

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report Geography

Summer Series 2018



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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GCE Geography

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 and AS 2

This season marked the second round of the 'new' AS specification, the first without any legacy papers, too. More examples of exam papers being available has enabled schools and candidates to practice more widely and become familiar with the way in which the specification is examined.

AS2 was marked on-line for the first time this year, further AS papers may go on-line in future. This mode of marking does not affect candidates, except that it must be emphasised that they have to ensure that their answers stay within the clearly laid out boundaries marked on their examination booklets. Answers should be completed in black ink and the use of gel pens is forbidden.

Timing was not a major problem this year, but certainly with AS1 and AS2 candidates need to save sufficient time to answer two extended response style questions from Sections B.

One issue that seems always to be with us is the appearance of prepared essays where candidates present a rote-learned general essay on a topic rather than answering the question as set. This might see the appearance of material irrelevant to the question and certainly there will be a lack of focus, to the detriment of the level of grade awarded.

Assessment Unit AS 1 Physical Geography

Overview

As the revised AS specification model entered its second year of assessment, it is not surprising that teachers and candidates responded positively to the paper format, the question styles and the general requirements of the examination. Although some of the questions presented challenges for candidates, all examiners reported that the paper provided suitable opportunities for AS candidates of all abilities to display their geographical knowledge, as well as their analytical and interpretative skills. The level of language and terminology employed in the questions and resource materials, appeared to present no obvious barriers to comprehension and the general lack of omissions within the scripts reflected candidates' willingness and ability to engage with all questions. As in all examination series, a differentiated outcome was evident, reflecting not just the cognitive ability level of the candidates but also their level of preparation for the examination. Marks generally ranged from the 30s to the high 60s. The increased time allowance for this revised assessment model has also benefitted overall attainment and few examiners reported evidence of time management issues.

Section A

Q1 (a) (i) Attainment was maximised when candidates displayed competent map analysis and photographic interpretation skills. Some did not use the resource well, missing certain elements such as the compass. Clearly, those who used the scale to measure accurately the delta expansion distances, as well as identifying the direction using the compass, attained better marks. Credit was gained for accurately recognising growth phases in the outward expansion of this arcuate delta via a series of distributary channels. Some provided more generic answers which lacked specific resource references and those who provided lengthy and irrelevant explanation failed to gain high reward in this question.

- (ii) Although most candidates could identify basic causal processes relating to delta formation, only the more able displayed a detailed theoretical understanding of processes, including sediment transportation, deposition, flocculation and aggradation of layers or beds. Only a minority recognised the role of vegetation expansion in the stabilisation of sediment within the process of bioconstruction. Lower levels of attainment were achieved when responses lacked theoretical detail, specialist terminology or essential contextual spatial resource references. Terminology – the names of the processes – was too often flawed.
- (b) (i) This question posed little challenge and many candidates attained full marks. Although candidates occasionally failed to recognise how dredging was achieved as a flood management method, there was an overall universal awareness of its purpose.
- (ii) This question proved to be surprisingly challenging, particularly for those candidates who selected, and attempted to justify, unsuitable hard engineering river management strategies such as realignment or resectioning. Although more vigilant candidates gained credit for their explanation of more appropriate ‘alternative’ soft engineering techniques such as afforestation, river restoration, landuse zoning or the creation of washlands, few could justify the sustainability of their chosen strategy – socially, economically or environmentally. As this aspect of fluvial hydrology is a relatively new addition to the revised AS specification, it is evident that a little additional reinforcement of this theme may yield more beneficial outcomes.
- Q2** (a) Although some candidates erroneously identified this biome, most could competently describe its global distribution. Credit was commonly gained for the quotation of accurate latitudinal values, as well as the correct identification of places displayed on the resource.
- (b) (i) This question was well received and highly awarded. It is pleasing to report that the role of the autotrophs within the ecosystem is well understood. Most candidates recognise their vital role in the fixation of energy through the process of photosynthesis, as well as its passage or transfer through the subsequent trophic levels. Occasionally candidates provided a purely theoretical answer with no reference to the ecosystem illustrated in the resource, and thus failed to attain full marks.
- (ii) Many impressive answers were produced, displaying an ability to use the resource to provide competent descriptive analysis, as well as integrating an understanding of energy loss and inefficiency in the ecological transfer process. Thus, many well-prepared candidates were rewarded highly in this question. Marks were generally lost in two ways. Firstly, in the descriptive component, many candidates accurately depicted the overall trend but failed to quote values to exemplify energy loss. Secondly, in the explanation component of the answer, only the most able candidates could distinguish energy losses from the autotrophs and heterotrophs.
- (c) A variation in the range and quality of responses was evident in this question. Although the majority of candidates could provide a precise and articulate definition of a plagioclimax, few could adequately explain one formation factor. Although a wide variety of arresting factors were accurately identified, candidates commonly failed to provide detailed reasoning. Whilst the quotation of an example was not an essential requirement, those who provided an appropriate illustrative plagioclimax tended to produce more focussed reasoning.

A small number of candidates who failed to recognise that a plagioclimax is a specifically formed vegetation community proposed factors such as urbanisation, industrialisation, construction of car parks etc. – such responses were deemed to be inappropriate.

