GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Geography

A level

Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.[1]

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

[1] ***Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.***

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
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Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner | Eduqas

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Executive Summary

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
AO3: Developing data analysis skills	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/pages/resourcesingle.aspx?riid=1293	Interactive digital resource to support candidates to analyse examination and NEA data resources.
AO2: Developing evaluative writing skills	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/pages/resourcesingle.aspx?riid=1544	Interactive digital resource to support candidates in developing evaluative writing techniques.
Developing an effective sampling strategy (NEA)	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/pages/resourcesingle.aspx?riid=1607	Interactive digital resource to introduce candidates to the principles of developing an effective sampling strategy for their NEA.

GEOGRAPHY

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COMPONENT 1: CHANGING LANDSCAPES

Overview of the Component

- Analysis of the resources needs to concentrate on overall patterns and be related to the question set. Teaching candidates how to spot the overall trend or pattern in a resource is paramount to accessing B3 and was lacking in many responses. Some candidates opted to lift and describe the resources instead of analysing them effectively.

- The use of case studies in essays was generally sound and appropriate but candidates should try to integrate and apply them in 8-mark AO2 tariff questions. This was more apparent in the Changing Places questions where a distinct lack of specific and named places informed the discussion of cultural and demographic change. There was also some evidence of inappropriate scale used e.g. comparing London to a rural village. Many candidates opted for the creditworthy rural versus urban approach.

- There was some use of effective diagrams in the glaciated and coastal landscapes essays and 8-mark questions which greatly supported the AO1 knowledge and understanding.

- In terms of administration, candidates should identify their selected questions on the front sheet of the answer booklet. Not all centres are advising students to do this and there was some evidence of a lack of signatures and front sheets in relation to typed or scribed scripts.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 **(a) (i)** Candidates were able to access the information provided in the resource with the majority able to provide descriptive outlines of the changes in beach width. The better answers were more analytical as required by the question and viewed the information using a more interpretive approach. These answers identified a 'fluctuating' and or 'cyclical' pattern using the data to support their answers. For example, many commented on the periods of loss tending to be higher in value. These candidates used the information as support for their analysis rather than the focus of their answer. Less successful answers found it hard to not simply describe and lift from the resource. A small number of answers drifted into explanation which is not required in a skills-based question such as this one.

(a) (ii) Answers to this question generally lacked balance between the negative and positive changes to the coastal system. A less popular rote was to address how the changes in inputs over time have led to varying degrees of positive or negative changes. Many candidates linked to the resource from the previous answer to help elaborate, but the best answers were often those that addressed a small number of impacts in significant depth e.g. an increase in longshore drift removing sediment and leading to the retreat of the shoreline. Many candidates successfully referenced places they had studied such as the Holderness coastline. These answers were well developed and gave detail on both negative and positive inputs linked to change.

Q.2 **(a)** Answers to this question tended to fluctuate between well developed and limited. Many candidates could confidently grasp the requirement of the question and use comparative language whilst referring to the resources presented. Many drifted into explanation, such as whether the coastline was concordant or discordant or high or low energy, which was not needed for this AO3 question. Many could confidently identify many of the differing features of the two coastal environments.

(b) There were some good answers that focused on social loss supported by references to places that candidates had studied. Candidates who addressed the question confidently had balance and depth to their answers, often utilising the inevitable economic factors but making strong links to social impacts. For example, loss of homes on the Norfolk coastline has led to the break-down of the community spirit and social fabric of the 'place'. Some candidates developed these points and referred to the development of two named and distinct social losses. They stayed away from overly discussing the processes of erosion as the cause of the loss. Some candidates drifted into economic losses and overly describing marine processes which diluted their answers significantly.

Q.3 This was the most popular of the coastal essays, but only just. The mean mark was 8.6. Good responses usually focused on longshore drift and spit creation with popular case study choices being Spurn Point, Chesil Beach and Hurst Point. The second choice was sand dunes (such as Braunton Burrows) where candidates successfully argued the importance of biotic processes in fixing the dunes or the importance of aeolian processes in their formation.

The importance of human intervention was acknowledged with some answers also referring to the interruption of transport processes to address the AO2 element of the question. The importance of biotic processes in salt marshes again addressed the AO2 element. There were some sophisticated answers that considered the suite of landforms found on and behind a spit and looked at the relative importance of depositional processes in the formation of salt marsh, spits and dunes with Spurn Point as the usual example. Some successful answers adopted a comparative approach examining the relative importance of fluvial and biotic processes against human intervention in the formation of landforms. Some candidates struggled to use appropriate examples and as a result constrained the AO1 marks that were awarded.

Q.4 This was the least favoured of the coastal landscapes essays but carried a mean mark of 8.7. The focus of the essay was on the influence of geology in the characteristics and development of coastal landscapes of erosion.

Successful answers needed to display an understanding of structural geology and lithology, but some candidates did not demonstrate sufficient depth of understanding as to how the two create landforms of erosion.

The Jurassic Coast was frequently used to outline the production of spectacular scenery with the development of stacks and stumps on the Holderness coast as a contrast. Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates produced an imbalanced answer which drifted into description without 'real place' examples to add depth. Some discussed negative impacts as a contrast to positive and this went outside the bounds of the question and usually involved detailed case studies of erosion. Some failed to acknowledge that 'other' processes may have impact on the development of landforms, e.g. sub aerial processes and the impact of human intervention.

Q.5 **(a) (i)** Candidates were able to access the information provided in the resource with the majority able to provide descriptive outlines of the changes in the glacier snout. The better answers were more analytical as required by the question and viewed the information using a more interpretive approach with evidence of overview statements about trend. These candidates used the information as support for their analysis rather than the focus of their answer.

(a) (ii) There were some good responses to this question with accurate and detailed outlines of both retreat and advance. More sophisticated answers discussed variations in inputs over time, climate change, and how this may lead to retreat and advancement.

Q.6 **(a)** Answers to this question tended to fluctuate between well developed and limited. Many candidates could confidently grasp the requirement of the question to use comparative language whilst referring to the resources presented. Many drifted into explanation of the processes which was not needed for this AO3 question. Many could confidently identify many of the differing features of the two glacial environments.

(b) There were some good answers that approached the question through a sophisticated analysis that was balanced between two well-chosen factors, such as ice velocity or ice thickness. Case study knowledge, often showing fieldwork experience, was frequently used to illustrate and enhance explanations with Cwm Idwal being a popular example. Some answers lacked balance and spent too much time on the processes operating with limited linkage made to rates of glacial erosion.

Q.7 Both glacial essays had roughly equal patronage but were not equal in terms of quality. Q7 had a mean mark of 9.8 in contrast to a mean mark of 8.3 on Q8. In many cases, candidates found it difficult to focus on true periglacial landforms with solifluction and pingo formation being the most popular route. There was also a distinct lack of evidence from case study examples to add depth to answers, this prevented the awarding of AO1 marks.

Q.8 Answers to this question were usually structured around GLOFs (challenges) and tourism (opportunities) as well as the usual economic, social and environmental impacts structure, with many reaching the conclusion that the impact is significant at many levels.

