**CCEA GCE - Geography
(Summer Series) 2014**

Chief Examiner's Report

geography

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Geography for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

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Assessment Unit AS1 and AS2

General Remarks

A few general comments may be made before discussing the individual papers.

- Candidates need to read the question carefully and focus on what has been asked. For example, at AS 1 in Question 1(a)(i), many failed to access the full three marks as they missed the plural element in the question and only gave a single strategy.

- Teachers should encourage candidates to include diagrams, where appropriate, to enhance the quality of their answers.

- Although a brief introduction is a welcome inclusion to provide a context for their case study, candidates should refrain from providing lengthy background to make most effective use of valuable examination time. Teachers should reinforce this within centres to allow candidates to maximise their attainment.

Assessment Unit AS 1   Physical Geography

Examiners reported that the paper was well received by candidates in their centres since it examined popular themes and case studies. This was evident in the scripts, which manifested a high level of completion with few omissions. Candidates responded positively to the demands and challenges of the paper including the resource stimuli materials. The level of language employed in the scripts appeared to present no barriers to comprehension; candidates appeared to be familiar with the paper style, format and requirements. There appeared to be no major timing issues, although as always a small minority failed to manage their time effectively.

More able candidates wrote with lucidity and were well focused in their answers, with a good balance between fact, description and explanation, although fewer understood the term 'evaluate'. Few candidates exceeded a total mark above 80; at the other end of the scale, a small number of less well-prepared candidates wrote very little, gaining fewer than 30 marks. The majority achieved 40–60 marks overall, presenting acceptable written work, but often lacking precise focus on the question. The paper's mean was comparable with that of previous examination series.

This report will present a synoptic overview of the feedback presented by the examining team with some advice and guidance to centres which may enhance future attainment.

Fieldwork reports and tables of data

Since the majority of centres are fully conversant with the required content of the submitted fieldwork report and the administrative process, few issues arose this year. Teachers are to be congratulated on the well-organised fieldwork, encompassing a diversity of themes, although dominated by river and psammosere studies. Many centres use the excellent specialist services of the field centres to assist with the data collection process. It needs to be reinforced for the benefit of a few centres that the report must only contain the prescribed content. An infringement of these regulations reduced the opportunity for a small number of candidates to access all marks available in Section A of the examination. The report must include a title, a

statement outlining the location as well as the aim of the study. It is acceptable, and indeed desirable, to present the predictive sub-hypotheses which diverge from the aim as they set an effective agenda for enquiry. The table of data is also an extremely important document, which must contain raw data collated from fieldwork, as these values are essential for graphical representation or statistical analysis. The table should present the variables and appropriate units of measurement with no statistical computations applied. A number of candidates used variables not evident in the table and therefore were not creditworthy as they could not be checked for accuracy.

Section A

Q1 **(a)** Marks in this question were fairly accessible for those who adhered fully to the demands of the question. Candidates failed to achieve full marks if the hazard was not clearly linked to their fieldwork. Some of the hazards presented were barely credible, such as those who stated that the bus trip to the fieldwork location was a hazard. There were also barbed-wire occurrences in unspecified locations and livestock running rampant. The hazards should be those of the fieldwork activity, not those related to everyday life such as getting on a bus. The failure to outline more than a single risk minimisation strategy, or evaluate their effectiveness, also compromised attainment.

(b) Although all data processing stages appeared popular in their selection, only well prepared candidates, who fully understood the enquiry process, scored highly in this question. Too often the Graphical Representation and Statistical Testing stages were misinterpreted, with answers relating, respectively, to tables and the recording and measurement of primary data. Data Analysis and Interpretation often comprised superficial discussion, with no mention of the fieldwork that had actually been carried out by the candidate. Although Evaluation of Data was understood by some, many misinterpreted this stage as being an evaluation of the investigation overall. With everyone having undertaken a Controlled Assessment relating to field work only one year earlier, the attempts at this question were somewhat disappointing. Evaluation was a poorly answered stage as identified by examiners as many discussed interpretation and did not fully understand the process.

(c) **(i)** Well prepared candidates excelled in this question and competently displayed their graphical presentation skills. Although full marks were commonly achieved, marks were lost when:

- graph work lacked completion or accuracy;

- the title was not specific, with no clarification of the variables presented;

- the axes were not fully labelled to display both variables and associated units of measurement, where appropriate;

- scaling issues were evident or when the dependent and independent variables were confused; and

- a line graph was inappropriately selected when the x axis variable constituted discrete rather than continuous data.

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(ii) This was one of the better-answered questions in which good candidates demonstrated their understanding of the fieldwork investigation in a thorough manner. It was a question that clearly demarcated the abilities of the candidates. The main weakness evident in the descriptive element of the question was the tendency to provide a general comment on the trend displayed without a more detailed analytical commentary that referenced the actual results. The explanatory component provided an opportunity for well-prepared candidates to display the depth of their geographical knowledge and understanding of their results in relation to appropriate theoretical concepts. Weaker candidates provided a more superficial explanation which was often incomplete, lacked specialist terminology and made little inclusion of relevant theoretical concepts.

(d) Examiners were genuinely disappointed in the standard of answers produced in this question. Many candidates produced explanations that were little short of trivial; for example a few candidates stated that the group did not pay attention or the equipment did not work which should have been verified in the planning pilot stage.

Many failed to respond to the dual commands of the question, and commonly answers neglected to consider conclusions. Although some insightful and relevant answers were presented, others provided less plausible, simplistic responses with little or no reference to the individual fieldwork. Others failed to focus on how their selected factor influenced the 'reliability' of their data. In many instances, despite difficult weather conditions, the patterns of data collected will display similar results regardless of the weather, only the magnitude of difference between sites will differ. The weakest candidates provided worthless excuses which negatively influenced their data collection such as faulty equipment, darkness reducing visibility for data collection etc. The Group Organisation explanation usually comprised discontent over some of the less energetic members of the group in collecting data.

