

A LEVEL GEOGRAPHY

Designing your methodology and data collection







Your methodology is your overall plan of what data/information and evidence you will collect, where and how.





- Balance between primary and secondary data collected
- A quantitative or qualitative investigation? You could take a mixed methods approach, which is a combination of both
- Sample size and method(s) chosen





You will need to explain and justify why you have chosen these.

Primary fieldwork  This is what you undertake 'in the field' by observing, measuring, collecting and recording. Think about: (1) the time you have available, (2) quantity of data you need and (3) how easy and safe it is to collect. 	Secondary data/evidence  This information is collected through a variety of sources e.g. census, , newspapers, images or graphs. Use key words from your investigation title and your sub-questions to narrow down your searches. 
Quantitative research Numerical data often collected and recorded through measurement e.g. beach profile or infiltration rates. Introducing quantitative geography 	Qualitative research Non-numerical information such as people's opinions, feelings and /or beliefs. These are collected for example through surveys, interviews or focus groups. Qualitative research ideas 

Sampling You cannot collect huge amounts of data for your investigation, so your sample is a 'snapshot' used to represent a larger picture. You will need to decide on your 'sample' size i.e. how much data represents enough for you to make a judgement in your analysis and conclusions. Sampling methods are explored further here and here . 
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Reliability and validity  When you collect data - how accurate is it? Have you accounted for any potential errors i.e. checking equipment? It is important to have consistency in data collection. If you were to repeat your data collection would you get the same results? Have you tried to avoid bias in your data? Find out more here .

Ethical, socio-political factors Your data collection will involve people directly (e.g. survey questions) or indirectly (e.g. getting land-owner permission). Think about the issues which influence your data collection as well as what you do with the data/information collected e.g. different viewpoints, bias, data representation, assumptions from data and reporting accuracy. Find out more here 
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCR A Level Geography Investigation Student Guide • OCR student independent investigation exemplars (see candidate exemplars tab) • Field Studies Council – Geographical Investigations • How to use geographical information systems to support the A Level investigation • Royal Geographical Society student guide to the A Level independent investigation

Fieldwork methodologies in Geography

Quantitative

Scientific methods, collecting numerical data

Process e.g. erosion, infiltration, respiration

Experiments e.g. pH values

Test e.g. a hypothesis

Mapping e.g. GIS, OS - relief, terrain

Computer modelling e.g. to compare to real life data

Questionnaires e.g. Likert scale/ranking answers

Measuring and recording e.g. beach profile, carbon flux

VS.

Qualitative

Collecting non-numerical data in open-ended approaches

Transects e.g. line following a route where a survey or observations are made

Derive e.g. an unplanned journey through a landscape

Surveys e.g. gathering information on a larger scale

Focus groups e.g. to discuss 'an issue/idea'

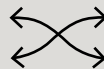
Interview e.g. informal, in-depth

Place check e.g. survey of an area

Ethnographic e.g. observation of behaviour

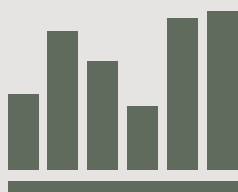
Questionnaires e.g. face to face or online

Remember



mixed methods

Explore a combination of both approaches



Primary data

Data collected from fieldwork and/or any raw/un-manipulated data e.g. census.



Sampling techniques

A snapshot of data collected to represent a larger picture

Random

Least bias sampling, equal chances of selection

Stratified

When there are sub-groups of unequal size, data gathered is proportional

Systematic

Even distribution or regular intervals for data selection