- Q3 (a)** This question proved to be fairly challenging and provided a highly differentiated outcome. Although the descriptive component of the answer appeared to be relatively accessible, all examiners were disappointed with the explanatory component. A small minority of able candidates displayed competent analytical skills and used well-informed theoretical knowledge and understanding of this meteorological event, but this was certainly not common. Although the climatological impact of the El Niño Southern Oscillation is complex, few candidates appeared to understand the processes and its inter-connection with global winds and rainfall patterns. Many candidates recalled their description of the El Niño diagram displayed in the Colourpoint textbook rather than responding to the diagram presented in the resource. There was thus evidence to suggest that candidates would benefit from further reinforcement of this fairly complex theme in advance of the examination.
- (b) (i)** A surprisingly large percentage of candidates – 40% was one examiner’s estimate – failed to identify accurately the centre of the depression and correctly annotate the synoptic chart. It is possible that some failed to read the question properly and thus lost what was considered to be a very accessible mark. A small number of candidates erroneously placed an X within the warm sector of the depression, thus displaying a lack of basic understanding of this low-pressure weather system.
- (ii)** Variable success was again evident in the identification of the occluded front. Although some candidates misidentified the boundary as a cold front, others provided a range of unacceptable terms in an attempt to recall the term ‘occluded’. While some candidates readily recognised the Tropical Maritime air mass, others provided the warm sector as their answer, as they failed to read the question closely.
- (iii)** This question proved to be an unexpected discriminator. Many candidates provided purely descriptive answers relying heavily on evidence presented in the synoptic chart. Occasionally, candidates neglected to consider both rainfall and wind conditions associated with the passage of the cold front across the west coast of Ireland. Obviously the lack of explanation restricted attainment and such imbalanced responses were surprisingly common. Although some generic and simplistic explanation was presented, only more able candidates provided a well-informed meteorological explanation of both wind and rainfall conditions associated with the cold front of Storm Frank. Candidates who correctly identified the air masses and displayed an awareness of the undercutting processes and the sequence of stages culminating in the formation of frontal rainfall scored well. Occasionally explanations neglected to consider the strong winds forecast for the west of Ireland. Only the more able and well-prepared candidates appeared to excel in this question as they displayed competency in their use of specialist meteorological terminology and their knowledge of atmospheric processes.

Section B

- Q4** This question was extremely popular and those candidates who attempted it generally performed well, particularly those who responded effectively to the dual commands of the question. It was clear that most had a good knowledge and understanding of their case study and consequently produced sound answers, a number of which were deemed excellent. Apart from an occasional reference to the River Jordan in Boscastle and the River Thames, almost all candidates selected the Somerset Levels or the Mississippi for the contextual exemplification. Many provided detailed, insightful and impressive knowledge of both the causes and effects of a specific flood event. At the highest level, candidates classified and explained both physical and human causes of flooding, displaying a detailed insight into a myriad of interconnected climatic, geological, soil and topographic conditions, as well as human factors which conspired to accentuate their flood hazard.

Case study specifics and locational details obviously enhanced the quality of answers and thus the level of attainment. Many examiners reported that some candidates achieved full marks. Those who performed less successfully in this question tended to produce imbalanced answers or responses that lacked case study depth and detail. Occasionally, candidates outlined flooding effects that deviated away from people and thus provided some irrelevant environmental and economic effects. Thus to maximise attainment, candidates need to be reminded to read the question carefully and tailor their case study material to suit the question specifically. Unfortunately, a few candidates selected an inappropriate LEDC flood event, which obviously proved to be limiting.

- Q5** This question also proved to be extremely popular and provided an opportunity for well-prepared candidates to display their knowledge and understanding of both the actual and potential impacts of climate change in their specified tundra ecosystem. Apart from an occasional study of Siberia, almost all candidates selected the Alaskan North Slope to exemplify their knowledge. High-level attainment was common and such answers focussed on the evaluative aspect of the question, as well as providing accurate and specific facts, locational details and appropriate geographical terminology. Many candidates demonstrated good preparation and were clearly well supported within centres.

A diverse range of ecological impacts were coherently evaluated; these included a consideration of vegetation characteristics, wildlife adaptations, permafrost melt, growing season changes, river and sea level changes as well as consequential effects on indigenous communities. Attainment was compromised when a limited range of impacts were considered or the evaluative aspect of the question was neglected. Furthermore, as in all case study questions, a lack of case specific details lowered the attainment level. Only a small minority of candidates failed to provide a case study location, which unfortunately restricted potential attainment.

- Q6** This question was the least popular in Section B and proved to be fairly challenging for any who brought only a superficial knowledge of relevant meteorological processes. Only able candidates attained high-level marks, with responses demonstrating a sound understanding of global or local factors which influence temperature together with appropriate place-specific exemplification and the inclusion of suitable meteorological terminology. Influential factors such as latitude, altitude, continentality, aspect, prevailing winds and ocean currents were commonly considered and coherently explained.

The examiners reported that a high level of differentiation was evident in this question. While many candidates appeared quite competent in their identification

and description of factors which influence temperature, the explanatory component of the answer was commonly omitted or only partially completed. Furthermore, attainment was compromised when candidates introduced only a narrow range of factors or failed to provide relevant spatial exemplification. The hesitant selection of this question, the lack of confident explanation and repeated inaccuracies clearly indicated that candidates were less well prepared than for the other questions. This highlights the need for greater reinforcement of this theoretical theme of the revised specification within centres.

Assessment Unit AS 2 Human Geography

Overview

Candidates appeared to cope well with this paper. They now benefit from having a past paper with which to practice, as well as exemplar materials. There appeared to be no questions that presented major difficulties, although a few found themselves running out of time and did not complete two essays. There has been an obvious improvement in the quality of responses to the Section B questions from one year to the next. However, some candidates seem to be rote learning the key facts and figures that provide the main basis for a given topic and this information can become confused, inaccurate or irrelevant to the topic actually being assessed. Candidates need to ensure that they use appropriate information to answer the question set on the examination paper.