Section B

Q2 **(a)** This question rarely presented a problem as the majority of candidates appeared to be secure in their knowledge of the required fluvial processes of attrition and suspension.

(b) **(i)** Although this question was challenging for some, others displayed excellent photographic interpretation skills and effectively used the compass and the scale to describe the expansion of the delta. A substantial number of candidates did not read the question and presented discussion on all resource material except that required – Resource 2B.

(ii) This question presented a challenge for the majority of candidates and many examiners expressed their disappointment with the quality of the answers. Only the most able could effectively apply the information presented in the resources to the formation of the delta. These candidates recognised that soil erosion in the drainage basin produced a large volume of sediment, which was transported in the River Omo and subsequently deposited in Lake Turkana, contributing to the rapid development of the delta. Few were able to attribute the vegetation growth to the stabilisation of the soil, the process of

bioconstruction, which assists delta growth. Nonetheless, well prepared candidates were rewarded for their theoretical knowledge and understanding of delta formation processes such as deposition, aggradation and flocculation. Weaker candidates displayed a limited knowledge of such processes and provided more simplistic answers with a lack of specialist terminology.

(c) This question was well answered and a range of well-developed effects of flooding were cited. Although a case study example was not a requirement, many candidates made effective use of their Bangladesh study to exemplify their chosen advantage. A wide range of acceptable answers included a discussion of recharged aquifers providing domestic drinking water, improved agricultural productivity resulting from enhanced soil fertility, improved diet resulting from improved breeding pools for fish, disease control resulting from the eradication of pathogens etc.

Q3 **(a)** **(i)** Most candidates provided accurate labels for the incomplete Gersmehl Model. The main error occurred when candidates mixed up the transfers.

(ii) This question clearly provided a differentiated response. Many candidates relied heavily on the resource and failed to engage fully with the question, providing a theoretical discussion of nutrient cycling without displaying a specific knowledge of the mid-latitude grassland biome. Well-prepared candidates provided more insightful discussions of relevant nutrient transfers, which incorporated specific knowledge of the soil, vegetation, geology and climatic characteristics of this ecosystem.

(b) This inviting and straightforward question provided an opportunity for candidates to excel. Most competently recognised the declining trend in soil erosion over time and quoted accurate figures to justify their depicted trend. Many exemplary answers provided concise and accurate explanations of relevant soil conservation strategies. Attainment was compromised when explanations lacked depth or sufficient understanding. In particular, contour ploughing and shelter belts were especially poorly explained. Few candidates fully understood how shelterbelts reduce the surface airflow to minimise soil erosion.

Q4 **(a)** **(i)** The majority of candidates competently annotated the Ferrel and Hadley Cells and thus attained full marks.

(ii) This question prompted some good answers, which displayed a sound understanding of the relevant atmospheric forces controlling wind direction. However, weaker candidates provided incomplete explanations, as they were unable to explain fully the integration of the pressure gradient and Coriolis forces in controlling the airflow direction. Too many candidates were waylaid by considering the Hadley Cell circulation.

(iii) Most candidates correctly identified ocean currents as the horizontal heat transfer mechanism.

(b) **(i)**   There was variable success evident in this question. Many candidates correctly annotated the cross-sectional diagram of the depression providing evidence that they were secure in their knowledge of both fronts and sectors. Others however provided erroneous labels or failed to attempt this question.

(ii)   This question provided a differentiated outcome. Impressive answers provided a detailed sequence of appropriate rainfall formation processes with the inclusion of suitable meteorological terminology. Such responses clearly appreciated the subtle difference in the initial cause of air uplift at positions A and B. Weaker candidates tended to produce more simplistic generalised responses, devoid of sequence, completion and generally marred by a lack of precise atmospheric terminology. The explanation of the processes leading to precipitation formation often left out dew-point temperature and saturation level elements of the scenario. Few candidates considered the air streams involved and differentiated between the nature of precipitation at the warm and cold fronts. There was occasional confusion between frontal and convectional rainfall formation. This aspect of meteorology clearly requires greater reinforcement within centres.

Section C

All questions appeared to be equally popular in their selection and elicited responses that encompassed the entire mark range.

Q5   This inviting question, the second most popular, provided an opportunity for well-prepared candidates to display their in-depth knowledge of drainage basin hydrology. A diverse range of characteristics was selected, including drainage basin geology, pedology, topography as well as land use and vegetation cover. Differentiation between answers frequently related to the degree of explanatory depth presented. Some candidates became muddled in trying to differentiate drainage basin responses to basin shape and size. Others were unclear of the distinctions between porous, pervious, permeable and impermeable geology and soils. Many candidates also could have considered interception, percolation and infiltration in greater detail in respect of explaining discharge levels. Furthermore, the inability to describe fully the characteristics of the hydrograph or employ specialist terminology reduced attainment. The question was more capably undertaken when candidates addressed the impact of their chosen factor on both the hydrograph and river discharge. A discussion of irrelevant climatic factors such as the nature of the storm event was fairly common when examinees lacked precise focus on the question. Examiners welcomed the inclusion of annotated sketch diagrams to display the contrasting characteristics of the comparative hydrographs, although surprisingly few candidates displayed such initiative.

