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 Units AS 1 and AS 2

General Remarks

Examiners felt that these were two fair papers, giving candidates the opportunity to display a variety of skills, techniques and knowledge. Those candidates who read the questions carefully and applied their knowledge to the focus of the question achieved high marks. The format and content of the potential questions are well-known at this late stage in the life cycle of the specification, so there are few rubric infringements or timing issues but even so, careful study of the reports on the two papers below will reveal a number of familiar issues that constrained the achievements of some candidates. Brief advice can be given.

- Focus on the question as set, especially referencing the words in bold.

- Make sure that with graphs the conventions are followed.

- Always give units of measurement.

- Do note the question's command word and carry out its instruction.

- Give details in case studies.

Assessment Unit AS 1   Physical Geography

Overview

This paper appeared to be well received as favourable comments were reported by teachers of the AS specification. Examiners collectively recognised that the majority of candidates were able to draw on a broad spectrum of geographical knowledge and understanding to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented on the paper. Therefore there was little evidence of omissions or lack of completion as candidates were generally equipped to apply their knowledge and display their geographical and fieldwork skills. Furthermore, the level of language employed in the questions appeared to present no major comprehension problems and candidates appeared to be familiar with the format of the paper and the general requirements. Little evidence of rubric infringement was therefore reported.

Although there were many accessible questions, others provided a higher level of challenge and geographical insight. Marks thus ranged from the low 30s to the high 80s, which is broadly comparable with past examination series.

Section A

Centres and Field Centres are to be commended for their continuous efforts and diligence in fieldwork preparation. River and psammosere studies are undoubtedly the most popular, although other physical and human studies are also represented. Centres are becoming confident with the required content of the submitted fieldwork report and table of data as well as the authentication process; infringement of these regulations was practically non-existent this year.

The reports accurately presented a title, aim, hypotheses, a statement of location and a well-organised table of quantitative data. Obviously the prior submission of these documents is vital for attainment in Section A of the paper. Examiners consistently cross-reference the report and the tabulated data with the fieldwork responses provided by the candidate in Section A.

Q1 **(a)** **(i)** Although occasional errors were evident, the majority of candidates generally scored well as they were familiar with all sequential stages in the fieldwork investigation process.

(ii) Those who achieved high marks did so by directly addressing **both** aspects of the question with the inclusion of convincing references and examples from their fieldwork. All optional elements of planning proved popular in their selection. A close focus on the requirements of the question was essential, and although candidates competently explained **why** the fieldwork process was completed, the **how** element was most commonly neglected, although this gave high ability candidates the opportunity to excel. To enhance attainment in future, a few points of guidance would appear appropriate:

- candidates must deconstruct the question and focus on the words which appear in bold print;

- some candidates are clearly unaware of the difference between risk assessment and risk management;

- similarly some candidates are unclear of the distinction between risk assessment and pilot testing;

- some mixed up sampling technique with selection of a suitable location; and

- Although the purpose of sampling was generally well understood, there was some evidence of misunderstanding of the stratified process, it was commonly confused with systematic sampling.

(iii) Candidates made a profound effort to respond precisely to the command of this question and well-prepared candidates produced creditworthy answers. The most competent answers provided all essential procedural details for the collection of their specified variable, including the type of equipment employed and laboratory analysis or calculations, if relevant. Obviously weaker or less well-prepared candidates had a more limited recollection of their methodology and answers were often characterised by omissions, errors and a lack of rigour.

(iv) This question provided a highly differentiated outcome. Competent candidates cited the importance of evaluation as a process involving a critical review or reflection of the fieldwork and were able to refer convincingly to their fieldwork experience. Many insightful answers explained a potential modification of the fieldwork to inform future improvement. Unfortunately some misinterpreted the question and confused evaluation with hypotheses testing. Others provided superficial or generic reference to fieldwork rather than reflecting on one specific aspect as requested.

(b) **(i)** Well-prepared candidates competently displayed their graphical presentation skills and full marks were commonly attained. Candidates excelled by producing relevant graphs, which accurately adhered to normal conventions including labelling and scaling. Occasionally marks were lost when:

- the dependent and independent variables were confused;

- units of measurement were omitted from the axes of the graph;

- the title lacked accuracy or precision;

- an inappropriate line graph was plotted when the x axis variable displayed discrete rather than continuous data; and

- graph work lacked completion or displayed some inaccuracy.

(ii) Although many candidates handled this question well, others failed to recognise that it demanded both geographical and locational knowledge. Many presented a well-prepared geographical interpretation, which integrated theoretical concepts without any locational insight. Only the most able candidates were able to adapt their knowledge and tailor it to meet the demands and challenges of the question. Weaker answers were generalised or simply described their graph rather than offering explanation.

Section B

Q2 **(a)** **(i)** Candidates generally displayed a sophisticated understanding of the contrasting hydrological regimes and included specialist hydrograph terminology. Whilst it is important to acknowledge responses of a high standard, it is also necessary to highlight that attainment was lower when answers provided a lack of explanatory depth and hydrograph descriptions were restricted in terms of specialist terminology.

(ii) This question posed a degree of challenge and thus allowed for a high level of differentiation. More able candidates competently recognised that the post-storm discharge was influenced by the hydrological transfer processes operating within the drainage basin and confidently employed specialist terminology in their explanation. Weaker candidates often displayed awareness that there was a slower release of water to the river without specifying the sub-surface transfer processes involved.