Section A

- Q1 (a) (i)** This was an accessible question and the candidates appeared to be well aware of the need to include figures in their responses. However, some did not read the axis properly and missed the fact that the figures were per 100,000 rather than absolute numbers. Care should be taken when interpreting resources in whatever format they are presented.
- (ii)** Only a small proportion of candidates made a connection to the stages in the epidemiological transition model. Candidates need to know the names of the stages in this transition and be able to explain fully how each stage brings changes to the types of disease being experienced.
- (b) (i)** Surprisingly, the completion of the graph was poorly done. Candidates need to know that it does not just over-shoot the food line but will fluctuate around it before eventually levelling off.
- (ii)** Most candidates picked up some, if not full, marks in this question. Responses were generally good. Where marks were lost it often was due to incomplete/inaccurate discussions of growth rates or leaving out the population checks as identified by Malthus. Candidates needed to identify positive and negative checks by name for full marks.
- (c) (i)** This was an accessible question and, generally, it was well answered. Some candidates failed to identify the connection between fines and population density and simply described the distribution of both.
- (ii)** The modal mark was [2]. A large number of candidates failed to recognise the connection to standard of living. For full marks, candidates needed to identify why the policy was needed to improve the quality of life. Candidates often presented too much case study material and failed to address the question set.

- Q2 (a) (i)** Most candidates achieved [1] for a basic description. Examiners reported that only a small proportion of candidates used direction in their response. It is important that candidates make full use of resource material, e.g. scale and North arrow, in their responses.
- (ii)** This sub-section was poorly answered. Candidates failed to distinguish between 'rural settlements' and 'surrounding areas' in their answers. Often, one of these areas was neglected entirely. Candidates need to read the question carefully and identify all the key parts being asked. Leaving out parts will cost marks. Others lost marks by failing to discuss their answer with reference to place.
- (b) (i)** Examiners noted that this question provided candidates with [3] accessible marks and the majority of candidates gained full marks.
- (ii)** A well-answered question. Answers were often informed by case-study specific material. Candidates had clearly learnt this case study well. Some lost marks by not focusing on one argument, rather outlining several arguments more generally.
- Q3 (a) (i)** Most candidates identified a composite measure and noted a positive and negative point in their evaluation. However, some candidates failed to understand what is meant by "composite". Time should be spent identifying how these measures are different to other indicators.
- (ii)** This question was poorly answered with restricted references to places and use of figures. Candidate responses either lacked reference to places or lacked an appropriate number of indicators.
- (b)** This was an accessible question and, given the range of resources, available, candidates of all abilities could access marks. A small number of candidates neglected either the positives or negatives entirely. They need to understand that 'evaluate' means looking at both sides of the argument/issue. Most candidates failed to make a meaningful connection to the 'influencing development' component so were limited.

Section B

- Q4** This question was extremely popular and was answered by a majority of candidates. On the surface it looks to be straightforward, but many candidates struggled to get into Level 3 because they did not make reference in their answer to all of the different aspects required in the question.

Some failed to describe both of the main sources of population data. Most were able to provide detail about the census, but a sizeable proportion did not refer in enough detail to vital registration. In addition, candidates were required to compare the issues that affect the reliability of collecting population data in LEDCs compared to MEDCs. They were expected to make reference to their case study material and examiners did see good, well-presented arguments. However, some failed to refer to the collection of data from the two areas/ countries. Often answers were vague and lacked the clarity and description required for Level 3. Sometimes, there would be a list of reliability issues, but there would not be enough depth, explanation or comparison to allow a higher mark to be awarded. One examiner noted that '*many of the candidates omitted any reference to vital registration and its reliability*'. Candidates should ensure that when a question asks for '*sources of population data*', all of the sources listed in the specification are clearly identified and described in depth.

To get into Level 3, candidates needed to ensure that they showed a full understanding of both the sources of population data and that a full comparison of the reliability of the data collected was noted, with specific case study information.

Q5 The settlement-based question on the paper this year took a route that will be familiar to many geography teachers. This was a popular question and many answers provided a good extent of detailed knowledge that helped to address the question. Some of the more common issues included:

- failure to discuss the MEDC city case study. Some answered in general terms whilst others used LEDC city case studies instead;
- some candidates wrote only about one issue; by contrast some went beyond the question to discuss three issues when only two were required;
- in order for candidates to discuss the particular details of social and economic deprivation within the inner city, there is an expectation that they will clearly show their command and understanding of the case study by including place names and figures; and
- some candidates spent time detailing the causes of the decline in the inner city case study and then did not spend enough time discussing the issues.

Examiners noted that candidates often presented answers that were lacking in specific detail with a poor application of facts and figures. One examiner also noted that candidates sometimes used figures that were not directly linked to their stated issues – for example making reference to absenteeism percentages in schools but not actually expanding on the relevance of this point.

Q6 This question was less popular than the others. Most candidates focused on either China or India though there were a few rogue exceptions that did not fall under a BRICS or MINT group designation. Examiners noted that this question allowed a well-prepared candidate to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how and why emerging markets have grown in recent years and therefore to score highly. It is important that teachers ensure that their chosen case study meets the demands of the specification fully. Some candidates seemed to be less well-prepared for this particular question. Pressures on time or a lack of learning the specific facts of the case study sometimes limited the marks awarded.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Fieldwork Skills and Techniques in Geography

Overview

In general, both centres and candidates were well-prepared for this assessment unit. Attainment was noticeably higher in centres where the collection of primary data was followed-up thereby ensuring that candidates were prepared for questions relating to all aspects of the fieldwork process. In addition, regular practice based on past questions allowed for the application and refinement of the various geographical skills and techniques. Unsurprisingly, river studies and psammosere transects were most commonly investigated by candidates.