Answers could have been more evaluative and could have made more overt reference to temporal and spatial variations and the relative importance of their impacts.

Q.9 **(a) (i)** Candidates were able to access the information presented in the resource and scored well overall with most being able to identify patterns of employment in scientific research and development. Some candidates incorrectly identified the ‘south east’ as the area of highest concentration and more accuracy was required to enter band 3. Overview comments were usually supported with reference to information extracted from the resource. Some answers drifted into explanation.

(a) (ii) This question generated a good deal of varied discussion with candidates presenting varied responses based on examples of two contrasting places they had studied. There was some evidence of imbalance between both places and/or between demographic and cultural characteristics and a minority lacked an understanding of what 'demographic' characteristics are. More sophisticated answers rooted their responses around their given examples and exemplified identity and culture well when referencing such factors as football teams or farmers markets e.g. Endcliffe in Sheffield, or diversity with regards to food traditions e.g. Burngreave in Sheffield. There were many references to age and gender as well as whether a population is aging or not in named places. There was evidence of some candidates drifting into economic characteristics as well as choice of location not always appropriate in terms of scale.

Q.10 **(a)** Many responses took a descriptive approach that focused on the economic impacts of nightlife on NYC. The theme of a significant number of answers also drifted towards detailed explanations rather than the more holistic approach of identifying the overarching trends. There were however more sophisticated overview statements seen in relation to both resources.

(b) There was a mixed quality to the responses with many not appreciating what commercial and entertainment expansion was. As a result there were a large range of examples, from out-of-town shopping to retail parks and the odd mention of suburban developments and the negative impact on the CBD. Many candidates did reference two or more explicit challenges; over-heating, congestion and crime being the most notable. Many candidates exemplified with located examples such as Meadowhall in Sheffield and the Bullring in Birmingham. There was occasional drift into quaternary industries.

Q.11 This was the more popular of the two essays with many candidates demonstrating a high level of knowledge and understanding of what globalisation is and how it has impacted the decline of secondary industries, mostly in the UK. This was also accompanied by knowledge and understanding of government policies (with Margaret Thatcher making her usual appearance) as well as change in technology and consumer preferences. Many candidates were able to successfully argue the importance of other factors over time which added sophistication to their arguments and conclusions.

Areas of industrial decline and regeneration, such as Salford Quays, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Sheffield Steel manufacturing, were frequently used as examples. There was occasional drift into dockland decline and candidates failing to link that adequately to the secondary industry e.g. London Docklands. There was also drift into impacts of industrial decline in a small number of responses that restricted their AO1 marks. The mean mark for this essay was 7.4.

Q.12 Candidates found this question more challenging with significant drift into the challenges that rural places, such as Cornwall, face rather than a focus on the challenges of *managing* change. Many candidates had strong knowledge and understanding of the changes
e.g. second home ownership, funding gaps and limited public transport, but failed to link them to management. More sophisticated answers examined the importance of legislation to limit second home ownership in Wales and/or Cornwall and the limited success of these strategies.
There was large variation in the choice of case studies with Cornwall and Wales frequently used to good effect. Although in several cases the historical background made up a significant part of the content.

GEOGRAPHY

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COMPONENT 2: GLOBAL SYSTEMS AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Overview of the Component

- As in previous sessions, candidates at the high end of the mark range produced scripts that were superb, given their age and experience. Significant numbers scored a raw mark of 100 or above, which is a fantastic achievement considering the range of geographical knowledge and assessment styles included in this component.
- By design, there is much to do in the allocated time. At the lower end of the attainment range, there was evidence of candidates not answering all questions or providing very short answers for one their essays. Candidates need to be reminded regularly of the need to allocate their time both carefully and strictly. Some candidates begin the exam by writing an over-long response to Section C that leaves them with insufficient time for other questions.
- A minority of candidates each year show no awareness of the assessment objective targeting in Section C. They write an answer based entirely on their own knowledge that makes no reference to the suite of resources. This inevitably lowers their mark significantly.
- There is great variability in the level of detail and exemplification used by candidates to support their writing in questions 3, 4, 7 and 8. At the lower end of the mark range, candidates this year wrote in very general terms about forests and grasslands in question 3 without ever specifying geographical and locational details of these environments. In contrast, answers at the top end compare different types of forests and geographical contexts throughout.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 **(a) (i)** The majority of candidates analysed the source material correctly and identified 50 as the answer.

(a) (ii) Candidates were awarded 1 mark for successfully interpreting the source material and extracting the two relevant figures of 5% and 3%. A further 1 mark was awarded for the correct answer of 0.15%. This item discriminated well, with roughly equal proportions of the cohort gaining 0, 1 or 2 marks.

(a) (iii) A minority of candidates ignored the instruction to make use of figure 1 and instead suggested reasons based on their own knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, such material could not be credited, in line with assessment objective targeting. The majority answered correctly by making use of the figure. They outlined the key idea that the aquifers are millions of years old and contain water that is not replaceable across human timescales.

(b) The majority of candidates found this a more challenging item to answer. The word seasonal was emboldened yet many candidates were unable to provide a secure focus on seasonality when answering. Large numbers wrote about long-term climate change or El Niño (Walker Cell) cycles leading to more extreme weather but did not make a strong connection with seasonal rainfall patterns or other hydrological variations as part of their answer. Seasonal changes were often implied but rarely explicit. Some candidates used the example of the 1976 drought in the UK. Those scoring full marks explained that normal seasonal hydrological deficits were further heightened by unusual jet stream activity during 1975-76. At the lower end of the mark range, candidates were unable to provide an answer demonstrating any developed hydrological understanding. They stated that 'hot weather and a lack of rainfall leads to water shortages in the summer in the UK', a comment that is worth no more than 1 mark without any further development.

Q.2 **(a) (i)** The majority of candidates scored a mark of 3 or above on this item. A clear pattern emerges from the synthesis of figures 2a and 2b: greater changes are seen in Northern Alaska than Interior Alaska. Most candidates identified the 'anomaly' of Livengood, the only negative change recorded. Candidates reaching the top mark band were more likely to manipulate the data in additional useful ways, for example by calculating the range of values for Northern Alaska and contrasting this with the range for Interior Alaska. Others widened their geographic analysis by contrasting changes in coastal sites (including Gulkana) with those found furthest from the sea, such as Livengood.

(a) (ii) At the upper end of the mark range, candidates showed secure understanding of the concept of positive feedback and were able to illustrate it with accurate explanation of permafrost thawing leading to the release of methane gas. Typically, the highest scoring candidates additionally made reference to changing albedo in places where surface ice is melting. They were careful to refer back to figure 2 and suggest that albedo changes might be more pronounced in maritime locations, for example. In the middle of the mark range, candidates were likely to provide a fairly secure outline of permafrost thawing. At the bottom of the mark range, candidates were either unsure what positive feedback means or were unable to illustrate the idea of accelerating change in a meaningful way.

