



2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020  
RGL/ts/alevelgeography

Dear Student/Parent/Carer

I am writing to give you an update on the situation regarding A-Level Geography Individual Investigations. This is the coursework element which is worth 20% of the A-Level (Sometimes referred to as the NEA or "non-examined assessment").

There was some debate regarding the viability of this assessment given the restrictions associated with the Covid pandemic. However, the decision has been made that all students will still need to complete this element of the course. I have attached the official guidance that has been published by the exam boards. The key points are summarised below:

- All students need to complete an individual investigation (worth 20% of the A-Level).
- All studies must include primary data (data collected by the students themselves).
- Primary data can be collected remotely (e.g. online questionnaires).
- Secondary data (data collected by someone other than the student) is valid and strongly advised. The exam boards expect to see greater use of secondary data compared to previous years.

Students at St John's are in an unusual position in that they had already planned their investigations before the lockdown restrictions were imposed (indeed they had already written their introduction sections). Since our return to school in September teachers have been supporting students with their projects. Students have been asked to adapt their project plans to make them as safe as possible. A small number of students have decided to scrap their original idea and design a completely new project.

Student safety is always of paramount importance during data collection. The pandemic has introduced another risk that has to be carefully managed. Before students can collect data, we need to be certain that all parties are comfortable with the risks involved and that any risks have been minimised as far as possible. With this in mind, I would be grateful if you would have a conversation with your son/daughter about their project proposal. Before collecting any data, students need to complete a risk assessment (Please see attached document). Students should consider "normal risks" such as exposure to the weather, traffic and stranger-danger. Students should also consider risks associated with Covid transmission and clarify the steps being taken to minimise these risks (some example entries are shown on the document). The risk assessment document needs to be signed by students, parents, and a member of the Geography team. I would be grateful if your son/daughter would return their completed risk assessment by Friday 9th October.



If you have any concerns about the issues raised in this letter, then please feel free to contact me.

Your support with this process is greatly appreciated.

Best regards.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R Lacey', written in a cursive style.

Mr R Lacey  
Head of Faculty Humanities

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Hazards	Persons at risk	Risk without controls			Control Measures	Risk with controls		
		Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Total risk rating	Likelihood (1) unlikely (2) Rarely (3) Infrequent (4) Sometimes (5) Often Severity (1) Inconvenience (2) Minor injury (3) Injury / Illness (4) Major Injury (5) Fatality	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Total risk rating

I am comfortable with the risks involved and the control measures identified:

Position	Print Name	Signature	Date
Student			
Parent / Guardian			
Teacher			



# A Level Geography support and guidance for submission 2021

**AQA, Pearson Edexcel, Eduqas and OCR have worked together to provide guidance about fieldwork and the Non-examined (NEA) assessment and to highlight support available.**

## What has changed for 2021?

- Centres do not need to show, or declare to exam boards, that they have given students the opportunity to undertake 4 days of fieldwork.
- There is no requirement to complete both physical and human fieldwork opportunities.
- Exam Boards to provide guidance about primary data for the NEA.

## What has stayed the same?

- The NEA has been retained and is still worth 20% of the A Level qualification.
- The marking criteria for the NEA.
- The content in the specifications and the examination of this content.

## What does this mean for teachers and students?

- Teachers should try to provide students with the opportunity to engage in fieldwork where possible, whether that is 'in the field' and / or virtually, to prepare them for their NEA.
- Recognition that in making fieldwork accessible, being 'in the field' may include the local area (to the centre / student's home) and school grounds.
- Students will not be compromised in terms of their performance if they are not able to conduct fieldwork in a more 'traditional' way due to public health issues.

## What do we mean by virtual fieldwork?

- For teachers - 'Opportunity to develop a sense of place remotely using maps, images, data and information without directly visiting that particular place. Geographical enquiry and fieldwork skills can be integrated into the delivery of virtual fieldwork'.
- For students - 'Opportunity to collect data remotely without directly visiting that particular place'.

## Supporting teachers and students in understanding the requirements

We are aware of the challenges students may face in designing their methodology and collecting primary data due to health and safety restrictions. To support students with their investigations we want teachers, markers, and moderators to understand the variety of different approaches to collecting primary data.

## What has not changed for the NEA?



Students carry out an 'independent' investigation linked to the specification.



Primary and secondary data collection should be included in the students' investigation. Secondary data is strongly advised and is a requirement of some mark schemes. A balance between primary and secondary data has not been defined for past cohorts. This remains the same for 2021.

### Primary data is:

Collected at first hand, collected directly by the researcher solely for the purpose of the investigation, and is original and unique.

### Secondary data is:

Collected by someone other than the student doing the investigation. It has been collected in the past by someone else (including students) but made available for others to use. It was generally collected for another purpose originally.

An investigation based purely on secondary data has not been appropriate for past cohorts and would not be considered appropriate in 2021.



Students' investigations engage with a place to develop a geographical context (including a physical and / or human environment).



Sufficient data is collected for students to conduct a valid analysis and draw conclusions (NB reference to data can include quantitative and / or qualitative).

**For the 2021 submission of NEA**, we are still expecting to see primary data form part of their investigation. It is acceptable for primary data to be collected without "going into the field", students can make use of technology to collect data by virtual means. In this context, the "field" can include desk-based studies if there is an element of primary data collection.

### Approaches to virtual primary data collection could include:

- Online surveys, interviews or focus groups
- Use of Google Street view and webcams
- Social media platforms to engage with an audience or extract text

NB – this is not an exhaustive list

To support students with their primary data collection, they could use unmanipulated (raw) data such as census, USGS or meteorological data as a source. We would expect this to be used alongside further sources of primary data collected by students.

Like with all other cohorts we would expect to see a variety of primary and secondary data sources used in student's investigations. This enables students to cross reference (triangulate) results, leading to increased validity and reliability in formulating their analysis and conclusions.

### **What differences might we see in the students' NEAs in 2021?**

- How they have collected primary data – there could be more variety and innovation.
- The topics students have chosen to investigate – we may see a wider range chosen.
- Accessibility of fieldwork opportunities – we may see more investigations rooted in the student's local area.
- We may see investigations that include more secondary data than in previous years.

### **Virtual fieldwork - Free subject community support**

Teachers and Students can draw from the expertise that exists in the subject community to deliver and develop fieldwork skills virtually. Some of these resources are outlined below and on the following pages:

#### **The Geographical Association**

[Virtual fieldwork](#)

[Geography Education Online](#) (GEO)

#### **The enquiry approach**

- [Curriculum planning](#)
- [Questions generator](#)
- [Critical thinking: a model for achievement](#)

#### **The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)**

- [Fieldwork resources](#)
- [Guide to the NEA](#)

#### **ESRI**

- [GIS for NEA – beyond the basics for data visualisation with ArcGIS](#)

#### **Further resources**

- [Google Education](#) – expeditions