The paper produced a wide range of marks, allowing for a differentiated outcome, and the level of language appeared to present no obvious barriers to comprehension. Examiners commented on some candidates' inability to address the demand(s) of the question asked. Candidates should identify the focus of each question, pay close attention to emboldened words and phrases, and carry out the instructions of the question as it is set.

A significant number of candidates did not complete Question 2 (b) (iv). There was no feedback from centres to suggest that candidates struggled to complete the examination in the allocated time. This suggests that some candidates:

- did actually run out of time;
- assumed that the questionnaire graphic on page 15 marked the end of the examination and did not go on despite the clear printed instruction to 'turn over'; or
- saw the pie chart and made no attempt to complete it, perhaps because they lacked a protractor.

Candidates must be reminded that this examination draws on the content of the AS1 Physical Geography and AS2 Human Geography specifications.

Q1 (a) Candidates needed to ensure that they incorporated clear and convincing links to their own fieldwork investigation throughout Question 1. In the case of Part (a), candidates were required to provide specific details relating to their own fieldwork planning and preparation. Some confused pilot testing with risk assessment. Furthermore, and disappointingly, many candidates neglected the planning aspect of the question and simply discussed the importance of the chosen factor in general terms; such responses inevitably achieved low marks.

- (b) (i)** Well-prepared candidates competently demonstrated their graphical presentation skills and full marks were commonly awarded. Occasionally, marks were lost when:
- the title lacked accuracy or precision;
 - the dependent and independent variables were confused;
 - the units of measurement were omitted from the axes of the graph;
 - an inappropriate line graph was plotted when the x-axis variable displayed discrete rather than continuous data;
 - the scaling of the x and y axes failed to encompass all values;
 - graph-work lacked completion or displayed some inaccuracy; and
 - the candidate failed to make sufficient use of the space provided.

(ii) This was the most poorly answered part of Question 1. The question clearly asked candidates to identify and explain one factor which may have influenced the accuracy of the data collected in the field. However, many candidates provided a geographical explanation for the trend displayed on their completed graph or answered theoretically on these lines. This was a most unfortunate and costly mistake, as no marks could be awarded in such cases. Many failed to recognise that prevailing weather conditions such as rainfall do not make results invalid or inaccurate.

In those cases where the demand of the question was correctly identified and a valid factor was discussed, answers often lacked specificity, convincing links to the candidate's own fieldwork investigation and/or a clear understanding of the factor's influence on accuracy. Only a small proportion of candidates developed their answer to a Level 3 standard. A few discussed a variable not shown in their completed graph in which case no marks could be awarded. Candidates must be reminded, yet again, of the need to read and answer the question set. Moreover, they must ensure that their answers to questions such as this are infused with clear and convincing references to their own fieldwork experiences.

(c) This was not a 'new' question, so to speak, as a similar type of question featured in legacy AS1 papers and a comparable question, also worth [6], was included in the AS Unit 3 Specimen Assessment Materials. Despite this, candidates struggled here, often losing marks because they:

- failed to address the two key demands of the question (purpose and relevance of statistical analysis);
- did not understand the purpose of statistical analysis in a fieldwork investigation;
- developed their answer using their chosen graphical technique in Question 1(b)(i) as the basis for discussion;
- made limited or no connection between their chosen statistical technique and the aim of their investigation; and
- failed to fully discuss the relevance of their chosen statistical technique, often providing basic statements lacking in depth and development.

(d) Candidates performed well in this question. Most recommended a valid extension to their investigation and provided a clear explanation of its possible impact on the reliability of the geographical conclusions drawn. It is important to note, however, that some candidates erroneously based their answer on an improvement, which is not what they were asked and which could not be credited.

- Q2 (a) (i)** Using Ordnance Survey maps and drawing sketch maps are valuable geographical skills. It was pleasing to see, therefore, that most candidates achieved good marks in this question; clearly, most centres provided opportunities for candidates to practise and refine this skill. Occasionally, candidates lost marks when they:
- failed to label the features drawn, despite a clear instruction to do so;
 - drew a contour line instead of the required spot height, surprisingly, some did not know what a spot height is;
 - inaccurately sketched the course of the River Usk; and
 - failed to identify and, consequently draw the National Park boundary;

(ii) Most candidates achieved good marks in this question. In most cases, both the line graph and the bar graph were completed neatly and with accuracy. In some cases, marks were lost for careless errors, including failure to:

- attempt the rainfall bar chart;
- recognise the different intervals used on the two y-axes in the graph;
- apply the key provided and shade the rainfall bars; and
- complete the line in the line graph.

Candidates should be reminded of the need to check their graph work carefully to avoid making careless mistakes that invariably cost marks.

(iii) Most candidates correctly calculated the range (2.3 m). A small number erroneously stated the mode, determined the median or calculated the mean. Candidates must ensure that they can accurately distinguish between these measures of central tendency.

(iv) This question drew on the AS1 specification, which requires candidates to explain the factors that influence storm hydrographs (regimes). Unfortunately, only a minority of candidates achieved Level 3 marks here. In a large number of cases, candidates:

- discussed factors not illustrated on the Ordnance Survey map, such as soil, geology and precipitation;
- neglected to incorporate detailed map evidence in their answers;
- failed to develop two factors, despite the clear and emboldened demand in the question; and
- provided explanations which were restricted in detail and lacking relevant geographical terminology.