Q.3 This was the more popular of the two physical geography optional essays. The mean mark was 11.7. At the upper end of the mark range, candidates were well versed in the characteristics of tropical forest and grassland biomes. They correctly recalled carbon storage and annual precipitation data and made extensive use of subject specific terminology to illustrate their understanding of water cycling, carbon cycling and ecosystem biodiversity. Some were very well informed about the relative size of biomass and soil stores in the two contrasting ecological contexts. Some candidates applied their knowledge of peatland environments to the question, either by arguing that the UK's peat moorlands are a type of grassland or by writing about peatland swamp forests in Indonesia. Either approach was acceptable.

In the middle of the mark range, candidates were more likely to lack specific detail and data. Their comments about climate were more generalised, for example the tropical rainforest 'has more rainfall'. They nevertheless provided a functioning discursive account that correctly contrasted the larger forest biomass carbon and water stores with smaller grassland stores.

Normally, answers in the middle of the range included some applied understanding of the hydrological cycle. Some attempted to argue, for example, that grassland areas might potentially have larger soil water stores in winter as there is relatively less interception cover than is found in forests. While this is not an entirely secure argument it does include some creditable application of water cycle knowledge and understanding.
At the lower end of the mark range, candidates were unable to do much more than draw a basic distinction between large trees and small grasses as carbon stores of differing size.

Q.4 Relatively few candidates attempted this question. Those that did were sometimes unable to maintain a secure focus on the 24-hour period that was the question's focus. As a result the mean mark was slightly lower than Q3 at 11.4. Some candidates attempted to argue that water and carbon flows do not really change in size in a 24-hour period, and that it is therefore much important to study long term climate change. While some limited credit could be given for relevant water cycle and carbon cycle understanding, this type of approach was not strictly in line with the wording of the question - which did require candidates to think critically about what can happen in a 24-hour period.
At the upper end of the mark range, some candidates rose to the challenge and provided detailed accounts of, for example, the flooding in Boscastle in 2004 (illustrated with a flood hydrograph), diurnal variations in photosynthesis and plant respiration, and sudden-onset extreme weather events and wildfires (with peat fires as the focus).

Q.5 **(a) (i)** Most candidates scored a mark of 3 or above on this item. The nature of the resource was relatively simple, other than the indexed scale. Three lines had been provided and candidates were able to identify the rise in data flows and the fluctuations for trade and capital flows. Some candidates wrote very long answers that only gained 4 marks, not 5. This often reflected the way they included an excessively large number of data points in their answer without providing a satisfactory overview of figure 3 as a whole. Their analysis of the figure would have benefited from a more succinct approach, and more selective use of data - in order to emphasise the key understandings that a reader might want to take away from the resource.

(a) (ii) At the lower end of the mark range, some candidates did not read the question properly and suggested reasons for the changes in all three flows. They were awarded a mark that reflected whichever change they had been able to write about in greatest detail. At the upper end of the mark range, candidates often showed good understanding of significant events affecting global systems in recent years, such as the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 or the global financial crisis of 2008. In the middle of the mark range, candidates scoring 2 or 3 marks typically provided a rather generalised account of increased internet and social media popularity. Many asserted that 'everyone' uses the internet now and 'everyone' is using social media. In contrast, higher scoring answers were usually more nuanced (for example, by suggesting that people on higher incomes in emerging economies increasingly use more data, along with transnational corporations including media streaming services such as Disney).

Q.6 **(a)** This was a relatively challenging item for candidates. Whereas the line graph in figure 5a was a familiar type of data presentation for candidates, they were less well-prepared for a complex map showing both gas and oil distributions, along with overlaid ownership boundaries. Many candidates produced an answer that did not clearly communicate the essential character of the two patterns (the resource distribution pattern and the ownership pattern). Instead, they sometimes provided a series of disconnected sentences, each of which offered an isolated fragment of information drawn from the resource ('There is gas near the Shetland Islands… Norway owns hardly any oil or gas… the Netherlands has a lot of gas… there is gas near the UK... '). Such answers typically scored 3 marks.
A minority of candidates scoring full marks wisely created an answer consisting of two clearly separated paragraphs of information. The first clearly communicated the geographical distribution of the resources; the second paragraph clearly communicated the disproportionate way in which the UK owns the majority of North Sea oil along with much of the gas.

(b) The majority of candidates correctly recalled the 200 nautical mile rule associated with exclusive economic zones (EEZs) under UNCLOS. A clear account of this rule was usually enough to secure 3 marks. Candidates in the top band typically made additional reference to the high seas as a Global Commons that no single country can claim ownership over, or the more complex EEZ jurisdictions that arise from overlapping claims. Some developed their answers further through reference to the importance of continental shelves or island territories that give sovereign states a claim over ocean resources even further from their shores.

The main reason why many candidates were unable to access full marks on this item was their inability to answer the question in a way that was adequately focused on ocean resources. Few included any mention of resources in their answers. Instead, they wrote in broad terms about territorial and non-territorial waters, without any mention of marine resources. Candidates who did score full marks were far more likely to have made some reference to biotic and abiotic resources, or had included more explicit references to fish stocks or to gas and oil fields.

Q.7 This was the least popular option of the two Global Governance essays with a mean mark of 11.4. At the upper end of the mark range, some excellent answers to this question were written by candidates. Detailed accounts were provided of the role of ocean transport in the arrival of the Windrush generation or more recently the arrival of people seeking asylum on the southern coast of England. Candidates evaluated the importance of transport mechanisms with other factors that contribute to the growth of diaspora communities, including immigration rules and regulations, the push and pull factors of different countries. Some wrote about the important role of data transfers and shrinking world technologies in both facilitating the diffusion of knowledge (of possible migrant destinations) and also allowing diaspora communities to retain stronger connections over time with countries of origin, for example through the Zoom app.

In the middle of the mark range, candidates were likely to argue along similar lines but without strong supporting detail. At the lower end of the mark range, candidates were unable to maintain a secure focus on global diaspora communities. Instead, they wrote about the importance of ocean transport as a way of moving goods and commodities around the world without any explicit link to particular groups of people.

Q.8 At the upper end of the mark range, candidates demonstrated secure understanding of the concept of interdependence. They were usually able to write a very strong account of the role that economic migration plays in making host and source countries interdependent. This was usually illustrated by reference to skills shortages in the host country and the value of remittances for the source country. The highest scoring answers developed their answers further by exploring ways in which interdependence may deepen over time as stronger cultural links develop. This was well illustrated by some candidates through an analysis of deepening interdependence between the UK and India over time, with Rishi Sunak's recent stint as prime minister mentioned by some candidates. Candidates sometimes found it harder to evaluate the importance of ocean pollution as an issue affecting international interdependence. Most high scoring candidates were still able to create a convincing argument, however. Typically, they argued that problems such as plastic pollution in the oceans are so large and complex that they require effective global governance which inevitably leads to greater interdependence because countries are working together towards a common shared goal.

In the middle of the mark range, candidates tended to write securely about economic migration but far less securely about ocean pollution. Some wrote about the importance of ocean transport and trade, instead of ocean pollution. These responses were marked positively wherever possible if good understanding of interdependence was shown as part of the answer.

At the lower end of the mark range, some candidates who attempted this question had no understanding of the concept of interdependence. They wrote about the costs and benefits of migration and the problem of ocean pollution while avoiding mention of the keyword 'interdependence'. In such cases, they were unlikely to score highly according to AO2, usually resulting in a single digit score. The mean mark for Q8. Was 11.5.

