

Geography

How you can succeed in your
Junior Cycle Geography CBA



by Marian Gill

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Introduction

The new Junior Cycle Geography course allows students the opportunity to showcase their work in 2nd and 3rd in the form of the CBA (Classroom-Based Assessment). These are two specific tasks which are given to students by your class teacher and for which you will be given two “descriptors” (more about that later!).

These descriptors will be added to your Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement alongside the grade you get in your exam at the end of 3rd year.

For some students, you may have already completed CBAs in other subjects, but for others the idea of doing a CBA may seem scary. But, fear not! That is where this CBA guide will help you through your Geography CBA step-by-step to ensure you get the highest descriptor possible.

General Information on the Geography CBA

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) are best described as the occasions when the teacher assesses the students using the specific tasks set out in the curriculum specification for each subject. They are completed within the teaching time allocated for each subject. (NCCA Guidelines)

There are two Classroom-Based Assessments in Junior Cycle Geography. They are assessed at a Common Level.

Descriptors

Remember!

The wording of the descriptors might seem a little confusing so be sure to **ask your teacher to explain them to you if you are unsure**. Exceptional is the highest descriptor you can get: so **aim to be exceptional!**



There are four level descriptors of achievement for each CBA; your teachers use the Features of Quality, set out in The Assessment Guidelines for each subject to decide the level of achievement in each CBA. The Features of Quality are the criteria used to assess your work as best fitting one of the following descriptors:

EXCEPTIONAL describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. While not necessarily perfect, the strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws, which are minor. Suggestions for improvement are easily addressable by the student.

ABOVE EXPECTATIONS describes a piece of work that reflects all of the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of activity of the investigation, and the work is praised for its rigour. Feedback from the teacher might point to the necessity to address some aspect of the work in need of further attention or polishing, but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.

IN LINE WITH EXPECTATIONS describes a piece of work that reflects most of the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand and is free from significant error. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention or correction, but the work is generally competent and accurate.

YET TO MEET EXPECTATIONS describes a piece of work that falls somewhat short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated Features of Quality. Perhaps the student has made a good attempt, but the task has not been grasped clearly or is marred by significant lapses. Feedback will draw attention to fundamental errors that need to be addressed.

Get to Know your Descriptors!

The best way to know what standard your work needs to be is by seeing samples. Ask your teacher can they show you some **samples of previous CBAs or any online samples**. Ask yourself **“What can I do to achieve this descriptor?”**



CBA 1 (Geography in the News): Step-by-step

What to consider before you start

WHAT IS THIS CBA ABOUT?

Geography is not “just” what you learn about in your textbook and in class:

Geography is EVERYWHERE, whether you notice it or not! It is on the news, in the newspapers, on social media, blogs and vlogs every day. That is what this CBA is about. ‘Geography in the News’ provides you with an opportunity to engage in a practical learning experience where you can see the relevance of the study of geography to the world around you.

For this CBA, you have to research a **real-life geographical event** as reported on in the media and draw conclusions on the implications of this event to people involved and the world in general.

WHEN DO I DO THIS CBA?

Your teacher will give you the guidelines on when your class will complete this CBA but it is **usually over a three week period during class time in the second term of second year.**

HOW DO I DO THIS CBA?

You may complete it as an individual piece of work, in pairs or in small groups. The format can be any of the following:

- **Visual format** - a display, photographic presentation or a poster
- **Written format** - a media article, a report, a review
- **Digital format** - a blog, webpage or slide presentation
- **Audio format** - a podcast, a voice-over, a recorded news report

Top Tip!

Play to your strengths! If you are a tech-whizz then perhaps a digital format may be the best one for you. If you are a budding artist then creating a visual may suit you best.



How am I graded on this CBA?

You will have to consider the three elements which you learn about in Junior Cycle Geography:

→ **Processes, Patterns, Systems & Scale:**

- How does your chosen topic relate to learning about a geographical process, pattern or system?
- Was this event geographically significant on a local, national or global scale?

→ Geographical Skills

- Use the key geographical questions of who, what, where, when, why & how.
- Consider the interactions and interconnections between people, places, environments and spatial patterns involved in this event.
- Use a variety of sources in your research.

