

Edexcel Geography A-Level

Fieldwork Section 1 - Introduction and Preliminary Research Essential Notes



Introduction

Your investigation is worth a total of **70 marks** and accounts for **20% of your overall Edexcel Geography A-Level grade**. Achieving a good mark in your investigation could benefit your overall grade, so it is important that you **spend the necessary time** working on it. If you **choose an interesting topic**, you should find your investigation enjoyable. Giving your investigation a **real life purpose** will make your investigation more rewarding. You could research a nearby woodland area for your local wildlife association, or investigate urban form for your parish council - there are many opportunities. These guides from PMT aim to help you through your fieldwork and encourage you to try hard and create an **insightful, purposeful and unique investigation**. We would encourage you to **read through each guide** before you start your investigation.

Overview of the Investigation

Here is a suggestion for the **order** in which you could complete your investigation:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a topic | <input type="checkbox"/> Data presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary research into the topic | <input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis (optional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a relevant title and define how it links to the specification | <input type="checkbox"/> Write up Data Analysis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brief plan of methodology | <input type="checkbox"/> Write up Critical Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set your aims and hypotheses | <input type="checkbox"/> Conclusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write Up Introduction | <input type="checkbox"/> Appendices and bibliography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write risk assessment and methodology | <input type="checkbox"/> Abstract |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Data collection - Primary and Secondary | <input type="checkbox"/> Contents page |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation/Formatting |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Proofread |

Choosing a Title

After choosing a topic, it is important to **focus on a specific area** that will allow the investigation to be easily conducted and ensures it will not be too time consuming. A **concise and directed title** is vital and it is necessary to spend time refining and improving it. If a title is too vague, you will struggle trying to prove it and may risk going over the word count.

The title should be **related to a particular area of the specification**, which you will specify in your candidate record form. Effective titles will also have a **locational context** and will explicitly link to a **key concept, theory or process**. The location may be **somewhere near to you**, that **you would like to study**, or that **your school is going on a field trip to**. The title could be a **question, hypothesis or statement**.

A hypothesis or statement can be proven/disproven, whereas a question is answered. e.g.:

- What effect have Coca-Cola had on the character of the PPSEZ, Phnom Penh?
- Coca-Cola have affected character of the PPSEZ, Phnom Penh
- Coca-Cola have positively affected character of the PPSEZ, Phnom Penh



To help decide on a specific focus within your chosen topic area, it is important to **conduct research into key theories, concepts and processes** which relate to it. Once you have decided on a title, ensure to **complete further study into this area** to collect secondary data sources and to advance your own knowledge. Record all researched sources into a suitable bibliography to ensure these sources do not become lost further into your investigation. Sources to investigate may include: social media posts, magazines, textbooks, podcasts, videos, articles, websites, academic papers and library sources.

When deciding the title and location, it is important to consider:

- If you can easily **get to the location** to collect primary data
- If you can relate it to contemporary issues
- If you can make it **useful to another stakeholder**. **Contacting a local council or organisation** may help with this and allow you to obtain secondary data
- If the **location is a manageable size**, suitable for fieldwork
- If you could **feasibly investigate the title** with the resources available to you
- If there are **opportunities to collect primary and secondary data, of both qualitative and quantitative nature** in that location, for the specific research title
- If it would allow you to **access the whole mark scheme**
- If it would be **safe to conduct fieldwork** in that area
- If you would **find the investigation interesting** - you will spend a lot of time on it!

Before confirming your title, it is advisable to **start planning your data collection**. If it does not seem manageable and there are not opportunities for a wide range of data collection and potentially statistical analysis, you may want to adjust the title. Your plan should consider:

- Planned data collection techniques: primary or secondary, qualitative or quantitative
- Planned sampling technique
- A brief plan of your data presentation techniques, and which hypothesis the results would be relevant to answering.

Linking the Title to the Specification

You should make it clear as to which parts of the specification your investigation links to and explain which specific areas you will investigate.

Aims/Hypotheses

After confirming the title (e.g. What impact does longshore drift have on sediment size at Pentle Bay beach?), you will need plan out how you will break down this question into its **constituent elements** that are more manageable to investigate and prove. This will allow a clear direction for the investigation.

You may wish to create either aims **or** hypotheses:



- **Aims** (Around 3) - What are your **targets for the investigation** and **what do you want to find out?**
 1. To determine the size of sediment along Pentle Bay beach
 2. To consider whether coastal management strategies have impacted on sediment size at Pentle Bay Beach
 3. To assess whether prevailing wind has lead to the process of longshore drift
- **Hypothesis/Sub-Questions** (Around 3) - The hypothesis/sub-questions should help give **direction to your investigation** and **link directly to the aims:**
 - a. Sediment size decreases along the beach
 - b. Coastal management has had no effect on sediment size at Pentle Bay Beach
 - c. Prevailing wind blows in a regular direction and has caused the process of longshore drift

Initial Research for Hypotheses

It is important to **research relevant and contemporary issues** surrounding your fieldwork topic and title as well as the **theory that supports these areas**. This may be referenced in an **introduction** (to be written toward the end of the investigation) and/or in the **rationale for your hypotheses**, which explains why you believe that a hypothesis will be proven.

Example hypothesis: Carbon sequestration is greater in the virgin/ancient woodland of Whittlewood Forest, compared with new woodland at Heartwood Forest.

To research the theory surrounding this hypothesis, you might **investigate other woodland areas**, both in the UK and around the world and use these results to backup theories that you research such as **carbon storage, photosynthesis and Net Primary Productivity (NPP)**. You could also research **contemporary issues** such as **carbon fertilisation and starvation**, which relate to global warming and relevant geographers in the subject. When linked with the **core theory from the specification** and the **history/contemporary issues of the locations** which you are studying, this would provide an excellent start to the investigation. Research may utilise relevant literature, articles, academic publications, videos, etc., found by going to libraries, searching the internet or using a specialist browser such as **Google Scholar**.

Location Analysis

Your investigation must have a locational context and it is important that you describe the areas which you will be studying in your report - **contemporary issues, history, location statistics etc**, which can then be used later to help form your conclusions. If you are **comparing two locations** in your investigation, it is also important to compare the **overview of the locations** in your report.