(b) Well-prepared candidates displayed an impressive insight into the features and formation of a waterfall. Explanations were frequently fluent, cogent, detailed and communicated effectively, with the inclusion of specialist terminology. However, many candidates failed to read the question carefully and neglected to explain the actual processes involved in the formation of a waterfall. Although many identified specific processes such as hydraulic action or corrasion, they neglected to explain how they operated to erode the less resistant rock strata. Therefore, teachers need to reinforce persistently to candidates the importance of focusing closely on the question to maximise

attainment. Even the weakest candidates appeared to use the resource images effectively to identify classic waterfall features such as the cap rock, plunge pool, overhang etc.

Q3   **(a)**   **(i)**   This open and inviting question provided an opportunity for candidates to use the resource and display their knowledge and analytical skills. Although the definitions were occasionally erroneous, there was generally a good attempt made to describe the trophic pyramid of biomass. A minority of candidates, unfortunately, provided a theoretical description of a trophic pyramid without specific reference to the resource provided. The explanation component was generally well handled by those who attempted to address this aspect of the question. The inefficiency of energy transfer through the successive trophic levels was depicted from the resource and many creditworthy examples of energy loss were cited. Answers from lower performing candidates tended to provide imprecise definitions and neglected to consider an explanation of the relationship between biomass and trophic level.

        (ii)   Candidates of all abilities responded positively to this question and competently explained how the hypothetical scenario presented would influence the trophic structure. Occasionally attainment was lower if candidates identified the projected change without providing a logical explanation. Additionally a small number of candidates misread the question and considered long-term rather than short-term changes.

    (b)   **(i)**   This question was completed accurately by most candidates and many acceptable mollisol characteristics were annotated appropriately on the diagram. Obviously marks were lost if annotated labels related to general soil characteristics or those already evident on the diagram such as the depth, horizons or calcium content of the soil.

        (ii)   Examiners were generally not impressed with the answers provided on water transfers within the mollisol. Only the most able candidates were able to explain how the actual climate influences the processes of leaching and capillary action and describe with precision their impact on the soil profile. Attainment was compromised when candidates failed to respond to the dual command of the question or did not fully inter-relate the climatic regime of this mid-latitude grassland biome with the specific pedological impact. There is considerable evidence to suggest that weaker candidates lack an understanding of the mollisol soil and those processes which operate seasonally within it. Furthermore, the level of specialist terminology varied enormously within answers and clearly proved to be an additional discriminator.

Q4   **(a)**   **(i)**   Almost all candidates competently completed this graphical skill question.

        (ii)   Well-prepared candidates, secure in their meteorological knowledge of air masses, coped admirably with his question. It is regrettable that many generic, or simplistic, answers failed to recognise the importance of the 'source region' in determining the thermal and moisture characteristics of the specified air mass. Weaker candidates simply described the typical weather conditions and neglected to consider

explanations. Some went on to comment on depressions forming and their associated weather.

(b) **(i)** Although the majority of candidates clearly identified the contrasting isobar patterns on the synoptic chart, the concept of the 'pressure gradient' proved to be surprisingly challenging. Many attempted to explain wind strength in relation to the actual pressure value (high or low) rather than clearly recognising that it related to the **difference** in pressure across a surface, per unit area. This obviously reduced the opportunity for achieving full marks. This aspect of meteorology thus requires greater reinforcement.

(ii) Although the descriptive element of this question proved to be accessible, the explanation component posed much greater challenge. Only the most able candidates provided a sound meteorological explanation of the weather elements presented for this typical Summer anticyclone. Impressive answers displayed an in-depth knowledge of air subsidence and its associated impact on temperature, wind direction, humidity, cloud cover and the formation of early morning mist and fog. Candidates of more modest ability struggled to provide answers with sufficient depth and provided more simplistic understanding of meteorological concepts and associated specialist terminology. Unfortunately some candidates provided description only, and even though there was generally substantial engagement with the resource, they were unable to progress beyond Level 1 marks as they failed to address the question fully.

Section C

All questions appeared to be equally popular and provided opportunities for candidates to display their knowledge and level of geographical understanding. These questions were typically broad in focus and allowed candidates to include a range of case studies when generating their responses.

Q5 Many candidates approached this question with confidence and gained marks for coherent and articulate answers that addressed both aspects of the question. Well-prepared candidates clearly excelled as they provided detailed subject knowledge with factual and locational case study support. The Rivers Ganges, Mississippi and Indus were most commonly selected for case study inclusion. The best responses often developed a wide range of the beneficial effects of flooding and closely focussed on people when describing the detrimental effects. Several candidates recited learned case study material rather than focusing responses around the specific question. For weaker candidates, the key barrier to attainment was a lack of specific theoretical and case study detail as they provided generic effects with limited credibility. Occasionally answers deviated into an irrelevant discussion of the causes of flooding.

