



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GEOGRAPHY
AS**

SUMMER 2017

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**EDUQAS
GCE AS GEOGRAPHY**

Summer 2017

C1: CHANGING LANDSCAPES

The paper was accessible across the ability range with little evidence of questions being omitted. It differentiated well and provided the opportunity for candidates to display the ability to appropriately apply their knowledge and understanding of the specification content.

- On the whole, the glaciated landscape questions generated a better quality of response with some clear use of case study evidence. However, fewer centres attempted this option.
- Many candidates failed to make use of the continuation pages and blank spaces provided within the paper. Instead, they opted for a separate continuation booklet which increased opportunities for error with missing or unattached pages
- The time available did not seem cause for concern with very few candidates failing to finish the paper.
- There was evidence of candidates having been instructed well on the differences between the command words and their impact upon the A01, A02 and A03 requirements. Centres should ensure that they devote adequate time to discussing the requirements of each command word with candidates.
- There was frequent use of dated case study examples. Centres should be aware that examples and case studies should be contemporary.
- The standard of responses seen to questions examining A03 suggested that some centres had not addressed this adequately within their teaching.
- Many candidates failed to identify the synoptic requirement for question 7.

Question 1(a)

Whilst many candidates were able to utilise Ordnance Survey Maps successfully, there were a significant number of candidates who were not able to record 6-figure grid references accurately, despite this skill being clearly identified as a requirement in Appendix A 1.2 of the specification. Most candidates were able to identify a wide variety of landforms along the high energy coastline but there were some inaccuracies in the recognition of landforms, with a few students wrongly identifying features e.g. a spit. A number of students identified landforms outside the specified stretch of coastline. These candidates were not penalised if they could accurately use the skill but lost a mark for the landform.

Question 1(b)

Many candidates showed good understanding of the formation of a wide variety of erosional landforms. Some based their answers around excellent place-based exemplars and included accurate diagrams (for example, the landforms linked to the concordant and discordant coastlines). Strong responses either focused on a headland, stack or wave cut platform and outlined the stages of their formation and how different marine (& other) processes are involved. A smaller number of candidates were able to give high quality explanations of marine processes at work in the creation of these landforms. Candidates who examined the role of marine processes with success considered the importance of the processes in comparison to other factors such as geology and climatic conditions. A small number of candidates failed to focus their answers on landforms of coastal erosion.

Question 2(a)

Most candidates were able to identify the impacts of coastal erosion over time. However, there was insufficient explicit use of the Figure 1. Many candidates failed to utilise the north arrow and identify changes between the northern and southern sections of the Hornsea coastline shown. Many candidates failed to pick up “varying” impacts of coastal erosion. Some responses focused on the size of the beach and did not take into account different tide levels. Some candidates still used phrases such as ‘top of the photograph’ or ‘bottom left hand corner’ which lack geographical validity.

Question 2(b)

Many candidates were able to present detailed evidence about positive and negative impacts of coastal processes on humans in relation to a wide range of places, activities and landforms. It was good to see a number of case studies from ‘beyond the UK’ as encouraged by the specification, such as the beaches and lagoon formations in Cancun, Mexico. Candidates who achieved well were able to address the command word with success by presenting a balanced discussion on whether coastal processes have a mainly positive impact on human activity. Candidates who did particularly well with the AO2 element clearly considered the positive and negative impacts of coastal processes and came to a clear conclusion. Some responses failed to make much of a link between coastal processes and human impacts.

Question 3(a)

Whilst many candidates were able to utilise Ordnance Survey Maps successfully, there was a significant number of candidates who were not able to record 6-figure grid references accurately, despite this skill being clearly identified as a requirement in Appendix A 1.2 of the specification. Most candidates interpreted map features well and were able to identify landforms of glacial erosion. The most common correctly identified landforms were ribbon lakes or hanging valleys. There was poor identification of arêtes, corries and pyramidal peaks.