Q6   This question proved to be fairly challenging as it required a knowledge of the biotic and abiotic components of their selected case study as well as their interaction to produce progressive seral change. Although psammosere studies were most common, occasional case studies cited hydroseres and lithoseres. Well-prepared candidates excelled, however, as they confidently identified seral stages and thoroughly explained the progressive ecological, microclimatic and soil modifications which occurred over time. Only the most able candidates successfully employed specialist terminology and appeared to appreciate that spatial progression through their ecosystem represented a temporal transition. As in previous examination series, a minority of candidates

incorrectly selected their small scale case study and thus such descriptions related only to the final climatic climax stage of succession. Unfortunately such answers failed to display an understanding of successional processes and attainment was restricted to Level 1.

Q7 The most popular question. The majority of candidates selected Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans as the locational context for their study. A small minority fully embraced the question and provided a fluent, detailed and well written description of a wide range of hurricane management methods with reflective evaluation of their effectiveness. However, differentiation was indeed evident when candidates simply presented their case study rather than structure the material around the question. Too many candidates provided very general accounts of events, but failed to include detailed factual and evaluative aspects within the discussion. A number of weaker candidates selected post-hurricane measures, which could not be evaluated and therefore restricted attainment in this question.

Most candidates were aware of the main protection/management strategies, but failed to include relevant case study depth and detail. Few emphasised how, in the USA, prediction of hurricane development and accurate plotting of landfall gave this MEDC an advantage over the impending hazard in terms of Katrina. Nor was it emphasised exactly why this initial advantage was so overwhelmingly and quickly lost. Too many answers were diverted to generalised accounts of education and building codes, without focusing on the primary management that induced the disaster. Little detail was presented of the coastal engineering frailties and organisational weaknesses that prevailed at the time.

Assessment Unit AS 2 Human Geography

The mean for this paper increased reflecting the fact that candidates are achieving good results in the skills section.

Section A

Q1 **(a)** **(i)** A very well answered section. Candidates of all abilities could successfully complete the relevant sections in the table.

(ii) The majority of candidates were able to calculate the Spearman's rank calculation competently. Some candidates lost marks because they had not included the negative sign in their final answer. They must remember that this answer can be negative or positive. It is surprising that some candidates are still electing not to show their working out for this answer. It is worth noting that it is good practice to show all calculations. This can be beneficial because if they produce the wrong final figure they can be awarded marks for their calculations.

(iii) Many candidates failed to identify that the question asked for a geographical reason. A significant number simply restated the pattern in the data and quoted figures from the table. This is not what they were asked to do. They could not gain marks for simply describing the relationship between the two variables.

(b) **(i)** Candidates of all abilities could recognise the mapping technique that was used. They clearly are familiar with this, however, many need to learn the correct spelling of 'choropleth'.

(ii) A well answered section. Most candidates completed the map effectively and gained full marks. A small number of lost marks because they had not shaded Romania correctly. When completing a choropleth map it is important to use the exact shading given in the key.

(iii) This was a well answered section. Candidates of all abilities were able to recognise the pattern in the graph. They described this effectively and quoted figures accurately from the resource. A few chose not to name countries but used compass points reference. This was acceptable, however, it is good practice to use the resource fully and in the case of Resource 1C all countries were named.

(iv) Most candidates could effectively describe one limitation of this technique but many struggled to produce a second. They need to look at all the mapping techniques and be able to fully critique them with more than one advantage.

(c) This was the most poorly answered section in Section A. Candidates of all abilities struggled to justify a sampling technique for the two groups given. Many candidates felt that it was acceptable to use random sampling for an investigation in a river to study pebble size from source to mouth. This reflected a poor understanding of random sampling. Centres should spend time discussing various situations when different sampling techniques could be applied rather than just describing the different techniques.

Section B

Q2 **(a)** This section was answered well by more able candidates. However, the weaker candidates failed to recognise the command word "distinguish" and simply attempted to describe one or other of the techniques without describing a difference between the two.

(b) **(i)** This was generally well answered. There were a number of areas where candidates lost some marks. Firstly, they failed to describe the difference in the population structure and focused on the differences in the shape of the population structure. They need to be taught that population structure needs reference to aged or youth numbers or economically active. Secondly, they did not use figures from the resource. This is essential for full marks. Finally, some gave figures with incorrect units e.g. percentages rather than millions.

(ii) Most candidates were able to describe an economic impact of the ageing population structure. However, many failed to do this in enough detail and needed to offer more on the points they were making. Many also struggled to discuss a social impact. They clearly found this harder to do. Candidates need to be able to distinguish clearly between social and economic impacts.

Q3 **(a)** **(i)** This was a very accessible question and was well answered. Candidates of all abilities effectively identified the pattern in Paris and the other departments of the Ile de France and clearly described the resource using figures. A number lost a mark for quoting figures without stating the unit used.

(ii) Most correctly identified the urban process shown on the resource.

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(iii) Candidates of all abilities could effectively describe the effect of counter urbanisation on the Paris area but many struggled with the effect on the surrounding area. Many only focused on the effect on the urban area.

(b) This was the most poorly answered section in Question 3. Many candidates clearly did not focus on a remote rural area, some referring to Liverpool and other inappropriate areas. The understanding of this topic was poor; candidates of all abilities lost marks in this section.

Q4 **(a)** The more able candidates answered this question well and were able to identify which countries had a trade deficit and which had a trade surplus. They demonstrated a solid understanding of trade patterns and used effective geographical terminology. However, the weaker candidates struggled; they tended simply to outline the data given in the resource and made no effort to incorporate appropriate terminology or to interpret the data. Candidates would benefit significantly from being given more opportunity to interpret data. Candidates of all abilities quoted figures effectively and few did not gain some marks in this section.

(b) Candidates of all abilities were able to name a composite measure of development. However, a significant number could not describe this measure or name the indicators used in their named composite indicator.