Q6 This question was also popular but proved fairly challenging as it demanded a detailed knowledge of the biotic components of their small-scale ecosystem as well as an understanding of the nutrient cycling process. Well-prepared candidates described a diverse range of autotrophs and heterotrophs and structured their information to classify herbivores, carnivores and omnivores. Commonly candidates provided a generalised theoretical discussion of nutrient cycling and neglected to consider essential nutrient stores and transfers within a case study context. Many candidates

successfully employed an annotated diagram to illustrate the cycling process. The inclusion of a relevant diagram is always a welcome addition to display complex and inter-related transfers of nutrients. Weaker candidates tended to focus only on the decomposition process and responses were generally marred by a lack of completion and precise ecological terminology. Although a brief introduction is a welcome inclusion to provide the locational context of the case study, candidates should refrain from providing lengthy and often irrelevant background material. In many such cases, candidates provided an extended section on the abiotic components of their selected ecosystem, which was clearly not a requirement of this question.

Q7   This question was clearly two-fold and frequently displayed an imbalance in responses. Well-prepared candidates provided impressive factual detail and an in-depth understanding of the complex and inter-related locational, latitudinal, seasonal and atmospheric conditions responsible for hurricane formation. Less able candidates simply outlined a limited range of conditions and neglected to provide sufficient explanation. Frequently answers deviated into an irrelevant consideration of hurricane structure, movement or decay. In the case study component of the question the majority of candidates selected Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans as the locational context for their answer. Well-prepared candidates provided a focused, detailed and well written discussion of the human effects of their selected hurricane. Such answers were fairly common and attained high level marks. Weaker candidates frequently produced more simplistic, generalised responses which lacked case study depth and a focus on the human impact of the hazard. Such superficial answers, or those which lack a case study context, are clearly self-limiting.

Assessment Unit AS 2   Human Geography

Overview

The mean for this paper was down 2.6% from the previous series, perhaps because many candidates found it difficult to apply the general theory of Spearman's rank to an unseen set of data. However, the skills section on this paper continues to assist candidates in gaining good marks.

Section A

Q1   **(a)**   **(i)**   A very accessible question, with the majority of candidates able to access the marks for this sub-section.

A number of candidates gave the incorrect nearest neighbour; a ruler must be used when there are a number of potential nearest neighbours.

(ii)   Most candidates correctly calculated the Rn value. Candidates who did not achieve the correct result generally made one of the following errors:

- they failed to average 'd', this was the most common error;

- applying an erroneous equation in spite of being given the equation – it should be drawn to their attention that the equation will be provided;

- not using a calculator; and

- not showing their calculations and providing an incorrect Rn – this meant that no method marks could be awarded for calculations.

  The marks for distribution and the comment in relation to the hypothesis was set against the candidates own Rn value. Candidates need to develop a clear understanding of what an Rn value means.

(iii) Fewer candidates gained full marks in this section. In most cases this was due to:

- failure to offer geographical reasons, plural; many only offered one reason and thus lost marks; and

- failure to make use of the resource.

(b) **(i)** Most candidates achieved full marks in this section. A few lost some marks for accuracy. Candidates should use a ruler to draw graphs and should ensure that the shading matches the key with which they are provided.

(ii) These marks were accessible to all levels of ability and most candidates gained full marks. Those who failed to do so mostly lost marks for not quoting figures. Some candidates quoted figures but did not give the units.

(iii) This was the least well-answered question on the paper. Only a minority gained full marks. This was because they had to apply the rules they have learnt about Spearman's rank to a new set of data. Some candidates recognised that the data set was too small for accuracy and thus gained [2] marks but few could offer two reasons.

(c) Most candidates achieved full marks for this sub-section. Those who did not tended to offer vague uses or two uses that overlapped; for example, two weather forecasting related points.

(d) Using OS maps and drawing sketch maps are valuable geographical skills and most were able to gain good marks in this section. Candidates who lost marks did so because they:

- failed to start the course of the River Harwood in the correct location; and

- failed to label the features although this requirement was clearly stated in the question – candidates should follow all command instructions in the question.

  Candidates must be reminded of the importance of producing neatly presented and accurate maps and/or diagrams.

Section B

Q2 **(a)** Most candidates achieved [3] marks here and made good use of the figures provided. Most identified three trends and used figures to describe each. Only a small number of students failed to make use of figures here. On occasion some inaccurate figures were offered.

(b) The specification specifically asks for 'implications'. Candidates should be aware that implications can be both negative and positive. Most could competently discuss the negative effects but found it harder to offer positive effects. Some lost marks because they did not discuss economic implication but offered solely social implications. Candidates need to answer the question as set.

(c) An accessible question to all levels of ability. Most candidates gained full marks in this section and had clearly covered this part of the specification well. Most candidates answered this question by offering a range of problems in LEDCs rather than focusing on two in more detail. Either approach was acceptable.

Q3 **(a)** **(i)** Most candidates gained full marks in this section. Those who did not tended to lose marks for the following:

- failure to include figures in the answer; and

- failure to use all three maps provided, despite being guided to do so in the wording of the question.

(ii) This is a straightforward case study question but few gained Level 3 marks in this section. They lost marks for the following reasons:

- they did not focus on the command word 'explain' but rather described the deprivation in their case study; some offered high quality descriptions with excellent facts/figures, but this was not the focus of the question.

- too many candidates failed to reference a case study of an appropriate scale, for example, a surprising number of candidates made reference to the economic and social deprivation within the cites of Belfast/Liverpool/London but they failed to look at the inner city areas within them which severely impacted the mark awarded; and

- many lacked appropriate place names for their inner city or detailed case study figures; case study specifics are needed for Level 3.