Only well-prepared candidates who addressed the various demands of the question, utilised the Ordnance Survey map with skill, and applied their knowledge of AS1 to the focus of the question achieved higher marks in this question.

(b) (i) A well-answered question, with most candidates able to explain a valid weakness of using a Likert scale in questionnaires.

(ii) Most candidates identified the overlapping categories in Question 3 on the questionnaire, the lack of “other” category in Question 5 or an additional weakness concerning the Likert scale in Question 7. A small proportion of candidates suggested an inappropriate weakness, such as the failure to gather demographic data, or a weakness connected to data collection as opposed to questionnaire design; such responses were not credited.

(iii) While most candidates competently explained why survey site, day of the week or month of the year needs to be considered when carrying out the survey, only a small proportion of candidates made the connection between the chosen factor and the collection of a sufficient number of surveys/a representative sample.

(b) (iv) (1) Most candidates accurately calculated the two missing values.

(2) Most candidates accurately completed and labelled the four missing sectors in the pie chart. On occasion, however, candidates lost marks because they:

- overcomplicated the task and completed the remaining sectors in

an anticlockwise direction in the pie chart;

- failed to measure their sectors accurately using the scale provided (one inaccurate line resulted in two inaccurate sectors);
- did not label the sectors, despite a clear instruction to do so; or
- erroneously transferred the greater than symbol (>) in the final sector.

Candidates who calculated erroneous values in the previous part-question could access marks here.

Assessment Unit A2 1 and A2 2

Examination of the previous specification was required to be undertaken within two examination papers only, thus the combination of human geography with global issues and the never-popular linking of physical geography and decision making. Permission to go to three papers in this new series has enabled a more logical examination structure to emerge with physical, human and decision-making all now set within their own paper. This change has been welcomed by all. One positive outcome has been that few timing problems were seen in this suite of papers.

Some general issues still remain, of course.

- Diagrams
 - More diagrams would be welcome, though some that were seen this year were poor.
- Order of answers:
 - The best way to approach individual questions in the two structured papers is to answer whole questions in the order set. A few centres seem to advise candidates to answer the sub-section c questions first. Whilst there is a logic to this insofar as the c questions carry the greatest reward, a danger is that candidates miss the way in which a question can develop through its three sections and become confused.
 - One candidate who ‘dipped’ into the questions lost their way and ended up answering parts of three questions, thus committing a rubric violation, which cost them considerable reward.
- Prepared answers:
 - Learned responses to case study questions were seen once more, despite the danger of their not responding to the question as set.
 - For example in response to unit AGG21 Question 4(a), some candidates referenced economic considerations, despite this not being a requirement of the question and as such, not worthy of credit.

Assessment Unit A2 1

Physical Processes, Landforms and Management

Overview

The structure of, and demands posed by, the new specification assessment appeared to offer candidates of differing abilities appropriate opportunities to respond positively to the questions set. The number of rubric violations was limited and the majority of candidates responded to the required number of questions and sub-sections. Better responses displayed a high level of knowledge and understanding with extensive use of appropriate subject-specific terminology and high standards of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

In respect of resource-based questions, candidates are encouraged to probe fully or analyse resources presented, and to manipulate information given therein to address the specific demands of the question. For example, figures, dates or values can enhance the quality of description or evaluation. However, candidates should be reminded that long portions of verbatim quotation from resource-based material cannot be rewarded with higher level marks.

It was pleasing to witness candidates taking advantage of the enhanced time allocation and available mark reward in Sections (c) of each question. In these sub-sections in particular, candidates are urged to pay attention to the command word/s of the question, and to address them specifically; for example, the higher order skill of evaluation, at times, provides a discriminator for entry to Level 3 marks. However, although cautioned against it in the past, there remain indications of candidates producing learned responses to case study questions. By their nature, such responses are unlikely to address the specific elements of the question explicitly and may thus self-limit, perhaps precluding entry into Level 3. Therefore, candidates are strongly encouraged to read the question carefully and to marshal and manipulate their knowledge to address its specific demands.

Only a small number of candidates appeared to run short of time. In some cases, this may have been due to mis-addressing earlier questions e.g. explaining the processes for each of the three locations (A, B and C) in Q1(b), or describing both the erosional and the depositional feature identified in Question 5(b). For others, a timing issue may have arisen as they answered sub-section (c) first, and may have misjudged the time required for sub-sections (a) and (b).

Once again, the quality of the diagrams was too frequently disappointing. Although it is recognised that high quality of construction cannot be expected under examination conditions, the information contained on a diagram should be accurate, relevant to the question, and explanatory.

- Q1**
- (a)** Although better candidates were able to provide detailed explanations of seismic gap theory and dilation, a number offered explanations which were restricted in terminology or, at times, accuracy. This was especially true of seismic gap theory.
 - (b)** Whilst a number of candidates provided pleasing explanations for their chosen locations, others incorrectly identified the nature of the boundaries at A and C. In some cases, the understanding of the processes associated with hot spots was limited.
 - (c)** In the main, candidates were well prepared for this question and the level of case study detail was often good. However, at times, candidates restricted the quality of their response due to: restricted case study detail; omission of either 'preparation' or 'response'; limited, superficial evaluation. A number restricted their response by utilising 'Pinatubo' as their case study.

