

## **GCSE Geography Fieldwork**

### **Strand 1**

#### **Suitable question for geographical enquiry**

Sometimes teachers start their planning with identifying the fieldwork methodologies they want candidates to use and then try to fit these methods into a title. What can happen in such cases is that the methodologies do not actually collect the data required to address the question, aim or hypothesis and this can cause confusion for the students.

Try to keep the work simple, concise, precise and focused. Students have to carry all of the key information in their heads into the examination so the more complex the enquiries the harder this will be.

There are four sub-sections within Strand 1 of the enquiry sequence and teachers should tackle these in the order they are stated and let the geography drive the methodology.

The four sub-strands are:

1. Selecting suitable questions, aims or hypotheses for geographical enquiry.
2. Relevant geographical theory/concept(s) underpinning the enquiry.
3. Appropriate sources of primary and secondary evidence, including locations to be used.
4. Potential risks and how these might be reduced.

1. Question, aim or hypothesis.

This is largely a matter of personal preference and knowing how your candidates work best, it makes no real difference which option you choose. However, taking into account the small-scale nature of each enquiry, it would make sense to have just one question, aim or hypothesis to underpin each investigation. The question, aim or hypothesis for each investigation can be determined by the teacher or through discussion with the candidates.

A trick for devising a simple hypothesis is to think of a statement and put the word 'that' in front of it, e.g. ***'That housing inequalities exist in X'***. Now candidates have an assertion to be tested.

## 2. Geographical theory underpinning the enquiry

Throughout each of the GCSE specifications there are numerous opportunities to use established theories, models or concepts as a basis for a small scale fieldwork investigation.

- Food webs and chains
- Longshore drift
- Hard and soft engineering strategies
- River and coastal and glacial processes
- Push-pull model of urban migration
- Urban regeneration
- Sustainable urban living
- Environmental sustainability

In most cases, the fieldwork undertaken by candidates does not have to be based on an established geographical theory or model, but it should be based on a geographical concept or process that is clearly identifiable from within the specification. Check the individual specification requirements before you start planning.

## 3. Appropriate sources of primary and secondary evidence, including locations for fieldwork.

*'Fieldwork overall should include exploration of physical and human processes and the interactions between them and should involve the collection of primary physical and human data (but these requirements need not all be addressed in each piece of fieldwork).'*

**DfE Geography GCSE subject content pages5-6.**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/301253/GCSE\\_geography.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301253/GCSE_geography.pdf)

Data should not be collected simply because it is possible to do so at the location(s) used for the investigation. Having determined the focus of the enquiries, teachers might ask themselves the following question:

*What primary data will be needed to specifically address the geography underpinning each enquiry?*

Now the geography is certainly driving the fieldwork.

It should be remembered that secondary data can also play a part in allowing candidates to complete a successful fieldwork investigation. For example, local council documents/websites can explain why particular schemes (coastal defence, flood relief, regeneration) were instigated. Secondary data can also include maps and photographs relevant to the enquiries.

4. The potential risks of conducting fieldwork and how these might be reduced.

The RGS website provides excellent advice here so check this site when planning your enquiries.

<https://www.rgs.org/in-the-field/fieldwork-in-schools/fieldwork-safety-and-planning/>

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