(b) This should have been more accessible and answered at a higher level. Candidates failed to gain full marks due to a lack of place knowledge or a limited development of their problem.

Q4 **(a)** **(i)** An accessible question which allowed most candidates to achieve full marks. Some lost marks for a failure to include a reference to the 'global' change or they lacked sufficient reference to the resource provided.

(ii) It was surprising to note that a number of candidates did not recognise the term 'composite measure'. A significant number selected either a social or economic indicator rather than a composite measure. Those who selected a composite measure described it well but many failed to adequately evaluate their chosen measure.

(b) The definitions of 'globalisation' were weak and many candidates lost marks as a consequence. Candidates need to produce definitions with clarity and accuracy. The positive effects of globalisation were discussed in depth and detail. A small number failed to relate these effects to the effect on development.

Section C

Answers to the essay questions at the end of the AS level examination papers have gradually been improving over previous series. The majority of candidates have practised answering a range of questions and are well-prepared for this last section of the exam paper. However, a minority are still either running out of time or are choosing to only answer one essay question. This has a detrimental impact on their final mark.

A majority of candidates will find their mark in the Level 2 range. This is usually because of failure to include enough specific case study detail in relation to the place. It is important that candidates use significant facts and figures to help them to reference the place under investigation.

Q5 This question was popular and was answered by a majority of candidates. The question was of a familiar type that required candidates to use a national case study to describe and explain how population structure has changed over time. Unfortunately, some failed to read the question properly and answered based on changes over space.

There was a wide variety in the way that candidates addressed the question and in the range of countries that were used as exemplars. Some of the main issues involved in answering this question included:

- a few candidates failed to identify a national case study in their answer;

- some failed to **describe** the changes to the population structure (as shown by population pyramids). There was a requirement for candidates to use key facts and figures (e.g. birth and death rates) and to cross-reference these with the population structure. More reference needed to be made to the different parts of the population structure (0-14, 15-64, 65+) and comment made on the shape of the pyramids – where are the bulges and where are the narrow areas?

- many candidates made good reference to the explanation of the changes to the population structure but again some needed to be more detailed in their response, making specific reference to the reasons for changes to the structural difference; and

- some added their own diagrams of population pyramids but it was important that candidates also made reference to how the shape of the population pyramids changed.

To achieve Level 3, candidates needed to demonstrate clear depth of knowledge by describing (including the use of figures) and explaining clearly how the structure has changed. Candidates needed to use clear (and appropriate) periods of time.

Q6 **(a)** Well-prepared candidates, who had learned their case studies in depth, found this question to be straightforward. However, examiners noted two main issues that led to some candidates failing to achieve their full potential:

- some candidates did not use an appropriate case study relating to this particular question. They should have made reference to regional development agencies (RDAs) working in remote rural areas. Some candidates tried to draw on material relating to national parks or other remote areas where no RDAs were involved; and

- the key part of the question required candidates to discuss how economic regeneration is delivered to the remote rural areas by RDAs. This proved challenging for many candidates who completed this on a very superficial level. They needed to have clearly identified how the RDA aimed to bring economic regeneration to the particular area, which required precise case study data. Candidates needed to show a deep understanding of the role of the RDA working in this area to achieve Level 3. There was a need to ensure that answers clearly addressed a discussion on how the RDAs delivered economic regeneration.

Q6 **(b)** This question was popular. It required candidates to discuss the attempts made in a protected area to manage it for conservation, recreation and tourism. The majority of candidates concentrated on the protected area of the Peak District National Park though other specified areas were equally valid.

Good candidates were able to organise their answer to deal effectively with the three-fold requirements of the question, namely to cover conservation, recreation and tourism. In the main, they found it easy to discuss tourism but found it more challenging to deal with conservation in their specified area. Many struggled to distinguish effectively between recreation and tourism.

The main barrier that hindered many candidates was that they failed to ensure that their answers focused mostly on the *'attempts to* **manage** *it (the protected area) for conservation, recreation and tourism'*. Discussions about management were often lacking or totally absent. Some spent a lot of time listing problems or areas of conflict within the area rather than addressing issues of management.

Examiners noted that many candidates failed to access Level 3 marks due to a serious lack of knowledge/use of appropriate case study material. Candidates need to ensure that they use appropriate facts and figures to demonstrate their command of the specific case study.

Q7 This question was popular with candidates but many struggled to achieve marks towards high Level 2 or into Level 3 because they struggled to identify and then describe and explain the contrasts in development for a particular region. Many candidates continue to use the 'old' Italy case study, though some candidates discussed an area such as the Highlands and Islands of Scotland but did not draw out contrasts in developments in the area. Examiners noted that sometimes more appropriate case studies such as Brazil could generate more marks.

The main issue with answers to this question was that candidates did not make a detailed enough description of the contrasts in development. The mark scheme clearly states that any description should include 'a range of examples of social and economic development indicators'. Many became distracted by their comparison between north and south Italy and failed to describe the specific differences between the two regions. In addition, any explanation mostly referred to differences in economic activity – farming in the south and industry in the north of Italy.

Some candidates concentrated too readily on the physical reasons for variations in development and less on the social and economic contrasts. Some examiners noted that there was a tendency for candidates to 'dump' any information that they knew in relation to the chosen case study with little relevance to or reflection on the question. Candidates needed to show detailed knowledge in relation to their case study in order to be able to access the top marks in Level 3.