- Q2**
- (a)** Although in response to this question a number of candidates made good use of the resource material, this was not the case for all. It was, at times, disappointing to see explanations that lacked precision and clarity. Some candidates provided un-requested additional material.
 - (b)** In response to this question, explanations often lacked detail/precision/use of relevant terminology. A surprising number of candidates omitted one element of the question completely (most usually, evidence). Candidates need to better distinguish between evidence for continental drift and evidence for seafloor spreading.
 - (c)** In the main, candidates were well prepared for this question and the level of detail provided was often good. However, at times, candidates restricted the quality of their response due to: omission of one aspect of the question (or more); provision of a limited range of places; use of a semi-list format which did not encompass the 'discussion' element of the question. Please note, the question asked for discussion of socio-economic and environmental aspects as per the new specification.
- Q3**
- (a)** The better responses included specific detail (facts and figures) to support the description of the climatic characteristics as well as specific biomass figures, and emphasised connections between specific climate data and the biomass in this biome, perhaps naming species. However, it was disappointing that the connections made between the description and the explanation of biomass were, too often, limited.
 - (b)** Whilst the descriptions were often good, utilising specific resource information, the explanations too often lacked development and depth. The use of resource material was, at times, underdeveloped and a number included additional case study material that was not required by the question.
 - (c)** The case study details provided in response to this question were often pleasing; the problems were discussed to a good standard. The best responses incorporated both socio-economic and environmental problems. Whilst most candidates referred to at least one potential solution, evaluations varied in quality considerably. In a small number of cases, the evaluation was omitted completely whilst, in others, it was underdeveloped.
- Q4**
- (a)** As with 3(a), the better responses included specific detail to support the description of the climatic characteristics as well as specific biomass figures, and emphasised connections between specific climate data and the biomass in this biome, perhaps naming species. However, it was disappointing that connections made between the description and the explanation of the biomass were, too often, limited. Some provided an explanation for the climatic characteristics; this was not required.
 - (b)** Although the majority of candidates utilised the resources and discussed all required elements of the question, the additional material was, at times, too general in nature to sufficiently augment the points being made.
 - (c)** Common issues in response to this question included: lack of specific, relevant case study detail; limited development of the threats to the trophic structure and nutrient cycle specifically (candidates preferring to describe these elements in pristine forest); neglect of the evaluation. Generic responses, lacking detail attached to a specific case study cannot access high level marks. Conversely, candidates knowledgeable with regard to the specific location, were able to perform well.

- Q5** (a) Although the majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some understanding of the terms given, the distinction was not always made with clarity, incisiveness and use of relevant terminology. The use of place reference varied in quality. Better candidates understood the relativity aspect of the processes.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to identify a valid erosional and depositional landform using the resource. However, the diagrams presented were often basic in nature. A small number of candidates omitted the diagram altogether, and were thus confined to Level 1. A number of candidates provided a description and explanation for both landforms identified; this was not a requirement of the question. Better candidates employed precise and relevant terminology to address all elements of the question.
- (c) Better candidates addressed all elements of the question with relevant detail and development. At times, marks were lost due to: provision of generalised statements as opposed to detailed, informed and accurate comments; failure to engage with the human environment aspect of the question or to make appropriate links between the threat and the issue of sea level rise.
- Q6** (a) Whilst the majority of candidates demonstrated some understanding of the coastal engineering strategies given in the resources, some did not address the 'sustainability' element of the question explicitly and/or did not develop the evaluative aspect of the question.
- (b) It was disappointing to see that a number of candidates possessed limited understanding of the process of wave refraction. Some erroneous diagrams were presented and some descriptions lacked clarity and detail. Conversely, better candidates were able to address this question concisely.
- (c) Better candidates addressed all elements of the question with relevant detail and development. However, for some, there were difficulties in discussing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) in the context of their case study. Some did not develop the importance of the role of these processes in coastal management. A small number failed to mention EIA and CBA entirely. Technical viability was not requested.
- Q7** (a) Although in response to this question a number of candidates made good use of the resource material, this was not the case for all. Similarly, the second form of evidence was not always utilised fully in the explanation.
- (b) Most candidates provided an acceptable definition with some explanation. Whilst some reference was made to places for illustration, this was, at times, restricted.
- (c) The majority of candidates identified an appropriate regional scale case study. However, many focused on the socio-economic development of the lowland post-glacial environment. This was not the focus of the question.
- Q8** (a) Better candidates utilised the resource effectively; however, in a number of cases, resource use was restricted. Some neglected the 'enhanced' dimension of the question.
- (b) Most candidates addressed this question appropriately; better candidates incorporated appropriate terminology into their response.
- (c) Although, in general, case study detail was incorporated into the descriptions, candidates appeared to prefer the 'describe' aspect of the question to that of 'evaluation', thus, on occasion, limiting the potential reward. In some cases, the descriptions were vague or focussed on one action only, hindering the overall quality of the response. Again, candidates are encouraged to use place references effectively to support the assertions made or to illustrate points.

Assessment Unit A2 2

Processes and Issues in Human Geography

Overview

The paper was received well and the ending of the Global Issues section seems not to have caused any consternation. Time has been freed up, one experienced examiner recorded that she saw fewer unfinished scripts than in the past, 'while at the other end of the spectrum, there was some clear evidence of too much time, some scripts containing two additional four-page supplementary answer books!'

The new sub-section c questions have 18 marks, rather than the previous 15, which should encourage answers of greater extent, sometimes combining case study material and resource use. The key phrase in such questions is sometimes 'together with'; or, more often, 'to help you'. The phrase 'to help you' sometimes caught candidates out, which is really surprising given how long it has been used in human geography papers. One examiner noted with surprise (and an exclamation mark) that 'there are still candidates who do not include their own material in this type of question! Another noted that 'they tended to answer the essay using their case study and then tagged the resource on somewhere at the start or the end, rather than throughout.'

