

Planning for the NEA

Component 4:

The Independent Investigation

Worth 20% of the whole A Level

Key aspects

As an independent investigation, it must be based on your own question/issue – *but this doesn't mean it has to be a unique or entirely new question.*

The 2018 Examiner Report states that *“the success of the NEA depends very much upon careful planning and preparation, and allowing candidates ownership of their work.”*

The investigation must be clearly supported by your own literature search (i.e. background reading) – that must be clearly identified in the report. Therefore it's vital that you keep a detailed record of all websites and other reading you have done: URLs and dates when you accessed the websites, full details about any books or articles you've read, etc.

You must devise your own methodology, including data collection.

The presentation, interpretation, analysis, conclusions and evaluation must be entirely your own work.

Key aspects

However...

Some aspects of the investigation can be done in groups (e.g. data collection) but you must be able to present clear evidence that you have collected your own data as part of this.

Also, you will need to be able to justify why data needed to be collected in a group compared to that which you collected on your own.

If most/all of the data is collected in a group, you could do additional data collection in your own time, e.g. for comparison purposes...

Titles can be the same/similar to another's but you must be able to present clear evidence that you have independently devised/developed your questions/hypotheses.

A note about data collected in a group:

If you need to use helpers to collect data (e.g. contemporaneous data collection at different locations for micro-climate studies) but they are not using the data themselves, then this doesn't count as 'group' data. You'd still need to explain why help was needed, though (e.g. why it was important to collect data at the same time in different locations).

Key aspects

It must be based on themes from the Eduqas A Level course – the link(s) must be clearly identified on the Proposal Form (see later)

It must be at the **local-scale**.

There must be ‘an adequate amount of field (primary) data’ to allow for effective analysis, i.e. having a small number of sub-questions but a large amount of data relating to each one.

The 2018 Examiner Report recommends “*candidates have no more than 3 or 4 sub-questions.*”

The investigation must include both primary and secondary (i.e. research) data... and all secondary information will need to be acknowledged using an appropriate system (e.g. the Harvard system) – this includes digital materials where URLs or screenshots must be provided – so keep a record of everything you’ve read.

There should be a suitable balance of quantitative and qualitative data.

Key aspects

You must complete a Proposal Form that must be agreed with me before collecting any data.

There is some really good guidance on completing the form here – so read it!

https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/geography/as-a-level/NEA%20Guidance%20and%20Proposal%20Form%20Exemplars.pdf?language_id=1

The finished report should be 3000-4000 words long (which includes all text, text boxes and supplementary material but not the appendices or the abstract). **Comment from the Eduqas A Level Subject Officer (Dec 2018): being over the word limit “... is a common problem which can sometimes be addressed by securing more focused titles at the outset.”**

The 2018 Examiner Report stated that *“the guidance of 3-4,000 words was introduced by all Boards to give candidates a clear indication of the length and nature of the report required for the NEA. A concisely written, well-directed and focused investigation will meet the Band 5 criteria for Analysis and Interpretation, Conclusions and Presentation Requirements and Evaluation whereas a rambling, repetitive one will not.”*

Specific, individual help cannot be given on how to present, analyse, interpret, conclude or evaluate your work. Nor can a draft be submitted for review/suggested improvements.

Investigation process

1. Exploring focus/theme – collaboration allowed
2. Developing Task/Title/Purpose – independent work
3. Devising methodology & primary data collection – collaboration allowed
4. Secondary data collection/research – independent work
5. Data presentation – independent work
6. Data analysis and interpretation – independent work
7. Drawing conclusions – independent work
8. Evaluating investigation – independent work

Schedule

There are 6 weeks left before the end of this term to plan/research your investigation.

Submit a Proposal Form by Friday 28th June to allow for any changes that may be needed.

You must use either the Word version off the school website:

<http://www.bws-school.org.uk/Curriculum-Exams/Geography/files/?dir=03%20A%20Level/Geographical%20Fieldwork>

or from the Eduqas website:

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/qualification-resources.html?subject=Geography&level=asaLevel>

In either case, you need **Section 2**

You will collect your data over the summer break

Schedule

Detailed guidance will be given in September on how to complete the written report – which must be completed in your own time (though there may be occasions when lesson time is given over to individual work)

There will be an interim check on progress before the October half-term (around 21st October)

Final submission will be in the *penultimate* week of the Autumn Term (wk/beg 2nd December)

This will allow time for the work to be marked, internally moderated and, if required, marked a second time (should you feel that the markscheme has not been fairly applied) and the marks logged with Eduqas by 23rd March 2020 (which is much earlier than for other exam boards)

What makes a good title/Q?

A clear/precise question or assertion that can be tested ('Does...?', 'To what extent...?')

Not purely descriptive ('What is...?', 'How...?')

Not closed (answer is Yes or No)

Allows for sufficient breadth/depth of investigation (not reliant on only one or two sets of data)

Is clearly focused (max 3-4 sub-questions) – so is not too broad or wide-ranging Permits a range of appropriate presentation and analysis techniques to be employed

Allows sufficient data to be collected to use statistical tests correctly (what are the min/max numbers needed for Spearman's for e.g.?) – this can be an issue with questionnaires where subgroups (e.g. age/sex) result in groups that are too small

Related to the course in some way (though not necessarily what you have been taught)

Achievable, given:

- scale (local)
- time (for collecting adequate data)
- suitable locations
- accessible data
- equipment...

Getting started

Specific to our exam board (Eduqas)

Fieldwork tasks already undertaken

Appendix C in the specification provides suggestions of fieldwork opportunities in relation to each theme. They are designed as guidance only in order to provide starting points; they are neither comprehensive nor mandatory.

Student Guide #4: Water and carbon cycles; Fieldwork and investigative skills

Getting started

Other resources

These will be more general to be flexible enough to match all exam boards. Take care to refer to the requirements laid down by Eduqas. For example, the advice on completing the Proposal Form has some good investigation ideas but these are not necessarily appropriate to our exam board:

https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/geography/as-a-level/NEA%20Guidance%20and%20Proposal%20Form%20Exemplars.pdf?language_id=1

The **Field Studies Council (FSC)** is an excellent resource for all aspects of the NEA:

<https://www.geography-fieldwork.org/a-level/>

(Ecosystems dealt with here: <https://www.biology-fieldwork.org/> but take care, as not all of these would relate to our specification (or geography!))

The **Barcelona Fieldwork Centre** has many ideas for investigations (in and around Barcelona, of course!), but these might give you some idea of what can be investigated. Have a look at their fieldwork packages: <https://geographyfieldwork.com/GeographyFieldworkPackages.htm>

The **Royal Geographical Society (RGS)** has many useful guides for students undertaking their NEA:

<https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/a-student-guide-to-the-a-level-independent-investi/>

Also downloaded to BWS website