Assessment Units A2 1 and A2 2

General Remark

There are some general observations to make before detailing the individual papers. Candidates should be advised not to spend too much time on short answers; some candidates approach these as they would the essay questions and waste precious time presenting an introduction and detailing context, rather than just dealing with the question material. Even in the case studies it was observed that some candidates paid too much attention to introductory remarks rather than matters directly related to the question's demands. On case studies, candidates should be advised not to bring to the examination prepared essays as there is then a risk of them being presented with insufficient reference to the details of the actual question asked. In a few instances examiners observed that the entire candidature of a centre wrote very similar essays, which suggested these had been taught to them to be memorised. It is much better to let candidates bring in their knowledge and understanding which can then be tailored to answering the question rather than giving them learnt essays to be written out come what may.

Some centres seem to have trained their candidates to answer the questions worth most marks first. This practice has some benefits, but 'this approach didn't always translate into success' observed one examiner. There is a risk that the candidates can get confused as to where they are in the exam paper and a number of the few rubric violations seen this year resulted from candidates following the long answers with short answers from a different question.

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. Use the resources 'rigorously' was the advice from one of the examiners.

One examiner reported that some candidates did not seem to know what 'evaluate' meant as a command word.

It must be observed that time management is a key consideration in all examinations, and on occasion scripts were rushed at the end or were incomplete. Practice in sitting full examinations under examination conditions would assist candidates here if time in the classroom can be found.

Diagrams, other than those demanded by the questions, were rarely seen, which is disappointing in geography examinations. Regarding illustrations and graphs candidates should be reminded to bring appropriate implements; scruffy diagrams in biro rarely impressed the examiners. Poor handwriting continues to cause problems; illegible scripts are an unwelcome challenge to the examiners. One examiner, frustrated at a lack of space for her annotation, asked that candidates be advised that they can, indeed should, start each question on a new page. The exam booklets are rarely filled and supplementary sheets are readily available.

Assessment Unit A2 1   Human Interactions and Global Issues

Overview

The paper generally was well received and it was 'varied enough to allow student choice' observed one examiner. Another noted that some candidates did not follow the requirements of the 'to help you' questions. This form of question has been used for many years and centres should ensure that their candidates are aware that they may encounter this and be practiced in dealing with its demands to bring in extra material.

Almost as always there were complaints from examiners that the global issues section, established in response to government insistence to provide 'stretch and challenge', has never been matched by an adequate response. The fieldwork question is often thrown away and the case studies are too often shallow. There are no resources here, nothing to distract from the candidates' own knowledge and understanding of their studies and a massive 20 marks are available but 'I find candidates do not extend themselves' was one examiner's succinct summary of what she had seen.

One perceptive comment from an examiner was that if candidates gave an example even if not required to do so (as with 4a) this often helped in their concentration and understanding.

Section A

Option A: Impact of Population Change

Q1   **(a)**   One examiner thought this question 'showed well those who can focus on the question'. Issues were that sometimes characteristics were missed and some candidates did not seem to be aware of migration streams despite them being on the specification.

   (b)   Some few candidates misunderstood the resource but could still access the marks as the description was straightforward and the distinction between high and low rates of HIV/AIDS clear. As might be expected the easier task, the description, was often done better than the explanation.

   (c)   One examiner reported that the case studies he read on China were better here than those for Singapore; another that she saw too much on the historical background for fertility policies, sometimes at a cost of too little on operation as required. Some of her answers would have been the prepared essays mentioned above.

Q2   **(a)**   Most candidates were able to score decent marks here.

   (b)   There was some verbatim reproductions of resource material here, usually a problem more seen in the Decision Making exercise. Many did well with what was a good, 'meaty' resource, but some candidates failed to say enough about the morality of the situation which was the crux of the question.

   (c)   Answers here which used the Demographic Transition Model were acceptable and appropriate, but sometimes candidates taking this track lost sight of what this question actually had asked. Not detailing both time and space was another problem for some.

Option B: Planning for Sustainable Settlements

Q3 **(a)** Further photographs may have been helpful here; only some candidates appreciated that leaving an area untouched for decades actually has environmental benefits as vegetation and wildlife can become established. The detrimental effects of the situation were more easily appreciated.

(b) This was done reasonably, few now see urban conservation solely applying to trees and flowers.

(c) The resource sometimes got neglected here in favour of case study material inevitably about Cambridge. 'Evaluation' needed a little more, sometimes there was just description.

Q4 **(a)** This was quite well tackled; those who presented some exemplification found that helped their answer.

(b) Most candidates did well with the distinction between ecological and carbon footprints but dealt less well with the second strand of the question.

(c) The resource sometimes got neglected here in favour of case study material inevitably about Curitiba. Again here appeared some prepared answers, which wrote down everything about Curitiba with little reference to the question and sometimes no reference to Resource 4.

Option C: Issues in Ethnic Diversity

Q5 **(a)** **(i)** One examiner noted how helpful it was here if the candidates had good knowledge of the wording of the specification.

(ii) Some candidates missed one of 'segregation' or 'discrimination' whilst others failed to do sufficient, or indeed anything at all, with the resource. That said, there were some good, perceptive answers, too.