Question 3(b)

Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the formation of a range of glacial landforms such as corries, troughs, arêtes, pyramidal peaks and *rôche moutonnées*. Most candidates gave detailed high quality explanations of erosional processes at work in the creation of landforms. Candidates who examined the role of erosional processes with success considered their importance in comparison to other processes such as weathering or deposition. Weaker candidates possessed insecure knowledge of erosional processes and landforms. Few appeared to have understood or revised the plucking process carefully: in many cases, this was explained poorly. Many candidates did not appreciate the distinction between the weathering process of freeze-thaw and the erosional process of plucking. It is easy for mid-ability candidates to confuse the two; centres might be well advised to place greater emphasis in teaching and learning on the critical distinction between weathering and erosion. Most candidates were able to access some of the AO2 mark allocation for this item. There was evidence of candidates having been instructed well on the difference between ‘examine’ and ‘explain’ as command words. At the top end of the mark range, some candidates completed the answer with a mini-conclusion which made explicit reference to the *role* of erosional processes (in relation to time, geographical context or other types of processes).

Question 4(a)

Most candidates successfully described the trends in the volume of glacier ice, identifying the overall trend as well as peaks, troughs and fluctuations. The best responses examined the cyclical nature within the overall trend and showed evidence of data manipulation. The weaker answers often missed the overall trend and tried to explain the data. Most candidates were able to support their points with data and used Figure 4 as required.

Question 4(b)

There was evidence of candidates being well-versed in the need to carefully structure a response to a question carrying the command word 'discuss'. Connectives such as *however*, *furthermore*, *on the other hand* featured in higher-scoring answers. Candidates who achieved well were able to address the command word with success by presenting a balanced discussion on whether glacial processes have a mainly positive impact on human activity. Additional substantiation was provided: for instance, a few answers were able to compare the devastating impacts of rapid-onset GLOF processes with the more pervasive and slow-onset negative impacts of permafrost degradation. The weaker end of the cohort found it difficult to distinguish between glacial *processes* and glacial *environments* - and therefore built their answer around some description of 'the challenges of life in a cold climate'. Limited credit was available for this. Centres might work with weaker candidates to improve their understanding and recognition of key words in essay titles, such as the word 'processes' in this example.

Question 5(a) (i)

Overall candidates described the distribution of earthquake risk reasonably well using place names and gave a sense of direction using compass points. However, candidates should be reminded to read the rubric with care and address the command words in the question by using the appropriate figure requested. They should also take care with questions such as this to describe rather than explain the distribution of earthquake risk. Some students talked generally about risks in relation to the freeway, without specifying which area of freeway they were referring to.

Question 5(a) (ii)

This question produced a significant number of mediocre answers; few were outstanding. The majority of responses demonstrated very little progression beyond GCSE-level. Appendix A 2.1 of the specification requires candidates to have an understanding of sampling strategies. Significant numbers of candidates were not able to name or describe sampling strategies or give appropriate justifications.

Question 5(a) (iii)

This answer generated disappointing responses; few reached the standard expected at AS-level. Very few candidates were able to offer a justification that showed signs of joined-up thinking in respect to the *aims and objectives of the study* - namely, a survey of the perceptions of different residents of the earthquake risk. Thus, stratified sampling would be entirely appropriate in order to survey differences between perceptions of people living in: low and high risk areas; or rich and poor neighbourhoods; or youthful and elderly cohorts. Instead, most candidates ignored the given context and provided bland and generic answers (which asserted typically that a particular strategy would be best because it 'avoided bias', was 'representative' or was 'cheap and easy' to do). All students in some centres scored poorly on this question and a number of students did not attempt to answer at all.