- Q1**
- (a) Clearly, voluntary and forced migration were known about and distinguished well. One examiner reported that a lack of terminology hindered some.
 - (b) Some answers here were minimal, the place reference troubled many. Some candidates chose to evaluate instead of explain.
 - (c) The better answers provided proper, clear and overt attention to the Resource. One examiner remarked that some candidates focused on one aspect of social inequalities at the expense of presenting a broader answer; another that they regurgitated a pre learnt answer which often did not include the terms from the resource.
- Q2** This question was taken by few candidates
- (a) Many candidates did not make full use of the resource and gave only a brief description. The explain part was mostly overlooked.
 - (b) Migration policies might be weak here; rather the history of a country's migration (usually Canada) would be given.
 - (c) By no means every candidate dealt well with cultural nationalism. There were a few excellent answers, which took a great deal from the Resource.
- Q3**
- (a) Whilst greenfield and brownfield developments were known by most, some candidates failed to bring in properly the sustainability aspect of the question. A few confused greenfield sites with the greenbelt policy.
 - (b) Again, candidates knew what the term meant, in this case the urban ecological footprint; the better marks were awarded to those who went on to relate it to urban planning.
 - (c) This was done reasonably, although some displayed a tendency to over-use the Resource and not bring in sufficient extra material as required by the 'to help you' instruction. Giving reasons for the establishment of eco-towns was the most challenging aspect of the question.
- Q4**
- (a) Weaker answers were too general and lacked depth. Environmental considerations were often described in a limited manner. Some referenced economic considerations, despite this not being a requirement of the question. Better answers interweaved social and environmental considerations.

- (b) The better answers here were those which had detail. Bringing in examples helped candidates to provide this detail. Waste management was better handled than water supply.
- (c) Most of the case studies presented here were of Cambridge. The key discriminator was 'evaluation'; some didn't. The Resource was generally found helpful: 'excellent information for the candidate to use' was one examiner's comment.
- Q5** (a) (i) Resource use here was often fairly limited although most candidates used two of the expected factors: language, nationality and religion. Candidates should be reminded to answer the question as set; here there was no requirement, really no opportunity, to use their own material and doing so, often with reference to Northern Ireland, cost time for limited reward.
- (ii) Better answers here focused on the word 'perceived'. Residential concentration tended to be handled better than gender.
- (b) Some candidates, wishing to use their prepared answers, wrote also about colonialism and annexation. Whilst these might be brought in successfully as context, it proved too easy to lose the focus of the question on international migration. The most frequent case studies were the UK or Jamaica.
- Q6** This question was not chosen often.
- (a) (i) The terms from the specification of utility here were territorial disputes, historical animosities and discrimination. Answers which did not have these ideas could struggle. Instead of using the resource as the question demanded, many students chose to use their own examples.
- (a) (ii) Answers here were generally better, but in many cases more use of their own material would have helped. On the contrary, others neglected the resource. One examiner noted that in some cases, the 'why' element of the question was overlooked.
- (b) Use of detail was key to the award of good marks here. Common case studies were Belfast or Jerusalem. Candidates who wrote about the Troubles in Northern Ireland too generally, rather than dealing with the city of Belfast specifically lost marks. Sometimes answers here were unwieldy.
- Q7** (a) Rather surprisingly, the definitions of mass tourism were sometimes weak, even overlooked. Developments in transport usually produced a stronger answer than increased disposable incomes.
- (b) Answers here were generally good with useful, valid detail being seen in many cases. Both parts of the question were handled well, especially social sustainability.
- (c) Most of the case studies here were of Mallorca. Prepared answers were seen too often with some making little, even no, use of the resource. The question asked for an evaluation of strategies but some just wrote mainly about how the problems of mass tourism were made manifest. Evaluation was an important discriminator
- Q8** (a) This proved to be accessible and many did well, sometimes with the aid of a diagram and spatial references to exemplify the movement of the pleasure periphery. Some did not deal properly with the changes over time.
- (b) The terms 'leakage' and 'greenwashing' were usually known, but the explanation aspect of the question was often handled poorly.

- (c)** Costa Rica was the case study of choice here. Some candidates were so enthused with their case study that they neglected the resource, occasionally entirely. The better answers tended to interweave the resource and their own material.

Assessment Unit A2 3 Decision Making

Overview

For a few years when the Decision-Making Exercise (DME) first became a component of the A Level examinations for CCEA, it was a separate examination. Shortly after it was combined with skills questions and, in more recent years, with the Physical Geography paper. This year there is a welcome return to a standalone DME. This is a move appreciated by the examining team and perhaps also by candidates as it allows them to focus on one set of skills and approaches to the examination.

This year the context for the DME was the proposed construction of a salmon farm in Galway Bay. Despite being a separate paper, the constituent elements and the structure were unchanged. The familiar resources were there: maps, photographs, an infographic, text, artist's impressions and a graph. These were intended to allow candidates to quickly envisage the proposed development. They also provided a treasury of ideas, facts and figures to allow them to construct their report. In general, candidates appeared to find the material accessible and most were able to address the requirements of the paper very well.

A frequent theme in reporting back on the DME is verbatim use of resources. Despite warnings from these reports, and from centres to candidates, this still occurs and results in poor scores for these candidates. Perhaps the temptation is too strong for some candidates when the 'answer' appears to be provided. Of course, the words in the textual part of the resources, or in the infographic, are not the answer: these have to be taken, processed and developed and, only when conveyed to the examiner in the candidate's own words, do they become the answer. Only then is understanding demonstrated. As has been said before, replicating phrases from the text ('aquaculture installation', 'high deprivation levels', 'genetically distinct', for example) is not a problem, and is entirely understandable. It is when whole sentences – or in extreme cases whole paragraphs – are replicated that this is adjudged to be verbatim and, when that is excessive, candidates are limited to Level 1. It should continue to be made clear to candidates that verbatim use of resources will result in them being heavily penalised.