(b) This was mostly done well with case studies from a small range of nations. The UK was popular especially as a range of causes for its ethnic diversity could be discussed. Some few wrote about a city not a country.

Q6 **(a)** **(i)** This was usually handled well, the Resource seemed accessible.

(ii) Outcomes were sometimes missed; there is a need for candidates to be aware of the specification. Sometimes candidates wrote that the outcome of ethnic conflict was basically ethnic conflict.

(b) One examiner reported that she saw some vague answers here. Case study detail is always welcome. The better answers clearly differentiated between the three outcomes specified, usually in Belfast.

Section B: Global Issues

Q7 **(a)** There were good, brief accounts here.

(b) Data collection was not well handled, many placing instead their emphasis on sampling. Almost every year of this specification marks have been wasted by candidates not seeming to know how and for what purpose they did their field work. Some did not seem to know what they had done or even where they had done it.

(c) The climate justice debate required here was handled reasonably but some of the answers were too short and shallow. Most agreed with the statement.

Q8 **(a)** No problems; a range of issues were outlined.

(b) Data collection was not well handled, many placing instead their emphasis on sampling. Almost every year of this specification marks have been wasted by candidates not seeming to know how and for what purpose they did their field work. Some did not seem to know what they had done or even where they had done it.

(c) One issue was the lack of appropriate or, indeed, sufficient reference to the British Isles despite what the specification says. There were some powerful cases made on both sides of the debate.

Q9 **(a)** This agriculture option is by far the least popular of the global issues. Most knew what an agribusiness was; those who didn't put forward some imaginative but incorrect suggestions.

(b) Data collection was not well handled, many placing instead their emphasis on sampling. Almost every year of this specification marks have been wasted by candidates not seeming to know how and for what purpose they did their field work. Some did not seem to know what they had done or even where they had done it.

(c) Almost all answers were based on the Brittany example. Answers tended to be too descriptive with insufficient evaluation.

Q10 **(a)** This tourism option is by far the most popular of the Global Issues section. Ecotourism was mostly known but some struggled to detail a specific benefit; answers sometimes would apply to any sort of tourism.

(b) Data collection was not well handled, many placing instead their emphasis on sampling. Almost every year of this specification marks have been wasted by candidates not seeming to know how and for what purpose they did their field work. Some did not seem to know what they had done or even where they had done it.

(c) Nepal was a common choice for a case study but very few mentioned the earthquake, which struck a short while before the exam. True, the timing of the disaster meant that it would not have been discussed in class, but to say that things were now more difficult would not have been beyond a candidate to assume. Mallorca was another very common example. Details were known, but some did not evaluate as well as we might have hoped.

Concluding Comments

'Evaluate' caused problems to some. The poor response to the Global Issues (b) sections was noted above. One examiner reported that 'there was no issue with the style or question, more candidates' inability to decode it appropriately'.

The timing issues in the geography A2 examinations are more profound for A2 2 than for this paper. Whilst few demonstrated problems, one examiner noted that some spent too much time on their first two questions, with a consequence that the global issues section had to be hurried.

Assessment Unit A2 2   Physical Geography and Decision-Making

Overview

Examiners reported that the paper had been accessible to candidates and that it had elicited a wide range in quality of response. Most noted that case study questions were a differentiator of the better candidates who used their knowledge to address the question specifics rather than regurgitating verbatim their 'learned' essays (e.g. Question 6 (c)). The poor quality of the drawn diagrams was commonly referred to. Rubric violations were rare and there was little direct evidence of timing issues though this is more likely to be apparent in Section B: Decision Making.

Section A

Option A: Fluvial and Coastal Environments

Q1 **(a)** The lack of place reference or merely naming a context was a common failing here. Some did not focus on 'need' and some discussed basin management techniques such as dams and reservoirs that are not appropriate to channelisation.

(b) While most candidates readily identified demands, many did not fully utilise the resources, including the photographs. The 'increasing' requirement of the question was not well addressed in many answers.

(c) Most had valid case studies with both Hard and Soft strategies but the actual descriptive detail was too often lacking. The other common weakness was a failure to focus on physical environment impacts with economic and social impacts being routinely discussed. Geographically it is disturbing that Holderness was regularly described as being on the south coast of England or indeed specifically in Dorset!

Q2 **(a)** An apparently straightforward question produced disappointing responses; some lacked any development of place and some failed to address the reasons for increasing demand. Under agriculture the coast was often described, worryingly, as a good source of irrigation water.

(b) Examiners reported a lack of use of the resource material and a common problem of unbalanced evaluations (if any) overlooking the positive.

(c) Many good Colorado and some Nile based answers. Sadly, candidates who used pre-prepared essay answers often focused on 'aims and negatives' and

not on the 'strategies and conflicts' the question clearly required. It is simple; candidates who use their factual knowledge to address the actual set question can readily attain Level 3.

Option B: The Nature and Sustainability of Tropical Ecosystems

Q3 **(a)** Most had little difficulty with the identification but the explanation proved more challenging with Inter Tropical Convergence Zone and its migration often overlooked. Most used the Tropical Rain Forest graph though often provided general climate figures rather than those on the resource. Seen as an 'easy' question the overall scores for this question were very much in line with the other five questions.

(b) Diagrams were routinely poor to awful. Neat, pencil line drawings with clear annotations are required. Clearly practice is needed by many.