Question 5(b)

Most candidates provided a competent answer to this question although many showed little sign of genuine progression beyond GCSE-level in terms of their depth of knowledge and understanding of tectonic processes. Weaker and mid-ability candidates often struggled to access clear and unambiguous vocabulary in order to describe key processes for this topic - such as plate divergence and the upwelling of magma. Use of diagrams, when well-annotated was very beneficial. Centres might dedicate a little more time to ensuring that all candidates can clearly *articulate* these core understandings for the study of tectonic hazards. A large number of students focused on the wrong plate margin and started outlining processes at convergent plate margins.

Question 5(c) (i)

Most candidates were able to calculate the range of costs with success and showed their workings. However, a very small number of candidates were unsure of how to work out the range and some did not attempt the question at all.

Question 5c (ii)

The word 'cartographic' was not understood by a significant number of candidates. The overwhelming majority of candidates suggested that a bar chart might be used because it would clearly illustrate the differences. As a result, few were able to access the full marks available. Attention should be drawn to Appendix A in the specification and in particular to sections 1, 3, 5 and 6 so that candidates are better equipped to answer these questions. Most candidates successfully identified a graphical technique although some described rather than justified the technique.

Question 5(d)

In common with questions 2b and 4b, there was clear evidence that most candidates were well-versed with the 'procedural' skills and knowledge required to craft a discursive essay (with roughly equal AO1 and AO2 weighting). High-scoring answers were planned and structured well, and offered broadly equal weighting to both sides of the discussion. Different types of impact were examined i.e. economic and social costs; consideration was given to the human processes that potentially exacerbate risk and result in more people being affected, albeit with fewer lives lost than in the past. The very best candidates presented good discussions on population increases and technological advancement and noted that the continuing varying impacts seen in lower/higher income countries was perhaps a more important factor than time. There was evidence of detailed case study knowledge being applied well to the task. Weaker candidates, as might be expected, often tried to answer a slightly different question i.e. they looked at the differing impact of earthquakes on high-income and low-income societies today.

Question 6(a)

'Compare' is an important AO2 command word with which candidates should be familiar. This question required candidates to do more than describe two events sequentially. Such an approach would only allow AO1 marks to be awarded. Most candidates appeared to appreciate this restriction; some attempted correctly to *synthesize* their knowledge of two volcanic events in order to produce a structured account that carefully considered the economic impact of both events, followed by the social impact of both events, followed by the environmental impacts of both events *etc.* This was an effective route to follow and in many cases resulted in candidates attaining a band 3 mark. It was good to see the use

of a variety of recent events including the eruptions of Eyjafjallajökull and Mount Nyiragongo. Old and historical events however, were all too prevalent such as the eruptions of Pinatubo, 1991, Heimaey 1975 and even Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. There were also a few candidates who failed to name the volcano concerned. The most successful answers developed a continuous comparison of the impacts of two events recognising both similarities and differences between the impacts. Candidates are reminded to read the rubric of the question with care as some candidates discussed the impacts of earthquakes rather than volcanoes. The weaker AO2 answers tended to use comparison often as an afterthought in the final paragraph.

Question 6(b)

Of all the essays on this examination paper, this question had the highest AO2 weighting (10 marks). It is important that candidates are aware that the command word 'evaluate' - in common with 'discuss' - places a considerable demand on learners in terms of being able to demonstrate an ability to develop a coherent and substantiated argument which *progresses beyond descriptive writing*.

The best answers provided a mature evaluation of management strategies which progressed clearly beyond 'it worked' and 'it didn't work' assertions. For instance, the best evaluations noted that success very much depends on the volcanic context: mitigation is inherently more challenging when faced with violent and explosive eruptions at destructive boundaries. Another sophisticated evaluative approach taken by some candidates involved offering an overview of the value of different categories of management action, such as land use zoning and monitoring (as opposed to merely describing management failures linked with particular volcanic case studies). The most successful answers used place-based exemplification which clearly evaluated named strategies by presenting the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy and their overall effectiveness. There was strong evidence of high-scoring candidates managing their time carefully in order to produce a substantial conclusion that delivered more than mere platitudes and instead referenced specialized geographical concepts - such as scale or mitigation.