(c) All candidates could name a type of aid and gained the mark for this. Candidates lost marks, occasionally, if they failed to describe a negative effect of this aid.

Section C

Candidates are becoming increasingly able to dealing with the demands of the longer, essay-based questions. The questions are accessible to those who completed their revision carefully. However, candidates also need to practice their skills in being able to interpret and then respond to the examination question. A number of candidates only answered one question in this section, either through timing issues or a lack of preparation.

Q5 This question was popular being answered by a majority of candidates, many of whom concentrated on the case study of France. It was straightforward, closely tied to the specification and those who had prepared properly could access Level 3, especially if they were practiced in dealing with questions such as this. Others found it difficult to address both the physical and the human factors in sufficient depth. Although the mark scheme noted that there is not a need for precise balance in the answer, there was a requirement for the candidate to have a solid discussion on each with clear and direct links to the impact on the actual distribution of people within the country.

In some answers detailed discussion on the actual distribution was lacking, e.g. named areas/regions/cities within the case study supported with figures where appropriate. Some presented solid case study material to get them to the top of Level 2 but needed to explain how the population distribution was related to the availability of resources in the area to gain further reward.

Q6   In some cases, this question was well answered. Well-prepared candidates who had learned their case studies in depth found this question to be straightforward. The most popular issue to be discussed was economic activity. Service provision was often attempted but handled poorly and many discussions on informal settlement tended to be lacklustre. In order to access Level 3 candidates needed to show that they knew specific place names and facts in relation to their chosen city.

There were a few issues with this question that limited attainment including:

- A minority of candidates misread the question and proceeded to discuss the issues experienced in an MEDC as opposed to an LEDC. This restricted the response to Level 1.

- The issues facing LEDCS are listed in the specification as being: informal settlement, service provision and economic activity. Candidates needed to address at least two separate issues in some depth. Examiners often found that candidates had not discussed more than one issue. A common complaint was that candidates looked at different aspects of service provision such as water, sanitation or access to electricity but did not extend their discussion beyond service provision.

- Examiners felt that candidates did not always clearly show depth of knowledge in the case study as there was a lack of supporting facts.

- The majority discussed the issues surrounding Cairo. However, examiners reported that candidates often spent a lot of time and effort discussing issues that were not credit worthy. For example, many seemed fixated on telling the story about the Zabaleen waste collectors in Cairo but failed to use this material in a way that addressed the question.

Q7   This question was the least popular and many struggled to achieve marks in high Level 2 or Level 3. One examiner commented that candidates either achieved very well or very poorly in this question. Many candidates seem to be under-prepared for a question such as this. Some were confused by the lack of specific reference to case study material in the question, although they could have referred to general places in their answer or made use of their case study at the national scale. There was a sizeable number of candidates who used inappropriate material to answer the question. Some seemed to ignore the question and wrote an answer with reference to colonialism, globalisation, aid, trade and debt in a LEDC (usually Ghana). Others did not write about debt at all but about regional contrasts in development (usually making reference to Italy). In both these cases, candidates seemed determined to present pre-learnt case study material and not tailor this to the question actually set. This approach often led to very meagre scores. Within the question, some candidates failed to address both of the elements: the causes of debt and the impact on the development of LEDCs. Some were able to list the different causes of debt in some detail but struggled to explain how debt might have a specific impact on the development of countries.

Assessment Units A2 1 and A2 2

General Remarks

There are some general observations that can be made before detailing the papers individually. Candidates perhaps need to be reminded about the importance of writing a proportionate amount for the marks available. Some presented scripts with over-lengthy answers for their first question with problems resulting subsequently at the end of the question paper. High

marks/good grades require a consistent performance across the paper. This can only be achieved by the candidate being disciplined and giving as good an answer to the final question as to the first one attempted. One examiner did note for A2 1 that whilst the Global Issues 20 mark Section C was not always answered in the detail needed due to time constraints, this did allow for differentiation between pupils: those who had practiced timing as a skill could perform better. Time management is a key consideration in all examinations, and in A level Geography examinations in particular it should continue to be emphasised that it is a skill of particular importance. In a number of case studies, candidates paid too much attention to introductory remarks not directly related to the question's demands. Teachers must stress the importance of introducing a case study succinctly; given issues of timing it is imperative that candidates move onto the substance of their answer as early as possible.

Some centres seem to have trained their candidates to answer the questions bringing most marks first. Whilst we can see some merit in this as the highest marking sections are attempted when candidates are fresh, the senior examining team would caution against this approach and not just because such scripts are so difficult to mark. The sub-questions have a logic to their order which is missed if the answers are out of sequence. Worse, some candidates get confused as to which questions they are actually answering and some rubric violations occurred when Parts (a) and (b) answers were not from the same question as Part (c). The Chief Examiner's advice is that candidates should answer whole questions and from start to finish.

When addressing resource-based questions, candidates should be encouraged to utilise the resources fully and to manipulate them to meet the demands of the question. Perhaps particularly when figures are provided, candidates should be reminded to use them to justify claims or substantiate arguments. Verbatim quotation from resources cannot be highly rewarded. Also, candidates should be reminded that when the question uses the phrase 'to help you', they must provide additional material.

Poor handwriting causes problems. There have always been candidates with bad writing, but some examiners insist that the problem is getting worse as school pupils now do less work by hand than in the past. Candidates with illegible writing inevitably bring problems on themselves. One examiner reported that there seemed to be a growing number of candidates who were slow writers.