→ Sustainability

- Think about any sustainability and environmental issues caused by your chosen event.

These elements are what your teacher will be looking for in the features of quality for this CBA in order to give you the highest descriptor possible.

Step 1: Choosing your topic

Choose a significant geographical event in the news

You may have one that springs to mind straight away that has happened recently; you yourself or your family may have been impacted by a significant geographical event, or perhaps there was a particular chapter in your geography course that interested you and you want to research an event relating to that topic.

Some possible ideas:

→ Exploring the physical world: (A specific significant example of)

- Earthquakes
- Volcanoes
- Tsunamis
- The Impact of Coastal Erosion
- Hurricanes
- Bushfires
- Flooding (Coastal or River)
- Climate Change

→ Exploring how we interact with the physical world:

- How people were affected by a natural disaster or weather and how they reacted
- How people prepare for natural disasters or significant weather events
- How people have tried to prevent the impact of flooding
- How people have tried to prevent the impact of coastal erosion
- How people are trying to prevent the impact of climate change

→ Exploring people, place and change:

- Migration - specific examples and their impact
- The impact of urban or rural planning and its impact on the environment
- The impact of population growth in a specific area/country
- The impact of inequality in an LDC

Top Tip!

Reflection is an important part of the CBA process so when you pick your topic reflect on the reasons as to **WHY** you chose your topic and **WHY** this topic is newsworthy.



Step 2: Choosing your format

This is the way in which you will present your research (see list above). Your teacher may advise you on a specific format in class. As advised above you should choose a format that emphasises your strengths. But work within your limits and the resources available to you. For example you may wish to put together a top-of-the-range video presentation but do you have the equipment to do this?

Step 3: Researching your topic

Researching may involve you reading books or newspaper articles, watching video clips/interviews/documentaries, writing a letter to an organisation involved, listening to radio programmes or podcasts or looking up information online. You may even want to conduct your own research through an interview with someone involved in the significant event.

When researching you must keep in mind the **key geographical questions** of who, what, where, when, how and why?

Some ideas for you:

- **WHO:** Who was involved? Who was impacted by this event?
- **WHAT:** What happened? What caused this event? What was the effect of this event? What happened as a result of this event? What could have been done differently?
- **WHERE:** Where did this event happen? Where else was impacted by this event?
- **WHEN:** When did this event happen? When were the impacts of this event felt?
- **HOW:** How did this event happen? How might an event like this be stopped in the future? How will this event impact people now/in the future? How did people respond to this event?
- **WHY:** Why did this event happen? Why did people respond to this event the way they did? Why is this even significant?

TOP TIPS:

- Keep this list of questions in front of you as you research.
- Have a page or part of a digital document for each question and write in the information as you get it.
- Also, remember to **keep note of your sources** i.e. where you are getting your information from.
- Try to get your research from a **variety of sources** - it makes for more interesting reading for your teacher!

Step 4: Completing your project

Once you have all your research completed and your format picked, it is time to **put together your response**. This may involve putting together a Powerpoint, a poster, a video - whatever you are comfortable with!

You will also need to **practise presenting** your response to the class. For some people this can be very nerve-wracking so here are some tips to help:

- Make sure you **know your response to your chosen event well**- don't just copy and paste information from the internet and read it out. You will be far more confident if you have written the information in your own words.
- **Present your information to a family member at home or a close friend**. Ask them if they understand what you are talking about and ask for their constructive feedback.
- **Take your time. Breathe**. Remember that everyone else will have to do their CBA too and may be nervous about it (even if they don't show it!).

Getting the highest descriptor

Remember from earlier we said you need to consider the three key elements?

Here is a checklist to ensure you have considered all elements before you finish your project:

Geographical Skills

- Have I considered the key geographical questions of who, what, where, when, how and why?
- Have I gathered data from a wide range of sources, including online sources?

- Have I checked that the information I found is reliable?
- Is the response presented in an organised and creative format?
- Have I included a list of sources?

Patterns, processes, systems & scale

- What are the main environmental, economic or social concerns with this event?
- Did this event have any connection with other recent geographical events?
- Did the event impact the human environment? What were the impacts for people living close to the event?
- Did the event impact the physical environment? Is this impact long term or short?