Question 7

The quality of responses seen was sufficiently weak to raise questions about the extent to which students were fully aware prior to the examination of the assessment objective targeting for this final synoptic question. Targeting AO2, the question should function as a 'springboard' for candidates to use ideas drawn from the entirety of their AS Geography course. This particular question provided opportunities for candidates to look firstly at the possible positive and negative impacts of flows of money related to disaster responses, and secondly to reflect on other contexts for money flows, such as the rebranding of places or investment in urban areas by MNCs. Most candidates used the resource material, in isolation, to give detailed description of the flows of money to Haiti after the earthquake and therefore did not address the question. Some were able to present a discussion by developing counter-arguments. A small number of candidates used their knowledge from across the whole specification to answer the question although a number of well-developed and specific examples linked to the regeneration of places such as the London Olympic Park and the Liverpool Docklands were seen.

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C2: CHANGING PLACES

The paper was accessible across the ability range with limited evidence of questions being omitted, however, many candidates found some questions challenging. The paper differentiated well and all questions and their constituent parts gave the required characteristic of providing the opportunity to the most able to demonstrate some excellent knowledge and understanding of this new specification, whilst also being accessible to those of lower ability.

To summarise:

- Time management did not appear to be an issue with many candidates producing lengthy, detailed answers to all questions.
- The problem of poor handwriting persists for a significant number of candidates. It is easy to lose the thread of an argument or account when focusing on deciphering what has been written. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are still proving to be an issue for a number of candidates.
- Throughout the paper, the answers to the skills questions varied in quality with some very able candidates unable to answer some of the more rudimentary skills questions. This is an element of the specification that should not be overlooked when preparing candidates for examinations; it is to be expected that some skills will be examined in every examination session.
- It was pleasing to note the higher marks that were awarded in the questions relating to fieldwork – traditionally an area where marks can be low and differentiation problematical. The questions enabled all students to be able to demonstrate the relevance of the work that they had experienced.
- Geographical definitions and terminology could also usefully be stressed, paying particular attention to the wording used in the specification.
- The role of ‘**place**’ in the specification is significant and whilst some candidates are very familiar with case studies *per se*, the central tenet is that ‘this section is fundamentally at the local level’ was not apparent in candidates’ responses.
- Quite a lot of supporting data / evidence in candidates’ answers was ‘creative’ or at the very least confused: centres should remind their students that (i) examiners are aware of the case studies; (ii) it is easy for examiners to check case studies on the internet.
- Candidates need to respond directly to the questions’ command word.

Question 1(a)

The relative complexity of Figure 1 proved a challenge for many mid-ability candidates, some of whom only scored one or two marks. The most common reason for candidates failing to access the mark scheme was an inability to use language with clarity and precision: distribution was not understood by many candidates and consequently, relatively few candidates scored four marks. This was a pity because skills-based questions sometimes provide weaker candidates with an opportunity to bolster their mark. This is, however, dependent on literacy i.e. candidates' ability to articulate distributions and patterns clearly - terms such as 'clustering' 'concentration' 'peripheral' were rarely used. Furthermore, references to parts of GB were often vague and many candidates omitted any reference to data in their answers. More work needs to be done before the exam to prepare students for unfamiliar stimuli.

Question 1(b)

Many candidates provided a generic answer which would have been equally applicable to clusters of retail outlets or farms i.e. proximity to transport or markets; in some cases omitting reference to 'clusters' completely. Candidates who scored full marks were able to outline how their chosen locational factor operated in a way that *clearly* encouraged knowledge economy cluster growth. Proximity to universities was often the clearest way of demonstrating this e.g. links between technology companies and a university's science departments.

Some students thought the question to be a sequel to 1(a) and discussed the reasons for the medal distribution. Some students were clearly unprepared on this element of the specification and left this question unanswered.

