

# The Pilot

## Summer is almost here!

No doubt things in school are hectic at the moment with the preparations for examinations and coursework submissions. I hope that you are finding time to enjoy the subject despite these essential demands.

This edition of the newsletter is all about looking forward, celebrating the success of the Pilot and planning for the coming changes to the GCSE specifications. In the newsletter this term you will find the following articles:

- Sounding Board update
- Timeline for GCSE changes
- Pilot GCSE teacher resource pack
- A letter to candidates from the chief examiner – how to deal with the exam
- How to put your coursework package together for your moderator.
- What would you say to a specification development team if you had the opportunity?
- Teacher and Student voices.

I'd also like to draw your attention to a number of opportunities for teachers to engage with in the coming months:

The highly successful Pilot VLE conference has been reopened to link to the newsletters, on the VLE you will now find further discussion pieces and links to the resources from the conference last October. Do take the time to join in and share you views. Follow the link below to revisit the site. Your username and password will be the same as those used in October, however if you have forgotten them do contact me – [nreckless@geography.org.uk](mailto:nreckless@geography.org.uk) - and I will remind you.

<http://pilotgcse.geography.org.uk/>

On the site there remains all the resources from the conference including innovative and engaging resources for both the core and optional units, details to help inform your planning and assessment through the pilot, and space to discuss or revisit discussions. PGCE students have a section in which they can share their experiences of the pilot in relation to the other syllabus they may have experienced and there is information for all centers from OCR.

Each newsletter will also signal new or updated resources, and new for this term the VLE will include...

**10<sup>th</sup> July 2007 - Free Geography 21 Conference** for all pilot and non-pilot schools. Do come along to the conference held at Jury's Inn, Birmingham. The event is free and will be a useful day of CPD for all Key Stage 4 teachers. Bookings can be made by contacting Lucy Oxley at the GA - [Loxley@geography.org.uk](mailto:Loxley@geography.org.uk) - or using the online booking form at <http://www.geography.org.uk/apg>

**Talk on GTT.** As the pre-release materials for schools are now with you, many teachers have expressed an interest in talking about and sharing their responses to these materials. An excellent place to do this would be the talk section of the Geography Teaching Today site. The following link will take you directly to the pages where you can then begin to share your reactions, thoughts and best practice with other teachers:

<http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/talk/pilot-gcse/>

## **Pilot Sounding Board Update**

The sounding board advises the GA on how best to support all centres involved in the Pilot. It also considers how Action Plan for Geography resources can support geography provision in schools for 14-16 year olds.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April the sounding board had a very positive meeting with all of the GCSE awarding bodies to discuss potential specification developments. The QCA revisions to the subject criteria for Geography will create some really exciting possibilities. The sounding board was very grateful to all the organisations for attending what was a very successful and encouraging meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to share the high quality geography, centres are engaging with through the Pilot GCSE specification, and to highlight the many positive evaluations that have been produced over the last 3 years of the Pilots lifespan.

We are very grateful to Dr Phil Wood from Leicester University who has summarised many of these evaluations for us. His paper ([http://www.geography.org.uk/download/GA\\_PRPIlotSummary.doc](http://www.geography.org.uk/download/GA_PRPIlotSummary.doc)) may well be of value to you in your school, particularly when you have option events or parents information evenings to prepare for. Phil has also prepared a short PowerPoint presentation ([http://www.geography.org.uk/download/GA\\_PRPIlotEvaluation.ppt](http://www.geography.org.uk/download/GA_PRPIlotEvaluation.ppt)) which highlights his main findings. This is powerful information may also useful to you when you are preparing reports for your head teacher or senior leadership team about the Pilot GCSE.

It is evident that there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the curriculum opportunities created through the Pilot Geography GCSE specification. The sounding board meeting members were able to not only share the formal evaluations of the Pilot with the Awarding Bodies, but also the voices of teachers and students who are engaged on the course. For more on this see the later article on teacher and student voices.

It is hoped that the sounding body and the awarding bodies will continue to meet and discuss the forthcoming opportunities to secure relevant and engaging geography for our young people. If you have any comments about the Pilot or the impending specification reviews do use the talk section on the Geography Teaching Today website at the Pilot section by visiting <http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/talk/pilot-gcse/pilot-gcse/>

Or contact Nicky Reckless at [nreckless@geography.org.uk](mailto:nreckless@geography.org.uk)