Q.9 Most candidates gained secure AO3 credit. They diligently worked through each of the four resources in sequence, providing comment on what was being suggested about the role of government. In the middle of the mark range, candidates competently argued that some African governments might have limited power to interfere with global businesses for financial reasons. They proceeded to argue that climate change and conflict were beyond the abilities of governments to manage. Moving to figure 7, they argued that it shows governments do have some power to place controls on migration. Finally, they made use of figure 8 to argue that if people are moving voluntarily for work reasons within a country, then this is an issue that a government perhaps need not worry about. Candidates who could follow this relatively simple path while occasionally including examples or data drawn from their own learning were sometimes able to gain a mark of around 20.

At the upper end of the mark range, candidates tended to include more detailed knowledge and understanding drawn from their own learning. They sometimes made links and connections between the different figures rather than simply working through each one in sequence. They also provided a more critical discussion of the statement, for example by arguing that governments might have the power to prevent land grabs but that does not necessarily mean they would choose to exercise that power in the interests of national development. Both 21st Century Challenges questions performed similarly (with mean marks of 19.8 and 20.0 respectively).

Q.10 Most candidates answering this question also gained secure AO3 credit. They highlighted the inequality and injustice shown in figure 5 and figure 6, arguing that in both cases migration was an inevitable consequence of displacement of people. Typically, they argued that figure 8 shows people migrating for economic reasons and that this has little to do with inequality and injustice but is more to do with opportunity. Most candidates used figure 7 to build an argument that people do not always migrate because of inequality and injustice because they are not allowed to. Candidates who followed this relatively simple path, while including ideas drawn from their own learning, were usually able to access a mark of around 20.

At the upper end of the mark range, candidates tended to use more detailed ideas drawn from their own learning, notably in relation to land grabs, a theme which some candidates were well acquainted with. They usually made links, especially between figures five and 6, sometimes noting that climate change is likely to exacerbate conflict or land grab issues. A few were even aware that climate change is leading to land grabs in the name of carbon capture. Large companies are buying up tracts of land to use for offsetting purposes, sometimes leading to the displacement of indigenous populations. At the top end of the mark range, candidates sometimes developed far more creative and nuanced arguments using figures 7 and 8. Some argued that the lack of travel freedom for citizens in some of the world's most troubled countries may result in people moving illegally (trafficking) because they are denied legal channels, thereby leading to either further inequality and injustice for those individuals. This was a superb line of reasoning for a typical 18-year-old to be creating in a high-stakes examination under strict timing. It was pleasing to see some of our strongest candidates arguing along these lines.

GEOGRAPHY

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Summer 2024

COMPONENT 3: CONTEMPORARY THEMES

Overview of the Component

- Although the component places considerable demands on candidates, both in terms of its breadth of subject content, and the challenging nature of the essays set, the paper proved to be accessible to most candidates.
- There were extremely few rubric errors, but there were some misinterpretations of questions
    - Question 2: misunderstanding 'modify the event' (from spec).
    - Question 9: failure to write about measures, just development issues
    - Question 14: failure to write about air masses and confusion between weather and climate.

- Candidate timing had improved with only a small minority of candidates not attempting all the questions in the time allocated, although some coherence was lost in the battle to finish. Many centres had clearly advised their candidates to attempt the lower tariff hazard questions (Section A) as the last question with fewer candidates writing over-long Section A answers than in previous series'.
- The paper differentiated very effectively with substantial numbers of candidates displaying both impressive levels of knowledge and conceptual understanding (AO1) to form an effective platform from which to develop their sophisticated skilled analysis, evaluation and synthesis (AO2).
- This year several examiners commented on the candidate's essay writing skills with most essays having an introduction, a paragraphed main body which maintained a sound structure and a summative conclusion with evidence of appropriate planning.
- There was increasing evidence of the use of worthwhile diagrams which were well drawn and annotated. They were particularly useful in the hazard questions 1 and 2 (e.g. PAR model, Degg's models of vulnerability), question 12 (Energy Transition Model) and question 14 (Air mass source and track). The mark scheme lists where they could have been useful, especially for question 3, Biome distribution, question 13, passage of ITCZ, but these opportunities were rarely used.
- Unfortunately, there were very few maps drawn, for example, in questions 5 and 7, for evaluating distribution of population.
- An area of concern noted was the tendency of many candidates to drift away from the key focus of the question, often including over-long case studies (Q1 and 2, Q4, Q10, Q11, Q12) which were very descriptive and added very little to the response.
- Case study selection is an area for centres to develop. Many centres had heeded the advice in reports in previous years with many candidates moving away from the two case study format (HIC/LIC or for and against the argument framed in the question) towards targeting of relevant, extended examples embedded in a structural framework to ensure a more analytical AO2 approach.

- Whilst there is a need for classic case studies of mega disaster events, many centres are to be congratulated on the emphasis they have placed on candidates developing research skills of up-to-date case studies, for example, recent hazard events or political developments or changes in conceptual thinking, for example, about climate warming (COP 28) as this adds to the quality of their studies.
- In spite of concerns expressed in previous reports, a minority of candidates continue to write illegibly. It may mean that they have a genuine lack of psychomotor skills and should apply to type their answers, or that they rarely use opportunities to develop essential handwriting skills.
- It was pleasing to see an improvement in the geographical vocabulary seen, often using specialised concepts which support the synoptic element of this paper.

In conclusion, it is pleasing that many centres have studied the reports of previous examinations and taken advantage of exam board training and heeded the advice on two stages of long-term preparation (a) researching and developing knowledge and understanding for the chosen options and (b) honing the candidates essay writing skills.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Theme 1: Tectonic Hazards

Whilst many candidates showed increasing competence in answering these questions, some answers were disappointing for several reasons.

- Some candidates still spend far too long on this section, writing very lengthy, descriptive responses, with much irrelevant case study detail which was not well focused and contributed little to the more heavily weighted AO2 analysis and evaluation.
- Whilst a decreasing percentage of candidates adopted a 'two case study approach', there were still some answers favouring two in depth case studies, one in a HIC and one in a LIC, one to argue with the question and one to disagree. Whilst in-depth case studies can be rewarded as well as breadth, both question 1 and 2 required comments on tectonic activity as opposed to earthquakes or volcanoes and so a broader approach of targeted, extended exemplar examples (fact files) was almost always more successful.
- Frequently, candidates failed to extract the relevant key features of their chosen case studies, for example, types of mitigation strategy, modify the event or vulnerability for question 2.
- There were frequent case study inaccuracies, including the mixing up of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami with the 2011 Sendai (Tohoku) earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan. The first was especially useful in question 1 for demonstrating the spread of impact away from the plate boundary event in Aceh, Indonesia. The second demonstrated ways of modifying the event and managing vulnerability in question 2, thus emphasising yet again the need for 'tagging' the unique features of case studies when revising and then carefully selecting across a range of tectonic events to strengthen analysis and evaluation.
- There were other frequent inaccuracies including types of plate boundary as well as dates of occurrence, magnitude (MM or VEI) and economic and social impacts.
  Note. Iceland's tectonic activity is uniquely at a hotspot (magmatic plume on a divergent plate boundary.