Question 1(c)

This question gave candidates the opportunity to use a wide choice of examples and therefore a wide variety was seen. In some cases, candidates were well-prepared for this part of the examination insofar as they clearly understood that the command word 'examine' requires a different writing approach than 'describe' or 'explain' do. The instruction to 'examine' place changes in a geography examination is also intended to prompt candidates into 'thinking like a geographer', for instance by focusing on the way changes in one place will be linked with changes occurring in other places (e.g. on account of globalisation). The theory on which this section of the specification is based (the Clark Fisher Model) was rarely referred to in candidates' answers; applying this model to a local place would provide weaker candidates with a useful narrative through this aspect of the specification. Therefore, such candidates simply described the economic characteristics when they were asked to examine how they had changed over time.

The best answers examined changes occurring over varying time scales which were often very detailed. Candidates who accessed the full range of AO2 marks available typically wrote about spatial interactions between places over varying timescales. Candidates who were only able to access the AO1 marks typically provided a descriptive account of the industrialization or regeneration of a city (but with no specified time scale, nor any examination of how these changes were geographically connective with external flows of people or capital). In a few cases, candidates wrote about changes in particular local districts or neighbourhoods: this was encouraging to see, and very much in line with recommendations in relation to teaching and learning about **changing places** (case studies of **local** places - as opposed to case studies of large cities or states - is recommended throughout this part of the A-level course). Candidates who wrote about changes in the

economic characteristics of large cities such as London - or even China - over time struggled to access the full marks available (because the task was too overwhelmingly large to perform competently).

It is worth centres explicitly reminding students of the need to embrace the 'specialised concepts' outlined in the specification, particularly when answering questions requiring 'examination' or 'evaluation'.

Question 2(a) (i) & (ii)

Most candidates were able to calculate the mean correctly. Several squandered a mark needlessly however by not showing their working (this instruction was given as part of the question and was expected to be adhered to by candidates). Most appreciated a simple strength and a simple weakness - which was sufficient to access the 2 marks available for part (ii). However, there were many generalised comments that could refer to any measure of central tendency.

Question 2(a) (iii) & (iv)

Most candidates were able to plot the data correctly – however, some candidates did not plot **and label**; again, this instruction was given as part of the question and was expected to be adhered to by candidates. Most were able to explain the suitability of the scattergraph, although relatively few candidates appreciated the concepts underpinning best fit lines. This question posed relatively few difficulties for candidates.

Question 2(b)

The question contained four elements. Candidates were required to: demonstrate understanding of rebranding; recall case study knowledge; carry out an evaluation **and** arrive at a judgment. The very best answers focused on urban rebranding in its truest sense e.g. the adoption of new city slogans or advertising campaigns; consequently, the evaluation offered by such candidates did more than merely assert that the rebranding process had failed or succeeded. Instead, a nuanced and critical evaluation was provided which acknowledged that perspectives may vary on whether rebranding is successful according to who gains most and least as a result and some candidates explored ways in which gentrification involves both winners and losers in rebranded urban areas. Examples chosen were mostly appropriate and showed some accurate information about the rebranding/regeneration that had occurred, although it was unclear whether many candidates fully grasped the concept of **re**-branding, i.e. few could neither identify the earlier 'brand' nor any characteristics of the **new** brand with many mid-ability candidates seeing rebranding as synonymous with redevelopment or regeneration. Weaker candidates wrote at great length about 'new shopping complexes' without explaining the difference between rebranding and regeneration; in some cases, they continued a narrative that they had begun in their answer to question 1(c).

A significant minority of candidates failed to notice the restriction in the question title requiring them to write about *urban* places. Instead they wrote at great length about changes in rural regions such as Cornwall. In such cases, candidates were still able to access the middle band of the mark scheme by demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the rebranding process and by carrying out an evaluation of success. Awarding all candidates who used a rural case study with zero marks - irrespective of the quality of other aspects of their response - would *not* have constituted a valid assessment of the wide range of geographical knowledge and skills tested by the question. In answers where the urban focus was lacking, some candidates showed far greater understanding of *the rebranding process* than many of those who selected an urban case study and they were justly rewarded for this element of the question.