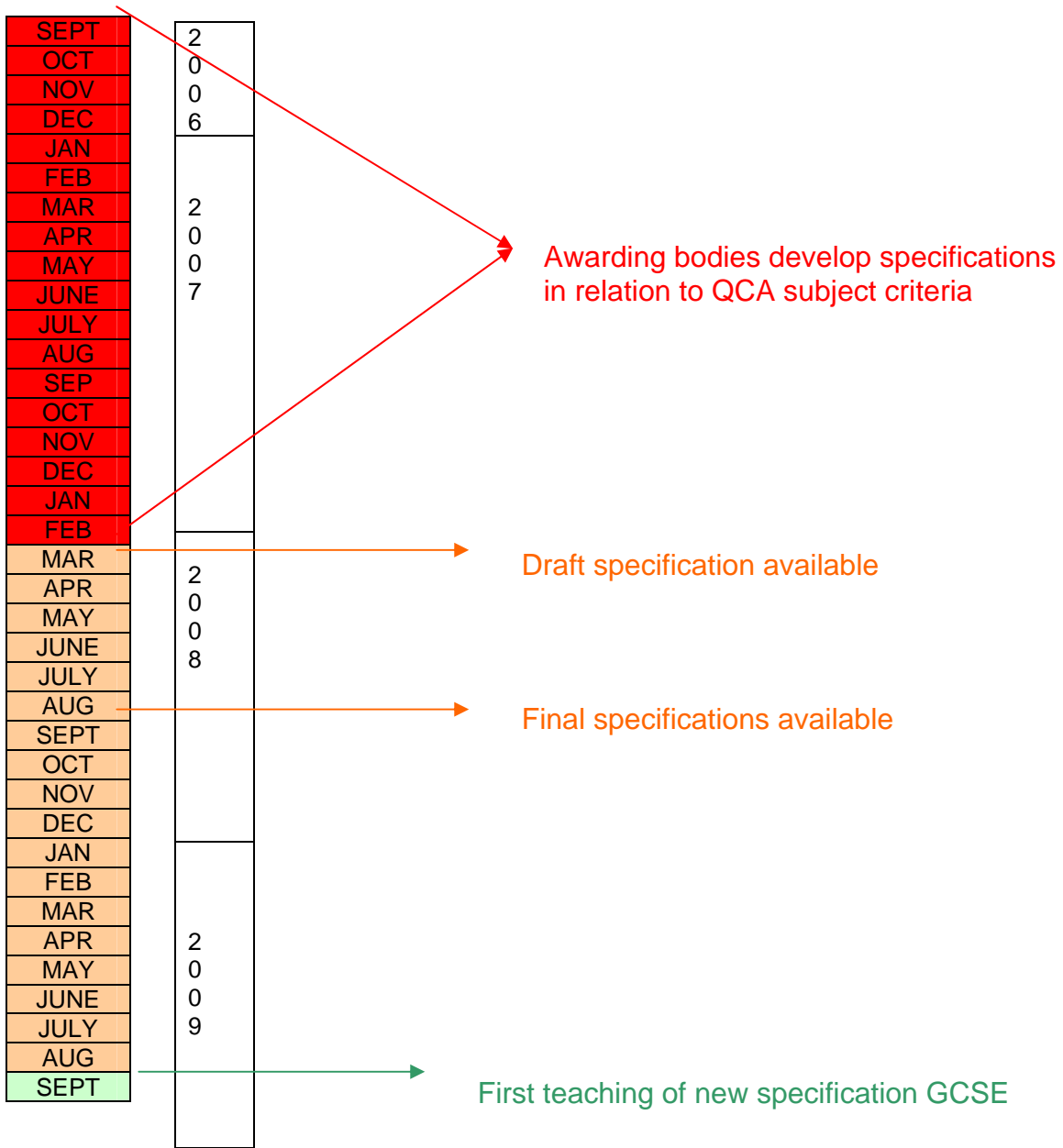
## **Timeline for changes to the Geography GCSE**

The GCSEs are being revised to reflect the new QCA criteria, and the 14-19 reviews. For more information on these changes follow <http://www.qca.org.uk/6.html> to the QCA website where further reading and materials can be found.

First teaching of the new specifications will be in September 2009, with draft proposals available from 2008. The new specifications will apply to all subjects with the exception of Science and Maths, and a large emphasis of the changes will reflect the issue of coursework. Coursework will no longer be teacher set and marked, but will be replaced with 'controlled assessment'. At the time of writing there was not a great deal of clarity as to what this might mean. QCA are planning to provide advice and guidance to Awarding Bodies in due course.

The timeline on the following page reflects the process that the awarding bodies will go through. It highlights some of the dates that will be significant to teachers. Over the coming months it will be important that we all keep our knowledge of changes as up to date as possible to ensure the voice of geography continues to be represented. Do check the awarding bodies' websites, QCA website and use the Talk section of the GTT website to share opinions, concerns or thoughts about these developments.