Assessment Unit A2 1   Human Interactions and Global Issues

General View

Performance on this paper overall was a little stronger than in Summer 2013. The paper seemed quite accessible to most candidates with good opportunity for candidates who had worked hard to demonstrate their knowledge. Questions allowed for progression, although it was noticeable that many candidates, when asked to use the resources 'to help you' focused either entirely on the resource or their own material; too rarely were both aspects properly developed. Some candidates presented good (if sometimes overly long) answers in Section A and then a poorer Section B - 'Global Issues' – presumably because of the timing problems they had caused.

Section A   Human Geography

Option A: Impact of Population Change

Q1   This was much more popular than Question 2.

    (a)   This section was answered well on the whole with age and gender being overwhelmingly the most popular choices.

    (b)   Answers tended to focus on mortality and omit fertility or not fully understand the HIV/AIDS impact. There was often good use of resource material; stronger candidates used global contrasts better to exemplify their points. There was a lot of information in the resource for this question and quite a lot for the candidates to do and a few struggled to cover adequately all aspects of the question.

    (c)   This section was generally well done with good comparative material brought in. Peterborough, if done well, was a good case study with lots of depth and detail. Better candidates talked explicitly about the contrasts between this and their other study, usually Barra and Vatersay or sometimes Tory. One examiner thought this was a straightforward and even predictable case study question that candidates should have practiced in class to become adequately prepared to give a good answer but a number had obviously not memorised their case study detail.

Q2   **(a)**   Most candidates who answered this showed understanding but some mixed up the epidemiological transition with the demographic transition model entirely. For those who did the epidemiological transition properly, a minority didn't link the stages of the transition to development.

    (b)   **(i)**   Many candidates selected the correct period and made a fair effort at justifying their choice.

        (ii)   Most showed some understanding of Malthus and linked it to population momentum, but some just wrote general answers about Malthusian theory, the explicit link to population momentum not being fully developed.

    (c)   Many candidates focused on description of policies rather than evaluating impacts. Fertility answers were stronger than migration. China and Canada were the case studies of choice. Some candidates wasted valuable time and space with unnecessary background information on reasons for the policies, rather than focusing solely on the impacts of them.

Option B   Planning for Sustainable Settlements

Q3   **(a)**   Defensible space was often explained well. The 'how' it can be used to enhance sustainability was understood but some either focused on one point (generally crime reduction) or talked rather generally about possible issues. Nonetheless, one examiner noted this was 'an achievable question in which a significant number of candidates provided good answers'.

    (b)   Candidates drew on their own knowledge and the resource was sometimes not developed to discuss how the former industrial area was re-used. Some did not take note of the instructions in the question regarding using the resource 'to help them', with the result that they only focused on the resource. Others, by contrast, made little reference to it.

(c) Answers were nearly all on Cambridge and strategies were outlined with the impact on sustainability being the weaker part of most answers. A few candidates gave overlong introductions explaining why the strategies were needed. Those that got straight to the point did better.

Q4 The least popular question of Section A, very few attempted it.

(a) This question was not answered well, comments tending to be general. The 'environmental' section was completed better than 'social' considerations.

(b) How parks are provided was not as well done as 'why'. Some examiners commented that candidates' own material tended to be used to explain why parks were provided and the resource was used ineffectually.

(c) In this question, answers tended to consider one or two issues well and be weaker on the third. Links to sustainability were not strong. However, one examiner reported that 'this was a very accessible question and many candidates were able to use the headings to provide well-structured and thorough answers'.

Option C **Issues in Ethnic Diversity**

Q5 **(a)** **(i)** Most candidates identified race and religion quite easily and used the resources to help them.

(ii) The majority of candidates were able to identify from the resource unequal distribution of resources and cultural conflicts. Not enough candidates used their own material to exemplify and strengthen their answer here.

(b) Economic outcomes were the best described here, in most cases for Belfast; Jerusalem was second. There was good use of geographical terms and contemporary figures. Some candidates from a variety of centres presented prepared answers and under-performed.

Q6 **(a)** Another good answer from most candidates. There was understanding allied to appropriate examples. Segregation was better understood and explained than multiculturalism.

(b) Most answers made good use of the resource with reference to other material, but as before, some did not notice the instruction to use the resource to help them, and did not include additional material.

(c) Those who answered correctly considered at least two of the processes. The case study, usually Britain, Mauritius or Jamaica was done well; in some cases there was really good understanding of how colonisation, annexation and migration (where appropriate) created ethnic diversity. Some gave material relating to ethnic conflict instead of answering the question set.

Section B   Global Issues

Q7 **(a)** Candidates answered this question reasonably well, outlining problems that existed. Some gave two tightly-argued points; others had a more rambling response.

(b) Answers to the sub-section (b) questions tended to vary, but one examiner just made the bold statement that these were 'the most poorly completed questions of the paper by a country mile'. Many candidates did not mention a sampling technique; some, including people from good centres, confused

sampling techniques with the method of data collection, and did not relate them to their study aim. Random sampling and pragmatic sampling seemed to be most confused.

(c) Most answers here discussed Los Angeles and its problems. Evaluation tended to focus on the reduction of smog days. Candidates need to be reminded not to write a page (or more) on the reasons the strategies were needed if that is not the central focus of the question; background information can be too extensive, and rarely is credit worthy.

Q8 **(a)** This question was the best answered with almost all candidates achieving full marks for describing two positive impacts that result from the use of nuclear energy. This said, a few just wrote about medical issues in two slightly different ways.

(b) Answers to the sub-section (b) questions tended to vary, but one examiner just made the bold statement that these were 'the most poorly completed questions of the paper by a country mile'. Many candidates did not mention a sampling technique; some, including people from good centres, confused sampling techniques with the method of data collection, and did not relate them to their study aim. Random sampling and pragmatic sampling seemed to be most confused.