(c) Most candidates found the resource accessible and virtually all used Pakistan. When they focused on solutions and provided good detailed knowledge, many were successful. Others included long descriptions of causes and impacts for salinisation that were not relevant.

Q4 **(a)** Encouragingly, diagrams were better here and those who provided the best well-annotated versions were well placed to answer the question.

(b) Many focused well on evaluation and addressed each of the three required aspects. Some used the resource too 'directly', while some did not evaluate the sustainability of the development.

(c) While most candidates choosing this question gave a sound description of the soil many could not go on to clarify its role in nutrient cycling. This proved a good differentiation question. The lack of detail for a specific Tropical Rain Forest case study, noted in previous years, remains in some centres.

Option C: The Dynamic Earth

Q5 **(a)** Most identified the hazards but the environmental consequences for North America were often poorly developed. Some effectively did little more than re-write the resource material. Better answers recognised the importance on on-going monitoring of the situation.

(b) Sadly, many candidates did not appear to have read the phrase 'ocean crust material' in this question. Consequently inappropriate evidence of plate movement, such as jig-saw fit, continental fossil distribution and past glaciations were wrongly included. As broad a definition of ocean crust as possible was used by examiners.

(c) A range of LEDC and MEDC studies was employed. While Stage of Development, Perception and Knowledge are NOT the required factors but as they are on the specification they help steer candidates. Many confuse perception and knowledge in management – teachers should address this. The pre-prepared essay again caused some to overload their answer with impacts without reference to management or evaluation.

Q6 **(a)** Some poor or inappropriate diagrams were presented including constructive or island arc destructive margins. Some candidates explained the process correctly but used poor terminology; others did well with the concept but did not incorporate the specific resource information in their answer. A range of

diagrams could be used with validity but the nature and reason for plate movement and the 'ageing' islands was needed to access Level 3.

(b) A demanding question in terms of structuring an answer in the time available but the resource provided plenty of useable material. Candidates needed to clearly show social and economic benefits and hazards from Pompeii and from named places they had studied.

(c) Most candidates did not lack the knowledge to answer this question however, many produced time-line descriptions and positive outcomes rather than focusing on the predictive methods employed and the evaluation of imitations of the prediction.

Concluding Comments

Examiners reported that the language appeared to be appropriate and unambiguous. Some candidates need to learn to differentiate between 'describe' and 'explain' and to know what 'evaluate' means in context.

As noted previously little direct evidence was found of candidates not completing questions but there were some signs of rushed work such as bullet points or the word 'time' added to one or two scripts.

Section B: Decision Making Exercise

Overview

Most candidates are well prepared for the demands of the Decision Making Exercise (DME), alongside A2 Physical Geography. A minority struggle with the challenge, particularly the timing; most appear to manage their time effectively and can do justice to both the Physical Geography questions and the DME. Nonetheless, centres should continue to be aware of the challenges particular to this paper, and ensure that their candidates are prepared as well as possible for those.

The potash mine context seemed accessible to this year's candidates, even if the mineral seemed unknown to many. The candidates appeared to find the resources accessible too. Some concentrated on the text in the Introduction and the Arguments for and against (Resources 7E – 7G) but most used the resources more fully, including the photographs and maps in the booklet, the Ordnance Survey map extract, and the quotations. Data from the table of unemployment was incorporated by a number of candidates, although the use of the Location Quotient was reserved to a very few individuals. Those who did use it, and demonstrated an understanding of the values, were duly rewarded. Some candidates read around the infographics and boxed information within Resources 7E, 7F and 7G and missed useful and in some cases, vital, information. Centres would be advised to alert students to the need to use the full range of resources including infographics. As ever, the best candidates used the resources very effectively utilising the text and weaving in many of the other resources, in comprehensive answers which indicated a mastery of the issue.

Candidates occasionally report some apprehension about the Decision Making Exercise, generally because it is an unseen exercise. However, it should be clear that, whatever the context, and this year it was a proposed potash mine in the North York Moors National Park, the structure remains largely unchanged from year to year. Any changes made tend to be incremental. For instance, the use in the resources of information graphics or infographics to

present some of the information is a growing development, which may increase in future years. This is partially an attempt to keep the presentation of the data close to that which would be seen by interested parties in a 'real' geographical issue. It is also an attempt to reduce the amount of plagiarism from the resources in some candidates' answers, which we know costs them dearly. Comments on some verbatim use of resources is a perennial section of the Examiners' report. It has been highlighted over many years that candidates who use the material in the booklet, or in the question paper, without demonstrating that they have read and understood it and are repeating it in a restructured and different format gain very few marks. It should also be noted that the threshold of what constitutes 'verbatim' and what is not is discussed each year. Changing an occasional word will not convince an examiner that the student is making use of the resources in the intended way. Leaving out a clause here or there, or changing the order of some words or phrases will also not convince. Occasionally, candidates copy out the whole resource, or large chunks of it, with no attempt to mask what they are doing. This is straightforward to spot and such candidates score very poorly. However, it should be noted that penalties are applied when the threshold agreed by all the examiners at the Standardisation Meeting is exceeded, even if not so obvious as in word for word transcription. We understand that it must be very tempting for candidates who have in front of them the answers to the question set, to simply give those back to us. However, they should be in no doubt that such an approach will cost them dearly in terms of marks gained. What is required from this paper, and what examiners continue to look for, is a reworking of the text and other resources into the candidate's own words in order to demonstrate a full understanding.