## Timeline to represent the GCSE specification change process



## Pilot GCSE Teacher Resource Pack

<http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/pilot-gcse/resource-pack>

The Pilot GCSE offers both teachers and students the opportunity investigate geographical issues and themes with a relevance to the lives of 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens. The Pilot has evolved over the past three years, and the downloadable teacher's resource pack is an updated version of the original. This is still available at <http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/pilotgcse/teachersresourceguide/>

The new pack has been separated into two sections. The first is aimed at supporting and furthering departmental curriculum making. This gives an insight to the thinking behind the Pilot and rationale for its development. In the second section, the emphasis is much more on support and sharing good practice. There are examples of resources that have been developed by centres and practical advice on the use of resources that engage and inspire.

Please take the time to download the pack - it is a useful tool, not only for Pilot teachers, but also for all geography teachers looking for innovative ways to tackle their GCSE syllabus.

Sharing good practice is a valuable experience for all and it would be great if you felt that you were able to contribute. Do please use the talk pages of the GTT website <http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/talk/pilot-gcse/> to discuss any issues connected with the Pilot. If you feel you would like to share you work with the wider community, please obtain the appropriate permission and forward resources to [nreckless@geography.org.uk](mailto:nreckless@geography.org.uk)

## Preparing for exams

In this next section, Lesley Moule, Principal Examiner to the Pilot GCSE, explains how she encourages her own candidates to prepare their answers for the exam to get the highest possible marks:

*A letter from the Principal Examiner to pilot GCSE candidates...*

Dear Candidate

I want you to achieve the best mark you possibly can in this summer's examination and so I've outlined below some things for you to think about. Please read the bullet points carefully, I'm sure your teachers will help you if there's anything that you are not clear about. Don't go into the exam room worrying about anything.

- If a question has more than 6 marks, chances are that it will be **levels** marked. This means that you need to develop you idea as much as possible. If you only get to Level 1 on a 6 marks question you can only have 1 or 2 marks, if you get to Level 2 you can have 3 or 4 marks and only when you get to level 3 can you have 5 or 6 marks.

Let me give you an example:

'Why did you go downstairs last night?'

Level 1 answer 'I went to the kitchen.'

Level 2 answer 'I went to the kitchen because I was hungry.'

Level 3 answer 'I went to the kitchen to make myself a cheese and pickle sandwich because I was hungry.'

Make sure you make cheese and pickle sandwiches in your written answers. I am sure you know the answers but you don't always say enough and this means I can't give you higher marks.

- Make sure you obey the **command words** in the question and only do what they say. E.G. 'describe' means just that – do not 'explain'- there won't be any marks available. If your teacher has past papers make a list of typical command words and make sure you understand them
- You have studied a 'My Place' and an 'Extreme Environment.' Regardless of what is in the Resource Booklet you will still need to know them. In the exam room it's very easy to confuse '**My Place**' with your '**Extreme Environment**' but unless you live in the Himalayas keep them separate! If you are not sure which area is which, ask your teacher. When you do your revision for these topics, write the notes for each in different coloured pen or on different coloured paper.
- Look at the number of lines available to write on and **try and fill the lines allocated**.
- If there is space, draw labeled **diagrams**. They score well and often are a better way of illustrating what you are trying to say. It's sometimes easier to show how steep a slope is by drawing it rather than describing it in words.
- Learn **definitions**. There are key words in the specification e.g. globalisations, interdependence, make sure you can define them. You may not be specifically asked to do this but a question may assume you understand the term.
- Some questions will ask for your opinion. Don't be afraid to start your answer with '**I think**' then back up your ideas to explain why you think in that way.
- Take the following into the exam room: pen, pencil, coloured pencils, ruler, and calculator.
- When you get the Resource Booklet your teacher will help you to **DUMP!**
  - i) **D**ecide what the key issues are,
  - ii) Make sure you **U**nderstand what photographs are showing, the data contained in graphs and key words. If there is an Ordnance Survey map can you read the scale/ give grid references / describe a location etc?
  - iii) **M**ake connections and find the similarities and differences between the places in the Resource Booklet and your 'My Place' and your 'Extreme Environment.'
  - iv) **P**ractice writing answers making sure you reach the higher levels.

Good luck and do your best, remember we want to give you marks!

Lesley Moule

### **Managing Coursework in the Pilot GCSE**

In this next section, Rob Clemens from West Ex has written a short piece about how his centre organizes their coursework. It is one example of how to get through the annual nightmare that is collating our students' coursework and getting it sent off to our moderators. For many of you this piece will simply re-affirm the good practice that you already have in place within your own school, for other centers, especially the third cohort it may prove to be a helpful tool to plan with.