(c) In most answers candidates recognised issues and clearly gave an opinion on which side they favoured. Some answers focused a little more than necessary on Chernobyl and other global incidents given that the question specified issues faced by the British Isles. Better answers explicitly stated an opinion.

Q9 This question was answered by very few candidates.

(a) 'Posed no difficulties', reported on examiner.

(b) Answers to the sub-section (b) questions tended to vary, but one examiner just made the bold statement that these were 'the most poorly completed questions of the paper by a country mile'. Many candidates did not mention a sampling technique; some, including people from good centres, confused sampling techniques with the method of data collection, and did not relate them to their study aim. Random sampling and pragmatic sampling seemed to be most confused.

(c) Candidates here gave good responses and described the changes with a fair degree of detail. The environmental consequences were generally quite well developed; some good answers using appropriate scientific vocabulary were seen.

Q10 **(a)** A number of candidates confused pleasure periphery with the Butler model. Too few described how tourists were able to travel further or, alternatively, discussed the impetus to travel further.

(b) Answers to the sub-section (b) questions tended to vary, but one examiner just made the bold statement that these were 'the most poorly completed questions of the paper by a country mile'. Many candidates did not mention a sampling technique; some, including people from good centres, confused sampling techniques with the method of data collection, and did not relate them to their study aim. Random sampling and pragmatic sampling seemed to be most confused.

(c) This was the weakest of the four sub-section (c) questions, with change not clearly described and limited evaluation of the consequences being presented. Many candidates gave too much information on the background of the area under study (usually Mallorca) sometimes to the extent that the nature of change and environmental impacts were missed. For those who got to the point, many gave good outlines of the change and then talked in detail about the environmental consequences. Some rehearsed answers insufficiently tailored to the question set were seen.

Assessment Unit A2 2 Physical Geography and Decision-Making

Physical Geography Questions

The paper appeared successful in allowing candidates of differing abilities to respond positively to the questions posed; differentiation by ability was achieved. There was a broad range of responses across and within centres; teachers should encourage their candidates pupils to aim for consistency across their selected questions. In some cases, teachers should examine their teaching materials to ensure that they meet the demands of the specification.

On case study questions (15 marks) it was too common for candidates to show sound knowledge of a relevant study but to make little or no attempt to address the specifics of the question. Pre-prepared essay answers with irrelevant material were often associated with a centre, for example with responses detailing conflicts and interdependence aspects of the Colorado study.

Candidates' diagrams were often badly drawn and/or poorly annotated. Candidates should be encouraged to be examination ready (with appropriate equipment such as pencil, ruler and so forth), to maximise legibility and to be careful about terminology, grammar and spelling. For example, in Question 5(b), many candidates spelled Benioff with a small 'b'. Rubric errors were rare, although a few candidates omitted sections of questions.

There appears to be a trend for candidates to learn pre-prepared responses, which rarely address the demands of the current question and, consequently, are constrained in reward. In addition, as questions are set with regard to logic of task, candidates should be encouraged to address them in the order that they are set within their chosen question.

Although some answers appeared rushed, some of these were when candidates included irrelevant material in their responses. Most examiners reported that their candidates had completed the paper in the allocated time. Generally, questions were answered to an appropriate length.

Section A

Option A: Fluvial and Coastal Environments

Q1 This was the more popular of the questions in this unit.

(a) **(i)** Although the majority of candidates were able to identify two relevant hard engineering strategies from the resources, descriptions were more limited in quality than explanations. The use of terminology is an area for improvement; candidates should be encouraged to use subject-specific wording to elevate the quality of their written work. A number of candidates chose to evaluate the strategies; this was not a requirement of the question and would have cost them valuable time.

(ii) Two common and opposite errors occurred: either the resource was heavily quoted without a developed argument (candidates quoting large sections of the resource verbatim and/or without development of points made) or arguments were outlined for and against coastal protection in general, lacking valid resource use. However, the best candidates mined the resource to its full potential, substantiating detailed, relevant arguments for and against coastal protection in this area.

(b) **(i)** It is worrying to see increasing numbers of candidates utilising apparently pre-prepared essays which do not address the demands of the question as set, unless by chance. Candidates must be encouraged to be ready to adapt their knowledge to an unseen question, rather than to regurgitate a learned response.

Other sub-optimal responses presented a mere list of strategies implemented along the chosen case study. There was often a lack of balance between the benefits for people and the benefits for the environment; in a number of cases, environmental benefits were underdeveloped. Candidates with good knowledge who followed the requirements of the question scored highly.

Q2 **(a)** The majority of candidates were able to note both domestic/residential and leisure demands from the resources. However, a number found it difficult to link the resources to conflict with the physical environment. In some cases a standard response was that increased population meant more demand on supply. Some responses showed confusion with river and coastal demands.

(b) Some responses discussed the nature of channelisation at the expense of the impacts. A number elected to outline a range of potential impacts, rather than focussing in detail on the required two and, thereby, cost themselves valuable time.

Despite the clear instruction, a number of candidates neglected to include reference to place/s for illustration purposes. This is somewhat disappointing, given that reference to place/s was a specific requirement of the question and can be used to good effect to substantiate an argument.

(c) This was a straightforward question, but too many candidates did not organise their factual knowledge successfully into a coherent answer addressing the required key ideas. Some candidates failed to provide a detailed explanation as to why the coastline required protection. Others elected to evaluate the strategies implemented; this was not a requirement of the question and use valuable time in an unproductive manner.