Sustainability

- What are the consequences of the geographical event?
- Describe how sustainability is a factor in this event.

Step 5: Evaluation and Reflection

Two very important skills for every student to learn are **evaluating and reflecting on work completed**. This allows you to learn from what you have done: what you are happy with, what you may not be so happy with and what you would have done differently.

It is really important that **you keep notes as you go along**. Reflect at all stages of the CBA - choosing your topic, format, during your research, completing your response and when presenting.

Your teacher will give you an evaluation and reflection document to fill out where you will be asked to consider some of the following:

1. What did I enjoy most about completing this CBA? Explain in detail.

Some ideas: Perhaps it was researching the event itself, watching videos about it, reading about it. Perhaps it was working as part of a team. Perhaps it was your first time ever doing research and you enjoyed that. Perhaps it was presenting in front of your class for the first time and it went really well.

2. What were the difficulties I faced?

Some ideas: Perhaps you found that three weeks was a very short time and you were struggling to finish it at the end. Perhaps you found it difficult to get different sources of information. Perhaps you found it difficult to present in front of the class due to nerves.

3. How could I overcome these difficulties in the future?

Some ideas: Perhaps you may need to do more work in class during CBA time so that you are not rushing at the end. Perhaps you may need to ask your teacher for more advice when picking a format. Perhaps you may need to slow down when presenting in front of the class.

CBA 2 (My Geography): Step-by-step

What to consider before you start

WHAT IS THIS CBA ABOUT?

This CBA builds on the knowledge and experience you gained in CBA1 so you will see some similarities between the two and it should not be as daunting for you!

You already know:

- The key geographical skills
- The different formats
- The three elements in the marking scheme.

If you cannot remember them then please read back over the CBA1 notes.

For this CBA you will have the opportunity to undertake a practical, active investigation into a geographical aspect of your local area. This is a great chance to do some fieldwork which is a key element of Senior Cycle Geography. It is also a chance to get away from the classroom and put your practical skills to test. Doing practical fieldwork is not compulsory for CBA2 - you may do desk research as you did in CBA1 but this will very much depend on your topic. Ask your teacher for help if you are not sure how to conduct your research.

WHEN DO I DO THIS CBA?

Your teacher will give you the guidelines on when your class will complete this CBA, but it is usually over a three week period during class time in the first term of third year (September to Christmas).

HOW DO I DO THIS CBA?

- You may complete it as an individual piece of work, in pairs or in small groups. If you are doing it as part of a group be sure to highlight in your report what exactly YOU did to ensure you get the descriptor you deserve.
- Your teacher may advise you to work in groups if the topic involves quite a lot of research so listen to what your teacher advises.
- You will need to do a “structured enquiry process”. This may sound scary but in simple terms, this means you need to pick a topic, ask questions about it, gather data, evaluate and interpret your findings and then present a report with this information. This will be explained more in Step 2.
- The report can be presented in any of the same formats as CBA 1 (see above).

How am I graded on this CBA?

As with CBA1, you are assessed under the three elements of JC Geography.

→ **Processes, Patterns, Systems & Scale:**

- How does your chosen topic relate to learning about a geographical process, pattern or system?

- Prepare a detailed response demonstrating the geographical significance of your chosen topic.
- Is this topic geographically significant on just a local scale or does it impact on a national or global scale?

→ **Geographical Skills**

- Prepare a detailed report using the key geographical questions of who, what, where, when, why & how.
- Consider the interactions and interconnections between people, places, environments and spatial patterns involved in this event.
- Gather data from a wide variety of sources in your research.
- Try to engage in field work as part of your research.
- Analyse your data to draw conclusions and evaluations.

→ **Sustainability**

- Think about any sustainability and environmental issues in relation to your chosen geographical topic.

These elements are what your teacher will be looking for in the features of quality for this CBA in order to give you the highest descriptor possible.

Step 1: Choosing your topic

Choosing your geographical investigation topic

As was the case with CBA1, you may have a local geographical site of interest that may seem like an obvious choice. You may choose from a topic in physical geography, human geography or both. You can also consider your local area as being your local town, village, county or province.