*Contribution from Rob Clemens:*

"... Every year this has seemed like a huge task to collate all of the coursework for the pilot. However, every year the task has run pretty smoothly. Collecting coursework begins with students handing in their first piece of worked based around the Extreme Environment topic. The students must ensure that their name and candidate number is on each piece of coursework. This piece is marked using an in-house mark sheet; it is then placed in a file. Next the piece of work for the Consumerism topics is collected and marked and finally My Place work is handed in and marked. The candidate authentication sheet S2006 is given to students to complete, this is

then kept in the centre. All three pieces of work are stored in a plastic wallet together. Each member of staff then allocates marks for the completed portfolio; these are internally moderated at a Department meeting. Once marks have been agreed staff complete the GCW742 carbon copy sheet. These marks are then transferred to the MS1 sheet and sent to the exam board and moderator. It is then a case of waiting for the request for a sample of work to be moderated.

When this is received we have 3 working days to collect all the pieces together. At this time photographs are taken of any display pieces of work like posters for example. Radio broadcasts, PowerPoints, websites and musical pieces are transferred to CD if this has not already been done. The work is then placed in a folder ensuring that each candidate's name and number is on each piece of work. If pictures of work are on a CD then a note is included in that candidate's portfolio pack to explain this to the moderator. Inside the folder the sample list is included to show all the candidate names, along with a copy of each coursework task sheet. This is important so the moderator knows exactly what was involved in the piece of work. The School name, coursework title and unit code is placed on the folder.

In Year 11 the same procedure is followed however it is important that each folder is clearly labeled with the correct option number. We tend to run five or six of the modules each year and it is important to get the correct work in the correct folder. This labeling also helps the moderator to moderate each option. ...”

### **If you could talk to the Awarding Bodies...**

As the awarding bodies and their development teams prepare to begin writing the new GCSE specifications, the sounding board asked Alan Parkinson and his pupils to tell us what they would like to say to the awarding bodies. Their thoughts are shared below. We are certain that you will enjoy reading them.

Tony Cassidy's pupils have created a blog, to share their feelings, and the link is included. Do take time to have a look at the pupil voices. You might like to ask some of your pupils to create something similar and link to the pupils who are already shouting out for geography.

### **Contributions by Tony Cassidy and Alan Parkinson**

- Reduced emphasis on content although the ACTUAL content would surprise a lot of people by its depth and relevance which has allowed us to be much more flexible with our approach to teaching and hence, hopefully, has engaged students more.
- Reduced content has also allowed us to look in depth at issues and develop interconnectedness between different geographies, rather than flitting from human to physical and back again.
- A less prescriptive specification has allowed us to develop a curriculum that reflects the interests of both the students and the specialisms of the staff. It has also engaged via 'new localism'. Students are exploring local geographies and personal geographies, and there is more opportunity to bring in contemporary issues from the media e.g. what does it mean to be British?
- The shift in subject knowledge has provided teachers with some 'creative friction' and encouraged us to research and update our geographical knowledge. This has time implications and will not be a 'comfortable' choice for everyone given the time pressures we are under.
- Coursework is inherent to the teaching of the specification, in the form of continuous assessment. Has reduced some pressure on staff and students, rather than more 'disengaged' longer coursework studies. Has been interesting for me to move to

- something different to the same old projects that have been trotted out for the last 17 years!
- Feel that the exam is a much fairer judge of geographical qualities: making connections between knowledge and information, and effectively applying skills are both important, rather than the regurgitation of content.
  - Students have been excited at the new presentation, and have been keen to 'sell' the specification to other students and even other local schools.
  - Some parental concern about the name 'Pilot': they see it as something experimental, and I had to go to some lengths to ensure that at Options time, students were aware of what was involved. Not sure that I did this as successfully as I could have done as overall numbers opting for Geography are down this year.
  - Controlled Assessments have worked well, as students are aware of the time constraints – important not to be too tight with time for weaker students – would have to explore giving extra time depending on ability?
  - Some 'in house' issues relating to Work Experience and other time pressures in Year 10, which create issues when Geography is the only subject following the new pattern.

### **Student Voice**

One of Tony Cassidy's pupils has started his own Pilot GCSE blog, and this makes interesting reading! Useful for the 'student voice'...

You can find it at <http://tdstringy.wordpress.com/>

### **Pupil comments on the Pilot:**

"I think the way of assessing geography is great with the coursework in year 10 and 11 and the final exam on year 11."

"I think that we should get a bit more hard core geography in there such as a unit on geographical skills: including maps, land surveying, field coursework, rocks etc and these skills will be assessed practically. Like in science, some 'can do tests'. It will add a practical element to geography which most people will enjoy."

"I prefer having assessment spread through the year rather than all at the end."

"It was very interesting to look at our local area and have a chance to talk about things that interest us."