Whilst the majority of responses included some reference to both hard and soft engineering strategies, lack of clarity around soft engineering persists; often, reference to soft engineering appears as an afterthought at the conclusion of the response. A number of candidates failed to utilise a case study of an appropriate scale; centres should examine the requirements of the specification to ensure that they are providing their pupils with appropriate information.

Option B: The Nature and Sustainability of Tropical Ecosystems

Q3 **(a)** Responses to this question were often disappointing; either the nature of the two groups was omitted or specific examples were limited. Reference to the

nature of energy transfer between trophic levels was sometimes omitted. It was pleasing to see a number of candidates successfully employing a diagram to augment their response.

(b) The resource appeared to be accessible and, in general, this question was well-handled by candidates. Those who used the three-fold sustainability structure and developed rather than copied the resource were awarded Level 3.

(c) Although Pakistan was the case study of choice, candidates were expected to present some regional detail in order to fulfil the demands of the question. Answers generally had clear and well-described causes but, on occasion, general causes were given rather than those specific to the case study under discussion. Too often, impacts were imbalanced or undifferentiated between people and environment.

Q4 **(a)** This section was a strong differentiator with some excellent and well-constructed responses from top candidates. It is interesting to note that, even at A Level, some candidates struggle when formulating definitions. Most provided an accurate definition for biomass, but less so in relation to productivity. In a number of cases, inaccurate units were quoted.

The best candidates made excellent use of the resource table and drew contrasts between the three tropical biomes. Some, however, failed to make use of the resource material or quoted erroneous data. Where resource material was used and contrasts drawn, Level 3 marks could be awarded.

(b) The Venezuela map was a challenge for some as the 'standard' latitude boundaries for tropical ecosystems differ from this reality. While this may have confused some, those that followed the command word order 'describe' then 'explain' generally did well. It was pleasing to see that a number utilised a diagram to augment their work to good effect.

Some candidates failed to describe/explain how the distribution links to both the Hadley Cell and the ITCZ, others did not account for all three biomes, and others quoted data not based on the resource.

(c) It is worth repeating that candidates should be encouraged to ensure that their introduction is relevant and succinct, and that they move quickly onwards to address the question demands. That said, in general, this question was well-handled, candidates providing relevant case-study detail tailored to address the question demands. Sub-optimal responses failed to address both elements of the question, lacked balance or provided a restricted evaluative element.

Option C: The Dynamic Earth

Q5 Question 5 was the more popular question in the most popular unit.

(a) Some of the best attempts were undermined by weak answers in this section. Only a minority focused on 'timing and scale' in their discussion and while most referred to the resource, comments were often undeveloped. In some cases, candidates were confined to Level 1 as they did not go beyond the resource itself.

(b) As noted earlier, diagrams, while generally appropriate, varied widely in quality. Some were very small, poorly or incorrectly annotated (for example, convection currents moving in the wrong direction), illustrating the wrong choice of plate margin, or strangely shaped. A key failing for many was omitting the distinct shallow to deep earthquake foci pattern in the Benioff

Zone. A number of candidates neglected to address the focus of the question and did not develop their explanations of seismic/volcanic activity.

(c) Kobe still dominates as the chosen case study, although some candidates utilised the 2011 Japan earthquake, though less successfully. In some apparently pre-prepared answers, little if any reference to Knowledge, Perception or Stage of Development was made, candidates preferring to include lengthy paragraphs on the impacts of the earthquake. It was disappointing to note that knowledge and perception were often confused with the rapid recovery being clearly linked to development. A few insisted, despite the set question, in contrasting their MEDC study with their LEDC one. Teachers must encourage their candidates to adapt their knowledge to the context and demands of the question.

Q6 **(a)** Although better candidates noted contrasts in direction and rate of plate motion on the resource map, the resource usage was somewhat limited. Any other evidence provided was often only vaguely described and, sometimes, irrelevant to the question. Too many candidates quoted theory, rather than discussing evidence for plate movement such as paleomagnetism and fossil remains. Those who did, however, often did so with a pleasing level of detail.

(b) Most made a good effort to explain the causes and impacts of their two selected effects, although the causal element of the question was not always addressed with precision. Again, candidates should be encouraged to employ a high level of subject-specific terminology if they seek high reward.

(c) A seemingly straightforward question, however, the two command words, two themes and two sides (+ and -) along with the requirement for illustrative locations made it more demanding. Most candidates found it relatively easy to attain a Level 2 response, while the more organised and analytical responses merited Level 3. On occasion, the evaluative element was underdeveloped; teachers should, perhaps, take time to elucidate the meaning of evaluation with their pupils. It was pleasing to note that a number of candidates were able to substantiate their points with an impressive range of place references.

Section B Decision Making Exercise

Most candidates were able to cope effectively with the not inconsiderable demands of two Physical Geography questions followed by a Decision Making Exercise. Despite this, examiners encountered a few occasions this year in which candidates appeared to struggle with time, and had not left sufficient to do justice to themselves in relation to the Decision Making component.

It should be emphasised, however, that the majority of candidates continue to be well prepared for the Decision Making exercise. This year's context – a port development in South West England – seemed reasonably accessible. The candidates also appeared to find most of the resources accessible. Some concentrated on the text in resources 7E to 7G but most went beyond that to use the resources more fully, including the Ordnance Survey map extract, the quotations, the images of the port development and some of the pictorial and cartographic resources provided. The best candidates used the resources effectively to move beyond the text and to provide rich and comprehensive answers which displayed a deep understanding of the issue and its component parts.

