should especially consider more critical evaluation by recognising good practice and by suggesting where improvements could increase the reliability of results in meeting an aim.

Be discouraged from simply lifting information from the geographical investigation. Instead, they should be encouraged to apply their own knowledge and understanding from their fieldwork experience to enable them to effectively answer the questions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.