

Dear colleagues,

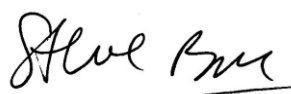
In 2017, the Geographical Association and Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) jointly welcomed the introduction of the independent investigation as part of the new A levels. Geography teachers and students have responded positively and there is much to celebrate from the first assessments. It has provided the opportunity for students to follow their geographical interests and they have produced an impressive range and quality of work.

The Awarding Organisations (AOs) have published an update on their websites titled: *Independent Investigation and Written Report (NEA)* and provided guidance through their FAQs. These make clear that the recommended word count of 3–4000 words is sufficient for study at A level. They also note that word counts significantly in excess of this become self-penalising, as they can lack focus and coherence. The experience so far has shown that a tightly structured report of 3-4000 words, clearly focused on the investigation in hand, allows the student to explain and evaluate succinctly. The GA and RGS-IBG support the need for students to write well-argued and concise investigations which meet the word length guidance.

There are well-established good practices in the way in which this can be achieved. For example, encouraging students to independently re-draft and edit their work and removing superfluous text and other materials which may detract from the focus of the report. The AOs are also all clear that teachers can continue to remind students about the recommended word count throughout their investigation without contravening the rubric.

We are pleased to note that the average length of submissions for 2019 appears to be closer to the suggested limit and hope that the guidance from your AO, the GA and RGS-IBG will further support you and your students to achieve success in their independent investigations.

Yours



Rebecca Kitchen  
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Further support and guidance from the GA and the RGS (with IBG):

Geographical Association:

- [Fieldwork at A level: your guide to the independent investigation](#) – this publication, written for students, has a section on editing and formatting investigations
- The GA website has support for A level geography and the independent investigation <https://www.geography.org.uk/A-level-curriculum>

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG):

- [A student guide to the A Level Independent Investigation \(NEA\)](#) - this publication provides guidance through the stages of an NEA and additional support materials
- [Data Skills in Geography](#) The RGS-IBG's additional support for A Level geography and the independent investigation