Each year, it seems, the examiner's report highlights the issue of verbatim, or near verbatim, use of the resources provided. The temptation is certainly there for the candidate as, unusually for an examination, the 'answers' are found within the text provided. However, candidates should be aware that the challenge is not to identify the appropriate parts of the resources provided to

address a part of the exercise and then to provide that information back in an unchanged, or very slightly amended format. That would not be not an appropriate challenge at any level, and is certainly not so at A level. Examiners will penalise candidates who take this approach, and they may end up with few marks. What is required, and what examiners will reward, is a reworking of the materials, including the text, into the candidate's own words, demonstrating a full understanding. Many of the examiners of this component of the paper will be familiar with the disappointment when encountering a candidate who has shown that they can clearly write effectively in their own words in Section C, but has used material largely verbatim in Sections A, B(i) and B(ii), and thus achieved a very limited overall mark.

For the second year, a name was provided for the candidate as the advisor writing the report. This is to try and circumvent the inadvertent use of the candidate's own name. Once again, this seemed to work well.

A: Introduction

Candidates were required to briefly describe the proposed project and to discuss the need for it, a reasonably common combination in this DME. Some examiners highlighted that there were candidates who misconstrued this question and instead provided a background to the issue. If neither 'need' nor 'description of the project' were even inadvertently referenced in this background, this brought no credit whatsoever. The candidates who scored best here addressed both parts of the question discretely ensuring that they had a brief description of the project, and that they clearly identified the need for it. They could have woven them together but, generally, those who did best kept them as different sections to their introduction. Occasionally, candidates introduced the potential impacts of the development in this section which was not required here. This was often an indication of a candidate who would struggle elsewhere in the decision making exercise.

B: The Likely Impact

(i) People and Economy

This question was generally well answered. The better-prepared candidates generally start with the beneficial effects of the proposed developments and then address the counterarguments, as the question suggests. Many candidates used the full range of resources in their answers and, where they did this effectively and convincingly, they were rewarded accordingly. Less successful answers tended to lack detail and substance and/or to be unbalanced between the two sets of arguments. There was much discussion in the examining team with regards to differentiating 'people' and 'economy'. However, it was agreed that candidates were not required to make this distinction overtly but that they had to deal with those aspects of the issue which were either 'social' and 'economic' in this section. Even environmental aspects of the issue could appear in this discussion, so long as the points were made with reference to how it would impact the economy or society.

(ii) The Environment

This too was generally well handled. Some candidates, for instance in their discussion of dumping of spoil, would introduce impacts which were economic by going beyond potential damage to fish stocks to talking about the impact on the fishing industry, something which should have been reserved for Section B(i). The best candidates spent an appropriate amount of time on this section, as it was allocated only 8 marks compared to 12 marks for Section B(i), but nevertheless covered the points required and utilised the resource booklet effectively to provide detail and demonstrate understanding.

C: Conclusion

This is the section where candidates are required to weigh up the relative merits of both sides of the argument, and compare the economic arguments with the environmental, not possible in

Section B. The most successful candidates, as in previous years, were able to weave a convincing narrative combining a reasoned critique of one position and a similar critique of the alternative but inexorably moving towards the justification for the decision made. It is always easier to do this when a decision is announced early in Section C, rather than have what can be a less structured and coherent account, before a decision is announced. The best decision-making geographical issues should be well balanced, allowing candidates to take either side with ease. This year, the bulk of answers, perhaps 70%, were in favour of the development. The concerns regarding the maerl relocation, and the associated arguments, did not convince all candidates. However, it was clear that both sides could be argued effectively, and there were some very convincing answers proposing that the development should not be permitted.

Format

Candidates are required to structure an answer in report format 'using the headings and sub-headings provide', an instruction which has remained unchanged on this sub-component of the A2 2 paper for some time. The bulk of candidates know that this requires them to use the headings and sub-headings exactly as printed on the paper, and they do that. Any temptation to improve the headings or sub-headings, to add superfluous wording to them or make them more succinct, should be strictly avoided if the two marks available for format are to be ensured. Not only should the wording be exact, they should be 'clearly set out'. This means that candidates should keep headings and sub-headings distinct from the body of the answer and, additionally, with the headings and sub-headings on separate lines.

Role

Professor Tom Finch was the named individual, the role of which the candidates had to adopt and maintain. Generally these couple of marks are straightforward for candidates. Examiners often find the reference to role at the beginning of Section A and again at the beginning of Section C but candidates can gain these marks anywhere in the paper, so long as the references are distinct from each other.

Graph

This year the skills component of the Decision Making was represented by a table of data that had to be represented in the form of a graph, and this has been the general way in which this skills element has been examined in recent years. This table of data was particularly suited to a compound line graph or a multiple bar graph, and the latter was perhaps the most common method selected by candidates. As with previous years the lack of a ruler posed difficulties for some candidates with a consequent loss of accuracy marks. This may be a generalisation on a number of levels, but the handwriting would suggest that the male candidates were more at fault here.

The choice of a suitable scale too was crucial to accurately plotting the figures, and centres could profitably present candidates with a series of tables from previous papers to provide them with some practice in representing the data. One examiner noted that the use of graph paper, which some centres seem to direct their candidate towards, led to more accurate graphs but that often the reference to the graph was missing, perhaps as the graph was completed as a separate task and the candidate omitted to reference it when returning to the textual answer. The examining team are currently happy to accept graphs on graph paper or, reasonably accurately, constructed using the lines on the answer booklet.

Most candidates were well prepared for this graph and many obtained the full eight marks.

Update on the Issue

Candidates are reminded in the paper that they should not use any information that they might know about the issue and that they should limit themselves to what is in the resource booklet and question paper. However, it may be of interest for teachers and candidates to know that the

development in Falmouth was still under consideration at the time at which candidates sat this paper. There has been trial dredging to see whether the maerl can be relocated successfully the results of which seem broadly positive for the developers.

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