- A confident and accurate AO1 (knowledge and understanding) really supports high level application in the analysis and evaluation required for AO2.
- Both questions required the candidate to 'peel back' the layers of argument necessary to answer the question. This can be achieved by taking a moment to make a careful plan which focuses on all aspects of the question.

Q.1

- Whilst some excellent responses were seen, as well as many competent ones, candidates tended not to consider the intrinsic and extrinsic factors and frequently failed to define severity, which can be seen in social, economic and environmental terms. Moreover, many lacked knowledge of the location of their chosen tectonic events with reference to named plate boundaries, but only around 40% mentioned non plate locations, usually hot spot volcanoes (usually Hawaii or E15). Knowledge of intra-plate earthquake activity (e.g. Central USA) or even along old fault lines in the UK was almost non-existent. One or two mentioned human induced earthquake activity from fracking or dam building.
- The most commonly successful responses were linked to 'spread' impact such as the ash cloud from E15, Iceland, or the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 as well as the global cooling from the enormous historic eruption of Tambora or even Mt. Pinatubo, thus challenging the assumption that it was always events at plate boundaries that generate severe impacts.
- Wide-ranging answers with well applied, extended case study knowledge were far more successful as they covered the breadth required. There were some moderately successful answers using just two case studies, provided other factors such as severity were considered. However, restricting answers to just two volcanoes or two earthquakes, or even one of each, was a feature of many disappointing responses.

Q.2 A wide range of performance level was apparent in this question for several reasons.

- Many candidates did not understand the concept of 'Modify the event' and frequently resorted to last year's question on prediction and monitoring, which is part of modifying the impact of the event, not the event itself (i.e. modify the vulnerability). Whilst it is recognised that there is an overlap between the facets of the mitigation process, for example, building aseismic infrastructure can modify the impact of earthquakes as an event but at the same time modify people's vulnerability; in order to achieve the higher-level marks it is necessary to understand the concept of 'modify the event', and to understand the different intrinsic profiles of earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunami.
- On the other hand nearly all candidates understood and defined the concept of vulnerability, but weaker responses concentrated on descriptive accounts of the Haiti earthquake, usually comparing it to earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, Loma Prieta in California or Valparaiso in Chile, often in a very simplistic way. Some answers however drifted into why vulnerability existed.
- Some candidates (under 1%) even wasted time discussing Modify the Loss (insurance and aid).

- The crux of the question was to evaluate the relative importance of the two mitigation strategies. Many candidates concluded they were about equal, but the more successful responses looked at intrinsic features associated with different profiles of hazard types or within a single hazard type, for example, based on the type of magma.
- Many commented on the lack of predictability of earthquakes and their sudden onset and sheer scale of their impacts, meaning that modifying the event directly was not an option. Equally good responses explored extrinsic factors such as location of the tectonic event (rural/urban), quality of governance or level of development, suggesting this determined the need to modify vulnerability and affected the possibility of doing so effectively.

Section B

Theme 2: Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Although this theme remains a very popular option, this year there was a marked disparity in popularity and performance between the two questions set.

Q.3 This question required a technical knowledge and understanding of the ecological processes which control the distribution of biomes, with many average quality answers and some extremely disappointing at band 1/2 level.

- Many candidates were unclear what a biome was and failed to distinguish between biomes and ecosystems. They wrote in detail about coral reefs and mangroves which are ecosystems within the marine biome – the world's largest - so missing out on the highest mark band.
- Many of the responses were inaccurate concerning the distribution of their exemplar biomes (usually rainforest, tundra or desert). The responses also lacked precise details of how temperature and other climatic factors such as precipitation influenced biome structure and functioning and ultimate distribution. It was this lack of accuracy and detail which led to the large quantities of average marks.
- Local factors such as light, topography, soil type (edaphic) wind and biotic factors were almost never mentioned.
- It was also legitimate for the purpose of analysis and evaluation to mention anthropogenic factors, both direct such as deforestation and impact of farming or indirect such as climate change, but in an answer which was evaluating the importance of temperature, in some cases the emphasis was over dominant.
- The successful responses considered the interlinkage of climate factors and often concluded that it was both the combination of temperature and precipitation which was the most important factor.

Q.4 Many candidates gained high marks in this very popular question. They frequently achieved very sound levels of AO1 with detailed exemplification for the Arctic tundra, coral reefs and rainforest ecosystems of the damaging actions from the direct activity of humans. It was also very pleasing to see some exemplification from local fieldwork and research for NEAs with case studies such ass Ainsdale sand dunes or the wetlands of the Somerset Levels

- Wide-ranging answers were particularly successful with succinct details across a number of ecosystems with strong, precise understanding of damage. Weaker answers were usually a single case study of one type of damaging action with little detail on the ecological impact.
- Where some responses fell short was in AO2 application, when evaluating whether the indirect actions of humans were more significant in terms of impact than direct ones. Successful responses explored the global scale of indirect actions such as climate warming as well as global/transboundary pollution issues (acid rain) or the spread of invasive species, but did not always go on to evaluate the impact of the scale of these global problems. For climate warming, high quality responses made very useful links to various ecosystems such as positive feedback loops in the Arctic, acidification of oceans, or the loss of CO2 storage and desertification in the rainforest to emphasise the global scale spatially of these indirect actions. They also discussed the acceleration of the damaging actions over time with discussion of tipping points.
- A further issue highlighted in many excellent responses was of the positive impact of humans, which was easier to manage initially at a local scale, to conserve and protect areas and the incremental contribution made by all the projects by a multitude of conservation organisations from local SSSIs or NNRs around the world. Some of the very best answers looked at the changing spectrum of ecosystem management and compared this with the apparent failure of successive COP and biodiversity global meetings organised by UN agencies to manage 'the world's many wicked problems' [UN General Secretary Kofi Annan].

Theme 3: Economic Growth and Challenge

This theme provides candidates with a choice of options from China, India or development in an African context. Questions are identical for India and China, but in 2024, because of specification requirements, were different for the African unit which is by far the most popular option. In last year's report centres were encouraged to read more widely and research current issues and it was apparent that this advice had been taken up, perhaps at the expense of the basic geography of India and China. The units are devised to provide a balance of physical and human geography, as well as current political issues concerning the two emerging superpowers.

India and China

Q.5 and 7

Although these questions were straightforward, overall achievement was relatively modest for a number of reasons.

- Most candidates had a very poor knowledge of place and basic geography which was a major problem when answering a question on distribution of population of the two countries. Students should be encouraged to use atlases and maps throughout the course. Very few candidates were able to mention examples of states/provinces to enhance their statements on distribution.
- A significant number of candidates misunderstood the term 'distribution' and drifted into details of structure of population including population policies and gender balance.