Some possible ideas:

- A study into local traffic patterns
- Changing land use in a local area
- Investigate the rock types/geology in your area
- A local environmental issue e.g. pollution, inadequate water supply, planning issues
- A study into features created by river/coastal/glacial erosion or deposition
- The impact of migration in your local area
- A study into primary/secondary/tertiary activities in your area
- A study of local weather patterns and how they affect the local environment
- A study of the local soil in my area and how it impacts economic activities
- A study of the change in population/demographics in my area

Top Tip!

Ask your parents/grandparents/family members whether there is a particularly interesting geographical feature, local environmental issue, a big change in the population of the area in their lifetime etc...in your local area that you may not know about. Again, reflection is so important, particularly for the Assessment Task after CBA2 so having a good choice for your topic is key.



Step 2: Choosing your format

As explained above, you need to do a structured inquiry process and produce a report on it.

A guideline on how you structure your report is as follows:

- **Introduction to the geographical aspect** - Give your investigation a title; outline what the study will involve and what are the aims/key questions you want answered by doing this study.
- **Aims/ Investigation questions** - what are you investigating? Where are you doing this investigation? Why are you doing this particular investigation?
- **Data collection** - This may involve a field study, an interview, a questionnaire, experiments, researching through websites, books or organisations involved.
- **Analysis** - This involves examining the data collected or research completed.
- **Findings** - This section relates back to the questions you outlined in your introduction- here you present your findings.

- **Conclusion** - In this section you draw a conclusion(s) on your findings. What has been learned as a result of your research? Are there more questions that may need to be answered after this?
- **Evaluation** - What was the overall outcome of your research? Would you have done anything differently if you did it again? What challenges did you encounter and how would you overcome these if the research was done in the future? Are there any organisations that might be interested in your research?
- **Reflection** - what was your personal experience of doing this research? What geographical skills did you learn? Would you recommend this type of research for future students to do?

How you present this report is entirely up to you and it may depend on your chosen topic.

For example, you may choose to study local traffic patterns and traffic management. Using bar charts or other visual diagrams on a PowerPoint presentation as you explain your findings to the class may be an ideal format for this. Ask your teacher for their advice on what format might be best for your topic.

Step 3: Completing your project

(i) Choose your aims:

Once you have your topic chosen you need **to think about your aims: what answers do you want to gain from your research?**

For example, if you are studying local traffic patterns and traffic management, your aim might be:

- An investigation into local traffic patterns in (your town) and how traffic management strategies aim to alleviate some of the traffic.

If you are studying river features, an aim might be:

- An investigation into whether features of erosion or deposition are more prominent in River (name your local river).

Your aims help to keep you focused throughout the project - keep thinking "I need to try to answer the questions".

(ii) Plan out your research/fieldwork:

Remember the geographical questions from CBA1? They are back!

- **Who:** Who is involved? Who might be affected by this? Who could I get information from to help with my research? Who or what organisation might be interested in the findings from my investigation?
- **What:** What exactly are the aims of my research? What data do I need to gather? What is the potential local environmental, economic or social impact of my chosen aspect? What are the future consequences of this aspect(s) on a local or a wider scale? What might be the importance of my research?
- **Where:** Where will I be gathering my data? Where will I get all the equipment/information needed to gather my data? Where has been affected by the topic I am investigating?
- **When:** When is the best time for me to gather my data? When did this topic become of geographical importance?

- **Why:** Why did I choose this topic to investigate? Why is it geographically important? Why do people/plants/animals respond the way they do to this topic?
- **How:** How have people/places/plants and animals been affected by this? How is sustainability a factor in this investigation?

(iii) Collecting your data:

Depending on your topic there are two main methods to collect data: field research (out of the classroom) and desk research (similar to what you did in CBA1).

In your report, you will need to show evidence of different types of data collection. Some examples may be:

Field research:

- Field study: a visit to a local river, beach, town, business, organisation during which you take notes and gather information.
- Experiments: looking at soil samples, measuring weather, water purity etc...
- Questionnaires: completing questionnaires/surveys with people in your local area who may be affected by the topic you are researching.
- Interviews: interviewing people in your local area who may be affected by the topic you are researching.

