

Consultation Response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

- **Ofqual: Arrangements for non-exam assessment for qualifications in 2022**

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the [Ofqual consultation Arrangements for non-exam assessment for qualifications in 2022](#).

The following is made as a public response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

Questions for each subject change.

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to carry forward specific assessment arrangements for 2021 into 2022 for each GCSE and GCE subject in the section above?

The Society **strongly disagrees** with Ofqual's proposals for fieldwork in geography GCSE, AS and A Levels.

Question 2

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for 2021 into 2022 for each GCSE and GCE subject in the section above?

Fieldwork is an integral part of geography, at all levels, and supports learners to develop distinct geographical knowledge, understanding and skills.

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) commends the hard work of geography teachers and their pupils in dealing with the pandemic since March 2020.

The Society has been heartened to see that – even amidst the challenges of Covid-19 and the additional workload pressures of TAGS – that geography teachers and their students have been returning to the field.

Ofqual's desire to provide certainty for schools over the coming year through a clear and definitive proposal is welcome. However, the proposals presented are not the right way to move beyond the current position.

Ofqual's proposals would force schools, for a further 12 months, into the restrictions on fieldwork that they experienced during the earlier stages of the pandemic. A trainee teacher commented,

Teacher commented: "I was delighted that our Year 10 Geographers were out on Monday (24 May) measuring the River Chess and I see no reason why activities like that should not be possible next year."

The Society recommends:

1. Re-establishment of the requirement to undertake fieldwork in two contrasting locations. The Society believes that this is a reasonable expectation and that it can (with the flexibility provided in point 2 below) be undertaken over the next academic year.
2. For the 2021-22 cycle the Society would be content to see flexibility in the locational requirements of where the two examples of fieldwork might be undertaken. For example, the first piece of fieldwork is might be undertaken on the schools' grounds, whilst the second undertaken further afield.

AS Level Geography

Ofqual proposal to carry forward from 2021, remove requirements:

- for written statement that centres have given students the opportunity to undertake two days of fieldwork
- to answer questions in the exam relating to their own fieldwork experience.

The Society **strongly disagrees** with this proposal.

The Society recommends:

1. Re-establishment of the requirement to undertake two fieldwork days during the AS Geography course over 2021-22. The Society believes that this is proportionate and a reasonable (necessary) expectation to be undertaken over the next academic year.
2. Re-establish the requirement to answer questions in the exam relating to their own fieldwork experience.

A Level Geography

Ofqual proposal to carry forward from 2021:

- Remove requirement for written statement that centres have given students the opportunity to undertake four days of fieldwork.
- Exam boards to review their guidance about their expectations relating to primary data for the non-exam assessment.

The Society **strongly disagrees** with this proposal.

The four-day requirement is vital to ensuring that fieldwork is an integral and integrated aspect of A Level geography and supports a student's development of their individual investigation (NEA). The Society supported the inclusion of four days of fieldwork within the current specifications, along with the written requirement to report on this, and the introduction of the NEA.

A Head of Geography from a Sixth Form College noted: "The requirement to take part in four days of fieldwork has strengthened the hand of Geography Departments in negotiating time for students

away from the conventional curriculum. It is ironic, as we seem to be returning to near normal classroom teaching, that working outside, a much more Covid-safe option, is proposed to be curtailed. This proposal is harmful to the subject and more importantly those students who sign up to it.”

Specific concerns have also been raised by Higher Education geographers, particularly with regard to the successful transition of A Level geographers onto undergraduate courses. Ofqual’s proposals could create the situation where young people applying to study geography at university in Autumn 2022 could have undertaken no fieldwork in Y11, Y12 and Y13. Professor Jenny Pickerill, University of Sheffield, has commented: “Fieldwork is integral to a high-quality geography education, and to have students arrive at university without these basic skills is worrying and ultimately harms their employability.”

The Society recommends:

1. Given the exceptional circumstances there be a minimum requirement of two days fieldwork for A Level geography for the 2021-22 cycle.
2. In addition, schools should be permitted to undertake the full four days - if they are in the position to do so.
3. Exam boards provide guidance to schools about expectations for primary data for the NEA that make reasonable adjustments in relation to the provision of a minimum entitlement of two days fieldwork

This would provide a minimum fieldwork entitlement of two days for all A Level geography students, whilst enabling those schools who are able to and wish to undertake the full four days fieldwork.

About the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the UK’s learned society and professional body for geography and geographers. The Society maintains a strong overview of the discipline, its standing and practice in schools, higher education, and the workplace. This includes the accreditation of geographers and geography programmes through the award of [Chartered Geographer](#) to individuals and the Society’s accreditation of undergraduate and Masters level geography programmes.

We advise on, and support the advancement of, geography; the dissemination of geographical knowledge to the public, policy makers and other specialist audiences including teachers, Geography ITT Scholars, and those involved in expeditions and fieldwork; and training and professional development for practising geographers. We work closely with the Department for Education, Ofqual, Ofsted, the awarding organisations, and geography teachers to support good practice in teaching and learning in geographical education.

We have 16,000 Fellows and members and our work currently reaches more than three million people per year. The Society awards the professional accreditation Chartered Geographer, which is awarded to teachers through the Chartered Geographer (Teacher) designation and accredits geography undergraduate programmes. Each year the Society works in a range of ways with teachers and pupils from about half of all English secondary schools which includes work with academies and their respective MATs, free, independent, and maintained schools.

The Society provides a significant programme of activities to support teachers during their training year and entry into the profession. We work regularly with Schools Direct, Teach First and HEI ITT



providers to provide subject specialist input into their secondary programmes and have awarded Geography ITT Scholarships to 500 new geography teachers trainees.

Over 2020-21 our CPD programme reached over 2,500 teachers and the Society's award-winning online resources are available on [our website](#).

Steve Brace s.brace@rgs.org
Head of Education and Outdoor Learning
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

May 2021