- Many candidates were stronger on either physical, or more commonly, economic factors, in particular, rural to urban migration which has accelerated over time to radically change population distribution.
- Candidates discussed the location and function of the burgeoning numbers of millionaire and mega cities very effectively, but with very few names, and often failed to mention physical factors such as relief, soils and climate and water supply as well as coastal areas for trade.
- Little regard was given to economic growth points except for SEZ.
- A particular strength for a distribution question is where candidates supplied very useful, annotated maps.

Q.6 and 8

Overall, these questions were less popular or less well done for a number of reasons.

- Whilst recognising that minerals and energy covers a very large area, candidates could achieve full marks if they covered selected aspects of <u>both.</u> Many candidates again were lacking in a sense of place and location, for example, of iron ore or coal deposits.
- In general, responses were stronger on the energy with good details of topics such as phasing down coal to meet emissions targets for GHG and location of various alternative energy sources than they were on mineral sources.
- The nub of the question was evaluating the balance of opportunities versus constraints. Many of the more successful responses explored the time factors, how the rapidly growing economies of both India and China had placed increasing constraints on indigenous supplies of both minerals and energy resources.
- Some of the very best responses, especially for China, then explored how the countries attempted to overcome the shortage of supplies by schemes such as FDI in Africa and for China, the OBOR strategy.
- One mistake made by a minority of candidates was to drift into a discussion of water resources (only acceptable as a source of HEP).

Development in an African Context

Q.9 and 10

In this very popular option, there was an encouraging performance but still with a considerable range of quality of response. Some centres had heeded the advice to ensure that candidates did take a broad overview of African development before launching into their chosen two or more countries which greatly enhanced their performance in both questions 9 and 10.

Q.9

- This had proved to be a very problematic area for many when a similar context was examined around five years ago, but even now a minority of candidates failed to write about *actual measures* and merely looked at difficulties in measuring development in a range of countries. Other successful candidates were very well informed on a range of measures from single to composite, from economic through social and environmental to all round development and also from quantitative to qualitative. Obviously, a well-informed AO1 section led to an analytical and evaluative AO2 section with a huge variety of both operational and practical difficulties related to the measures cited.

- The very best answers were supported with a plethora of well learned statistics to support assertions, usually with reference to their chosen two countries.

Q.10 This wider ranging question was set to allow candidates to play to their strengths of knowledge and understanding of both IGOs and aid agencies. Players included World Bank, IMF and WTO, IGOs (UN etc.) through big international NGOs (BINGOs) such as Oxfam to small NGOs and private charities. The question enabled candidates to write about FDI from BRICs into Africa (China, India and Brazil and to an extent Russia) as well as MNCs thus giving wide scope. Overall, the responses achieved good standards of performance but there were a number of pitfalls to overcome to achieve the very high marks.

- *Selection* of case studies was crucial to ensure a variety of *strategies* such as contrasting types of aid, or style of organisation, e.g., Top Down versus Bottom Up, or contrasting scale, or FDI v Aid, or Debt Relief v Structural Adjustment.
- Some candidates produced more limited responses by selecting three schemes from NGOs or just two schemes from MNCs and evaluating them in depth in terms of aid context, but lacking sufficient variety of strategy for marks at the top of band 5.
- Other candidates drifted into a previous question whereby the advantages of IGOs and international aid agencies were compared with development spearheaded by National governments.
- Some of the less successful responses concentrated on descriptive and generalised accounts of unlocated health or educational programmes which proved very difficult to evaluate in terms of efficacy.
- Yet other responses were extremely inaccurate on the role of the major UN agencies and other IGOs, all of whom have different strategies.

Theme 4: Energy Challenges and Dilemmas

Question 11

This theme is again a very popular option. Question 11 was overwhelmingly the most popular of the two questions set with large numbers of candidates answering it both competently and confidently with many outstanding responses seen.

- Good answers analysed changing demand in a structured response which looked at both changing demand and changing energy mix, using the Energy Transition Model (ideally with a diagram) and relating it to development. This worked very well when supported by well selected examples which analysed when economic factors were a very important influence both spatially and temporally. Iceland, China, India and African countries (drawing on Theme 3), USA as well as the UK were frequently used examples, supported by accurate statistics in the very best responses. Some weaker answers were very generalised and poorly supported by examples. Alternatively, one or two very lengthy, descriptive case studies were used, often with limited accuracy and confined to one country, usually the UK or China.
- Some of the high-quality answers also used the Kuznets curve to include the recent drive towards sustainability which could lead 'green growth' with changes to a more diverse energy mix and a slowing of overall demand.

- The AO2 application demands of the question required candidates to evaluate the extent to which economic factors were the most important, giving candidates the opportunity to discuss some of the following factors – demographic, geographical and technical, political and lastly environmental considerations.
- Whilst clearly the candidates were not expected to cover all the above factors in detail, an overview was useful. The one factor which was under played was environmental considerations which many responses omitted completely or subsumed it under social or political factors.
- At the top end of the mark range, many of the band 4 and band 5 answers decided, before making a decision, that the factors were interlinked and then went on to summarise the findings of their wide-ranging knowledge and understanding in an evidenced conclusion.

Question 12

This question was attempted by a small minority of candidates with varying degrees of success. When a similar question was set around five years ago, a similar pattern of unpopularity and variable achievement emerged as candidates struggled to achieve a structured response. Careful planning was required.

The vast majority of answers were disappointing for a number of reasons:

- The failure to discuss the imbalance spatially of both supply and demand, with a lack of knowledge of the current geography of oil and gas distribution and the understanding of how supplies are managed.
- The failure to identify the role of key organisations and their role on the stages of management. Most responses only mentioned OPEC and National Governments with poor knowledge and exemplar support.
- The lack of mention of any other challenges facing organisations. Only the very few high-quality answers considered other challenges such as the phasing down of the exploitation and use of oil and gas for environmental reasons, the choke points and blockages in the transport exacerbated by political factors or the fluctuations in price caused by economic factors.

Theme 5: Weather and Climate

There was again an imbalance of popularity of choice between Question 13 and Question 14, the latter being the most popular. However, there was a wide range of achievement in both questions for a number of reasons.

Q.13 This question required detailed knowledge and understanding of the seasonal movement of the ITCZ and the tropical climates.

- Some of the most successful responses legitimately majored on the Tropical Monsoon climate which is one of the generalisations listed in the specification content. However, as the question required knowledge and understanding of tropical climates (plural) for maximum marks there was a need to understand the wider implications of the Earth's axial tilt and its orbit around the sun and the subsequent impact of the migration of the heat equator on pressure, temperatures and rainfall.

- Candidate's knowledge and understanding would be enhanced by drawing simple diagrams (as shown in the mark scheme) which explain the characteristics of equatorial, tropical wet dry (savanna) and tropical desert climates.
- Candidates rarely supplied any statistics relating to key locations to support their responses, unlike in many other questions (e.g., Q9 or Q10 or Q11). The study of the monsoon climate emphasises some of the other influences such as continentality, relief and altitude, as well as the impact of the Indian Dipole on ocean temperatures and forms a useful part of analysis in AO2.

Q.14 This question was a very straightforward question but yielded a marked disparity of performance from outstanding responses achieving maximum marks to very disappointing responses which had many shortcomings for a number of reasons. The command 'To what extent to you agree?' perhaps generates the least successful responses of all the evaluative commands used on this paper.