Desk Research:

Desk research may involve you reading books or newspaper articles, watching video clips/interviews/documentaries, writing a letter to an organisation involved,

listening to radio programmes or podcasts or looking up information online. Remember to take note of all of the sources of information as you go along and reference them in your research. In the “gathering of data” section of your report you will need to explain how you conducted your research so keep notes as you go along.

Top Tip!

You will be marked on whether you gathered data from a wide variety of sources so if you are aiming to be exceptional then this is an area you need to focus on!



(iv) Analysing your data

When you have all your data gathered, you will need to **analyse it, present your findings and draw conclusions/evaluations** from it.

You will need to relate back to your initial aims/questions:

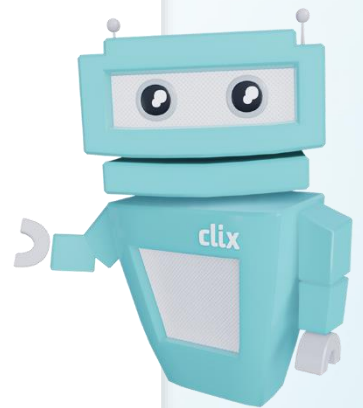
- Did your data support your aims? Why/why not?
- Did your data help to answer your questions? Why/why not?

These findings will help you to create conclusions/evaluations:

- If the data helped to answer your questions, were you surprised with the findings?
- Were your findings in line with what you initially expected?
- If the data did not help to answer your questions, then why not? What could you have done differently?

Top Tip!

You will be marked on how well you have analysed and responded to your data. An exceptional student will “draw insightful, relevant conclusions” so really think about what you have learned from doing your research. If you feel like you could have learned more by doing things differently, then it is absolutely ok to say that! Your conclusions and evaluations may help future students.



Step 4: Presenting your final report

As you did with CBA1, you will need to produce and present your final report. Again, how you do this may depend on the topic you researched. You may need to present your research to your class, either individually or as a part of your group.

Read back over CBA1 Step 4 to remind yourself of how to do this.

Step 5: Evaluation and Reflection

The evaluation and reflection on CBA2 is even more important than CBA1 as you will be completing your in-class Assessment Task based on this (more on this later!).

This is a sample reflection sheet for CBA2:

CBA 2- My Geography	Title/Aspects chosen:
What did I enjoy most about completing this CBA? Give details.	
What were the main challenges I faced? How could I overcome these in future investigations?	

<p>What new geographical skills did I develop when completing this CBA? How could I use these in the future?</p>	
<p>Who or what organisation might be interested in my research/data collected? Why?</p>	
<p>Student Name:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

Assessment Task

Following CBA2, you will undertake a written Assessment Task (AT) in your geography class. This is submitted by your teacher to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for marking as part of the state-certified examination for Geography.

The Assessment Task will be allocated 10% of the marks available for this examination. The Assessment Task is directly related to your CBA2.

The Assessment Task will assess you on different areas of your learning including:

- Your ability to **reflect on the development of your geographical thinking** through completing the research in CBA2.
- Your ability to **evaluate new knowledge or understanding that has emerged through your experience** of the Classroom-Based Assessment.
- Your ability to **reflect on the skills you have developed, and your capacity to apply them** to unfamiliar situations in the future.
- Your ability to **reflect on how your appreciation of Geography has been influenced through the experience** of the Classroom-Based Assessment.
- Your **reflections on how your experience of completing CBA2 has influenced your attitudes and values.**

Put very simply: You will need to be able to reflect on what you have learned and how you learned. As mentioned, reflection is such an important aspect of not only geography but life in general! The Assessment Tasks give you an opportunity to develop your reflection skills.

The mark awarded for your Assessment Task will be put together by the State Examinations Commission with the mark awarded for your written examination in June to determine the overall descriptor for your state-certified examination in Geography.

Online Resources:

JCT Booklet 1:

https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/99635529-c82b-4224-9a2f-6b878b8debf9/Junior-Cycle-Geography_AG.pdf

JCT Booklet 2: <https://www.jct.ie/perch/resources/geography/resource-booklet-geography-cluster-2019-20.pdf>

Helpful YouTube Clip explaining the Structured Inquiry Process:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMwGAsql17g>