A: Introduction

Candidates were required to briefly explain the high global demand for potash and to briefly outline the proposed project. Some candidates provided a background to the issue, which is a common enough component to start a DME, but was not central to the introduction this year. Candidates who used the infographic in Resource 7E as a basis for a brief explanation were strongly placed here. As in previous years, a small number of candidates started discussing impacts here, something that they would have to address in Section B. However, most handled this relatively well, particularly when outlining the proposed project.

B: The likely impact

(i) People and Economy

There was a lot to say here and this section was generally well answered. The beneficial effects of the development on people and the economy should have been discussed first, and there were many points that could have formed the back-bone of this answer, as detailed in the sample answer in the mark scheme. Counterarguments should then have been presented. The best answers used the full range of resources, including providing facts and figures where appropriate, raiding the infographics for some of the detail omitted in the written resources and incorporating items such as the unemployment data in Resource 7D and using the OS Map where appropriate.

(ii) The Environment

Candidates had to work a lot harder to find content for this section, but it was there. Many used the photographs at this point, both by those using it to emphasise environmental damage or, in the counterarguments, to indicate the low visibility of the mine in the landscape. Quite a few candidates picked up on the source of the images in Resource 7C5, and their careful selection, and the statement in Resource 7G that they do no fully portray the impact of the development. Like any of the resources, this could be used to argue that the impact on the environment was greater than portrayed or, alternatively, that these arguments are weak. This section was worth less than the economic and social section preceding it, and most candidates recognised that in

the amount of coverage they provided to it. A few disappointingly strayed into social and economic points here, while not emphasising the environmental aspects of the points being made and lost marks in consequence.

C: Decision

In this section the candidates are required to weigh up all the aspects of the issue, pitting for instance the environmental arguments against the economic and social ones. They have to consider the merits of each argument for and against the establishment of the mine in a sophisticated manner, a task which is quite challenging. Combining that with the fact that these candidates are just approaching the end of a two and a half hour examination paper makes this no mean challenge. However, as in previous years, well-prepared and reflective candidates approach Section C with clarity and panache. It is always easier for candidates when they make their decision known early in the response to this section. Many candidates chose this as the point to gain their second 'role' mark, although they can of course insert this anywhere in their answer, followed by a clear decision. The remainder of the answer can then be a justification of that decision, which is a much easier task than a general discussion, which starts to look like a re-run of Bi and Bii, before the decision is reached. The best justifications are balanced, with an acceptance that the opposing case has considerable merit, but with an argument that the decision reached is the better one. There were more answers in favour of the mine being developed this year. More candidates thought that the economic case for was stronger than the economic and environmental arguments against. The proposed environmental mitigation was also part of this argument. Nevertheless, there was a sizable minority, perhaps 35%, who ably argued the contrary decision of not granting permission to the mine. As with all DMEs, it should be equally possible to make either of the decisions available.

Format

These should be an easy two marks. All candidates have to do is to use the headings and sub-headings exactly as required on the paper, and to avoid elaborating on them or simplifying them. They must also be set out 'clearly'. This requires a separate line for the headings and for the sub-headings. It is disappointing that some candidates fail to get both of these marks. Some lose both. Most often it is a small slip that costs the marks – perhaps an inadvertent 'the' added, or omitted. We still find a very small number of instances where candidates do not structure their answers at all. While this forfeits these format marks, it also makes it difficult for the candidate to provide the structure needed to fully address the question. Most candidates, happily, gain both of these marks.

Role

Once again the role was ascribed to a fictitious individual. This year it was Dr Eileen Gildea, and this worked for most candidates. A few overused it, using the name and title in each section. It is only necessary to adopt the role and to maintain it. Maintaining it may be as little as one other allusion, so long as it is clear, at a different part of the report.

Graph

The skills element of the paper this year was again a graph. The data were fairly straightforward and particularly suited to line or bar graphs. Some centres particularly seem to instruct their candidates to use graph paper, and this produced accurate graphs in most instances. However, any candidate who selected a suitable scale and used the lines in the booklet could also achieve the accuracy required. Either approach is acceptable to the examining team at present, although we continue to discuss what requirement is fairest for candidates in terms of the required task and in terms of the ability for examiners to judge accuracy of plotting and reward accordingly.

Most candidates were well prepared for this graph and most obtained seven or eight marks.

Update on the Issue

The outcome of any issue is irrelevant to the performance on this paper, as candidates are expressly told that they should base their answers "…solely on information contained in the examination paper and Resource Booklet and not on any decision that may have been made". It may be that some issue will hit the headlines just before a DME is sat. While 'A' Level candidates, preparing for examinations, might have little time to read the papers or consult social media about geographical issues at that time, it is important that they are not influenced by any such decision. Happily, there have been no instances of this, and often the issues chosen tend not to be those that might dominate the media. However, it may be of interest to teachers and candidates to know the outcome of any issue. A few weeks after the paper was sat, it was announced that the mine would get permission to proceed following a decision by North York Moors National Park Authority on 29th June. The vote was close – 8 votes for and 7 against – but the mine is set to proceed, albeit in a slightly different form from that described here, which was taken from earlier proposals.

Further detail can be found here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-33333543

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