- A substantial number of responses wrote that they didn't agree and that other factors like weather systems or the polar front jet stream (often very badly understood) were far more important. Unfortunately, they barely mentioned air masses at all and so scored minimal AO1 marks as the question is about air masses. Information in the mark scheme shows a table of main air masses and their source and track and the impact it has on their characteristics and resultant weather. Some candidates did draw a simple two triangle – UK and Ireland map which was very creditworthy.
- Knowledge of air masses tended to be simplistic, often just polar (cold) and tropical (warm). At A Level, good answers should include the four main air masses plus Arctic air masses and Polar Maritime returning track.
- As ever, there is great confusion between weather and climate and the factors that influence them. Suitable influences on weather include the jet stream and weather systems, but also local variations from relief, altitude, proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, urban areas and to an extent the pattern of extreme weather exacerbated by climate change.
- Analysis of the impact of air masses on weather was frequently generalised and inaccurate and was enhanced where candidates referred to specifics such as 'the Beast from the East' or 2023 as the record season of Atlantic storms as examples of impacts.
- For very high band marks, some candidates argued that on the surface, air masses were very important, but that it was upper air movements of the jet stream which in turn control the weather systems of anticyclones and depressions which are of greater importance. Some candidates scored highly when they related the air masses to weather systems such as depressions where fronts are formed between two different air masses.

Summary of key points

Candidates should:

- Continue to carry out individual or group research to bring each theme up to date, for instance, details of the latest hazards, or changing economic activity in Theme 3.
- Continue to take opportunities to develop their essay writing skills. There was again, evidence that more attention was being paid to structure, using the 'dog' model of introduction, main body with paragraphs, and conclusion. The use of evaluative language is vital, but it needs to be inbuilt in the practise essays and exams over the two-year course – not contrived.
- Further work is needed on how to dissect an essay title and make a concise plan.
- Further work needs to be done on concepts within the specification, geographical terminology (a problem as ever in the physical options) and the synoptic element contained within the specialised concepts including space and time.
- Further improvements need to be made on selecting and using case studies within the essay questions. There is evidence of progress, but still a greater need for concise fact files, embedded in the essay, chosen to provide wide ranging, supporting evidence for all facets of the question. Above all, avoid description and drift.
- Case studies need to be accurate and also so do the supporting statistics which candidates are beginning to provide more frequently.
- Finally, a message for students about handwriting. Whilst there were some improvements, writing legibly at speed requires practise during the course. Timed essays and mock exams are a good scenario for getting a good quality black pen and learning how to break up a wall of illegibility.

GEOGRAPHY

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 4: INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATION

Overview of the Component

As with previous years it was very pleasing to note that many candidates undertook a variety of interesting and mostly appropriate investigations, the majority of which were clearly linked to the specification. It should be noted that as the specification relates to the 21st Century, candidates must be encouraged in their planning not to become too historical, particularly in relation to theories such as Burgess and Hoyt. However, it was good to note that where relevant theory was identified better candidates referred to their theory throughout the work, while weaker candidates tended to ignore theory after it had been identified at the outset.

Administration was mostly excellent although it was noted that some declaration forms are still not being signed or even submitted, and that there are several centres that still do not use the published proposal form, instead generating their own. It remains worrying that several proposal forms are very poorly completed, showing little evidence of planning or discussion. Marks sheets did have some addition errors, these should be double checked by each centre before submission, and it would also significantly help the moderation process if the mark sheets could be annotated in some way to illustrate the centre's marking process. Additionally, it would be helpful if the sample work itself was clearly annotated, with clear statements rather than just AO levels. Some centres submitted candidate work with no annotation. ***Centres should note that there is now an updated declaration form on the Eduqas website which refers to the use of AI within investigation write-ups. This form must be used with all further cohorts.***

Planning the investigation is very important, and it is the one aspect where candidates can be given support and advice by their teachers. Completion of proposal forms is quite variable, the strongest examples are detailed, have a well-focussed title, clear reference to the specification, relevant sub-questions (no more than three or four) and some ideas about data collection and relevant theory, with supportive teacher comments. Weaker examples tend to have unfocussed titles that are far too broad in scope, sometime no reference to the relevant part of the specification, and even no sub-questions or teacher feedback. ***If there is any doubt as to what a candidate is trying to achieve, centres are advised to make use of the free advisory service that is available from WJEC Eduqas. These forms should be submitted by the teacher and, if the process is to be effective, should contain detailed reference as to what the candidate is proposing.***

During the planning stage, candidates **MUST** be advised to consider the scope and scale of their investigation and should be encouraged to edit their work carefully before submission to minimise unnecessary, repetitive, unfocussed and/or irrelevant discussion. Conciseness is necessary to achieve the higher bands in the Conclusion and Presentation element of the mark scheme.

It was noted that once again most centres allow their candidates to far exceed the guidance of 4 000 words, too often work was in excess of 10 000 words, and as such may have been penalised on the grounds that it lacked conciseness.

It was disappointing to note that an increasing number of centres were not following the prescribed structure as outlined in the specification. This applied to font sizes, spacing and pagination, while grayscale photocopied work often loses the impact of colour from the original.

Candidates should be aware that using AI to plagiarise content for GCE Geography assessment constitutes malpractice that can have severe consequences. In academic settings, plagiarism undermines the value of honest, original work and goes against the principles of integrity and academic honesty. It is important for candidates to properly cite sources and give credit to the original authors to avoid plagiarism. Centre MUST ensure that all candidates are fully aware of the restrictions relating to plagiarism and the use of AI.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Context

The best candidates clearly identified the relevant section from the specification, e.g., 1.1.8, and the relevant bullet points, to guide the necessary data collection. A reasonable number of candidates did not match their data collection to the sub-questions identified, and issue that should have been remedied at the planning stage. Theoretical context still appears to be an aspect of Geography that many candidates fail to understand thoroughly, again better candidates did well here, and clearly identified relevant theory. They also clearly located their study and justified their choice of location, while some were poor and at times went into pages of unnecessary text, emphasising a lack of guidance on conciseness. However, many investigations would benefit from providing clearer locations for the study. An unannotated screenshot from Google Earth does not constitute a valid map.

The use of literature is steadily improving with the best candidates making excellent use of literature throughout their work, with relevant sources clearly identified in the text, using a recognised system such as Harvard. There was some varied use of literature reviews, while most had a list of sources in their appendix, often it was just reference to web sites.

Most candidates had clear reference to risk assessments, but many tended to be generic in nature. This is often a limiting factor and should be explored further with candidates at the planning stage. Many showed a lack of understanding of ethics, which tended to be covered very weakly, or was even absent. This also remains an area that centres are advised to work on with candidates.

Methods of Field Investigation

The best candidates clearly linked their methods to sub-questions using a comprehensive table. This allowed for a clear description, justification, relevant sampling and in some cases evaluation. However, the latter should ideally be reserved for the evaluation section of the work. When using questionnaires or environmental surveys, for example, good practice would be to include a blank copy which could be annotated to emphasise the relevance or otherwise) of the questions or statements posed. Some candidates completed pilot studies which greatly assisted their outcomes.