Question 3(a) (i) & (ii)

Very few candidates identified an appropriate technique. Bar charts were common and others suggested scattergraphs. There was little evidence of progression beyond GCSE-level in terms of the breadth of knowledge candidates possessed of graphical techniques used to support geographical study.

Question 3(b)

Few candidates were familiar with the **process** of risk assessment, thus were unable to handle the demand to suggest the likely **characteristics** of a risk assessment process; instead, they made generalised points about potential dangers encountered in their own fieldwork such as the need to check the weather forecast or cross roads at designated crossing points. The best answers identified a number of stages in the process and provided appropriate illustration. This is a section in the planning phase of the enquiry process that needs to be better understood by candidates.

Question 3(c) (i) & (ii)

Many candidates suggested correctly that the Spearman Rank test would be appropriate; they then proceeded to offer sufficient justification to score 2 or 3 marks. From some centres, candidates were familiar with this technique and are aware of important procedural steps, such as the use of critical values, that are always likely to trigger the award of marks in an examination such as this. In a significant number of cases, students did not give a statistical technique and guessed with a graphical technique, which then meant it was difficult to justify their choice when they had not understood the first part. In some cases, students from whole centres opted for solutions such as bar charts which demonstrates that the statistical content and emphasis of adhering to all aspects of the specification should perhaps be given a higher profile.

Question 3(d)

This question required candidates to suggest two primary or secondary data sources with sufficient clarity to gain the four AO3 marks available. Thus, vague answers about how the imaginary students might 'use a council website to find out facts about who lives in the area' or suggested questionnaires without including reference to any likely questions, lacked the level of detail required for full marks. The AO2 marks were anchored in the hypothesis and a proportion of students had a very weak link with this aspect, therefore full AO2 marks were awarded to answers that paid close attention to the *context* which had been suggested. The best answers matched the suggested data sources with the context intelligently and appropriately.

Question 4

The quality of responses varied significantly from centre to centre. There was a huge discrepancy between how well centres had prepared their students for this section. This was unexpected as it very much follows the pattern of the legacy papers from previous AS specifications. Seven marks were available for an account of the conclusions to the physical geography investigation with 3 further marks allocated for some discussion of 'to what extent' these conclusions actually supported the original research question or theory.

The best answers were richly detailed and made reference to conclusions which drew on both primary and secondary data in a specified local context. Some candidates quoted facts and figures drawn from their fieldwork while others identified university reports from particular universities and were able to discuss the extent to which the secondary sources corroborated the primary fieldwork findings. Meanwhile, weaker students just described what they did, not the conclusions they reached in which case the command phrase "to what extent" was largely ignored and the answers were little more than descriptions of the data collected.

Question 5

There was a significant variation in candidates' answers to this question, this variation was clearly determined on a centre by centre basis. Answers from some centres, demonstrated that candidates were able to state two methods of data presentation and evaluate the methods used. It is to be hoped that centres, in preparing for this type of question, can encourage the use of sophisticated cartographical techniques which, by their essence, will give a greater scope for spectrum than the more restrictive bar or line graph.

Those who accessed the full AO2 marks available were able to do more than comment on the generic strengths of particular techniques: they were able to additionally *evaluate* these strengths in the particular *context* of their investigation. Some mid-ability candidates accessed good marks by including a sketch of the method(s) and then evaluating the technique and stating why it was suitable for their data. Unfortunately, in a number of centres, it appeared that candidates had engaged in a 'look-see' style of fieldwork to fulfil this requirement, which, whilst providing case study evidence of rebranding, did not constitute fulfilling the six-stage model of the enquiry process for Human Geography fieldwork. Therefore, such candidates had not had the opportunity to present any data; and were significantly disadvantaged.



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