There is no requirement for candidates to reference the source of their information, as might be the case in a formal document. Some candidates provide such references: Text C, or Resource 6. While this is allowed, it is not required. One examiner who noted this tendency felt that it interrupted the "flow of what they were writing about". Examiners are expecting the arguments to be advanced largely using the resources in the booklet and in the 'Background to the Report' section of the question paper. So long as these ideas and concepts are reflected back in the candidates' own words and construction, that is sufficient.

A Introduction

This appeared to be fairly straightforward for most candidates and was reported by examiners as well handled across the board. The request for a brief description of the project and a discussion of the need for it has been a method of starting the report which is quite common. A couple of examiners noted that description tended to be handled a little better than the need. One noted that the need for such a development in the region itself was ignored by some candidates. Another examiner commented that some candidates "...included relatively longwinded introductions comprising irrelevant background information on the Aran Islands and/or the remarkable lifecycle of wild Atlantic salmon, rather than providing a description of the project itself."

B The likely Impact on:**(i) Employment and the economy**

Examiners reported this section as “well done” in general, and a range of resources were employed in support of the points discussed. One examiner noted some candidates threading the points made around Myrdal and Friedman’s core-periphery model. While an interesting approach, it was felt that this hampered those candidates in developing the concepts in the resources. The use of additional knowledge and concepts not contained in the resources is to be welcomed, and this is explicit in the guiding principles for Examiners. However, these should not be used in such a way that they impair the candidate in their construction of a narrative using the resources provided.

For many candidates, this was the best answered section of the report. Those candidates who used the full range of resources including the graph (Resource 6) tended to have the best answers. Less successful were those who presented unbalanced answers, with deficiencies in either the arguments or the counterarguments.

(ii) The environment

This had the same mark allocation as sub-section (b)(i), with around the same amount of material supporting the discussion. Some examiners felt that it was a little more challenging than (b)(i), for candidates. Those who read the question carefully, noting that it required a discussion of “the potential environmental damage ... and the counterarguments”, were most successful. On the other hand, candidates who started with the benefits to the environment tended to have a less well-structured answer, and this would have been reflected in the marks awarded. Candidates who used the infographic (Resource 5) in this section were able to pick up a range of ideas and figures to support their discussion. One examiner noted that verbatim in this section was generally linked to ammonia production and the impact on water quality and flushing rates, in addition to the impact on wild salmon of escaped farm salmon interbreeding with the wild fish. She noted that this “... showed that there was a limited understanding as it was rarely put into their own words.” Despite these challenges, many candidates did well in this section.

C Conclusion

This remains the most challenging part of this paper for most candidates. Despite being separated from the challenges of other aspects of the specification, there was a little evidence of this section being rushed by some candidates. In previous years, we often emphasised the importance of careful timing to ensure that this paper is completed. Clearly, despite separating the DME from the Physical Geography paper, there is still a need for care with time.

Deficiencies included justifying the decision with a one-sided argument leading to an imbalance in the response, or rehashing points made in (b)(i) and (b)(ii), without a fresh presentation. In this section candidates should be seen to weigh up the arguments on both sides of the issue, and to compare the benefits to employment and the economy with the inevitable disadvantages to the environment. Equally any losses to the economy or to local jobs can be balanced with any proposed environmental amelioration. It is not possible to do this in (b)(i) or (b)(ii), but it is required here to justify the decision made ‘on the basis of the greater overall benefits’. The structure of this section of the report is also important. As one examiner put it “...those who stated a clear decision early in this section, followed by a weighing up of the arguments tended to produce the better quality responses”.

Format

These should be a straightforward [2] marks for candidates. Most know that creativity with the headings and sub-headings is not a good idea: candidates must use the headings and sub-headings as provided. Care should be taken not to remove or to add a word to these titles, and to ensure that the sub-heading is not on the same line as the heading. Occasionally, Conclusion was substituted for Decision with the loss of a mark. There was at least one example of a candidate who did not provide any structure for the report. This lost them the two format marks; additionally, the resultant poorly-structured script made it much more challenging for the candidate to address the question effectively.

Role

Most candidates gained both marks for adopting and maintaining the role of Dr Mark David.

Graph

The data were quite straightforward this year, and examiners reported that most candidates achieved full marks. The least successful were generally those graphs where an inappropriate scale was selected for the y-axis. There is always a discussion as to whether to use graph paper or not and the pros and cons have been discussed widely. With care, it is just as possible to get full marks using the lines on the answer booklet as a guide to allow bars or lines to be drawn, as it is for a graph drawn on graph paper. Those candidates using graph paper seem less inclined to produce a graph crammed in to a few lines at the bottom of a page, however. One examiner this year suggested that, if not encouraging the use of graph paper, centres should encourage candidates to “use a whole page for the graph in the booklet to remove errors in drawing the scale and plotting data” and this is appropriate advice.

Update on issue

Candidates are told in the paper that they should not use any information that they might know about the issue which is not present in the Resource Booklet and Question paper. However, it may be of interest for teachers and candidates to know that this project was withdrawn by BIM when the Irish Government’s national strategic plan for aquaculture capped the scale of production from aquaculture installations at 5,000 to 7,000 tonnes; this proposal had been proposing the production of 15,000 tonnes of salmon each year. A lot of the information on which this DME has been based is still available online, as is information about the final decision:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/broad-welcome-for-bim-decision-to-abandon-galway-fish-farm-1.2474385>

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