Good examples of methodologies were ones that had well-described, replicable, and justified methods. Many weaker candidates had a limited range of sometimes dubious methods that did little to allow relevant data to be collected. There was evidence that some centres were using the same fieldwork experience each year as a class activity for NEA data collection. This can be detrimental as it can limit a candidate's ability to fit the group data to their identified title and can severely limit individuality within final investigations. Centres that continue to follow this model would be well advised to consider the impact of this method on their NEA outcomes.

Census data is often used by candidates and presented as screen shots, which suggests that candidates do not understand or did not know how to extract the data that was relevant for their specific purpose.

As in previous years the main weakness with this section was the identification and justification of a sampling strategy which, to many candidates, appeared to be a complete mystery. Most candidates made brief statements and there was clear misunderstanding of certain strategies, particularly random sampling when opportunistic sampling would have been more appropriate. Justification of the chosen sampling strategy was often missing or limited. To access band 5 candidates are required to have a "**sampling *strategy that is well designed, explained and justified. The strategy is wholly appropriate to the investigation***." Eduqas has provided a freely accessible digital resource to assist candidates with this element of their enquiry. The link can be found on page 5 of this report.

Data Presentation and Findings

While there were some examples of good and varied practice here, candidates need to be reminded that to access band 5, they should demonstrate "***wide ranging and accurate use of appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative data presentation methods/techniques. Well selected, applied and wholly appropriate cartographic and graphical techniques to support the analysis of findings***." Sadly, this was often not the case, with a notable weakness being the use of multiple bar and pie charts and inappropriate graphs for the data collected.

Better candidates used more sophisticated methods with data, such as photographs, radar charts and other graphs located on maps or satellite images. The use of maps appeared to have eluded many candidates, who used only Google maps or satellite images. While the latter are acceptable, they tend to lack some clarity relating to other information such as the location of sites or routes of transects shown.

Candidates **MUST** be reminded to use appropriate map protocols, and clearly label the axes of graphs, particularly on beach profiles where vertical axis was often absent or showing degrees rather that height. Photographs would benefit from annotation rather than labelling and should be clearly located and orientated. With beach and dune investigations there was a tendency for the data and the profile to be separated – a missed opportunity to integrate both.

Evidence of raw data having been collected was often absent. It would be beneficial to see tables of raw data clearly referred to in the appendix.

Maps, diagrams, and photographs from secondary sources should be clearly identified as such and cannot be credited as the candidate's own work. Many candidates reduced their maps, photographs, and graphs to a size so small it was almost impossible to comprehend what they were about, candidates should be reminded that it is important to ensure that all data presented is legible and clear.

Analysis and Interpretation of findings

Centres are reminded that to achieve band 5 marks candidates are required to give a "***sophisticated analysis and interpretation of findings, clearly showing why they were appropriate and relevant to the research question***." Ideally, they should show some individuality and/or links between the study and other aspects of Geography, i.e. synopticity. The best candidates also reflect on their theory, secondary data, and literary review.

Stronger investigations attempted to use statistical methods to support their analysis, most commonly Spearman Rank and Chi-Square. It should be noted that for the latter the expected frequency in any one fraction must not normally be less than 5 (and for 2 categories not more than 20 percent of expected frequencies may be less than 5), and in no case must any expected frequency be less than 1. For Spearman Rank there should be at least ten pairs of data to allow a valid test to be completed. Candidates should also be remined that data sets can also be analysed using more basic measures of central tendency e.g. mean, mode and median (as relevant). Often these opportunities are missed. In weaker investigations candidates often failed to show their working, the raw data, state a null hypothesis and/or demonstrate an understanding of reliability or validity. Where findings were integrated within the analytical context the interpretation was much more effective and focussed. Some excellent work was seen on glaciation, which included some varied and sophisticated work. In the very weakest investigations the tendency was to methodically describe each graph, offering little to no analysis.

Candidates should be encouraged to make greater reference to the theory that underpins their investigation, showing to what extent their findings support the theory. It would also be good to indicate how their findings link to wider aspects (synopticity) of Geography e.g. future implications for the economy, people or environment.

Conclusions and Presentation Requirements

To access band 5 marks conclusions should provide a "***sophisticated and confident summary, drawing convincing and thorough individual conclusions that address the research questions and substantiate the analysis and interpretation***." This was attempted with varying degrees of success. The most effective conclusions drew the investigation to a close linking the findings back to the sub-questions and the research title. Often, however, there was a tendency to repeat what was in the analysis and even introduce new data and ideas, which was not always clear or relevant. Weaker investigations were often not concise, and ideas were not substantiated by any actual data within the investigation.

For band 5 candidates are also expected to produce "***a well-structured, concise and logical report; accurately referencing secondary information***." While sub-questions were covered, elements such as 'Assess', 'Contrast' or 'To what extent' introduced in research titles were frequently neglected.

Returning to the suggested word guidance, candidates should be reminded that producing work that is considerably over this guided limit carries risks. It should be noted that bands 4 and 5 require concise work. Many candidates have a tendency to believe that 'more is more', particularly within the context section of investigations. Many draw multiple and often unnecessary comparisons with a range of different places that have limited relevance to the investigation being undertaken. All centres should attempt to spend some time discussing this issue with their candidates. Overly long and wordy context sections will not gain more marks and candidates should work hard to self-edit any unnecessary content from their final write-ups. This is a challenging but a necessary part of producing pieces of research in this form.

Evaluation

Candidates should be reminded that this section is worth 25% of the total marks, and that to achieve band 5 marks they must show a "***highly effective evaluation of the knowledge and understanding gained from field observation. Must have a perceptive evaluation of each stage of the fieldwork investigation including the ethical dimensions of the field research; and a perceptive and well-considered reflections of further research and extension of their geographical understanding***.' It was noted that many centres overmarked this section, particularly when the evaluation was limited, for the most part, to the data collection phase.
The best candidates tackled this well, using sub-titles to clearly identify each of the stages of the investigation: Planning, Knowledge and Understanding, Context, Methods of field investigation, Data presentation of findings, Analysis and Interpretation of findings, Conclusions and Presentation, Evaluation, Improvements, and Further Research and Extensions. Their evaluation was often perceptive with well-considered reflections for extensions and their wider geographical understanding.

It might help candidates if they focussed their evaluations upon this section rather than drip feeding evaluation throughout. Centres should be reminded that marks are awarded for focussed reflections rather than writing at great length, possibly using bullet points where appropriate.

Ideas for improvements are still quite basic in most investigation, e.g., collect more data and do it on different days. There remains scope to develop ideas for further research, extensions of their geographical knowledge, and further consideration of theory.

Weaker investigations tended to be selective in the stages considered, mostly covering data collection and presentation, and less so analysis. Often, much that was written was a repeat from earlier in their work and was descriptive rather than evaluative.

Overall, centres are to be congratulated for guiding their students and preparing them effectively. Where centre marks are adjusted, we encourage the centre to analyse their individual centre reports carefully. Full guidance is provided on where the marking of the centre differed from the marking of the moderator.

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