

Version



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Geography

GEOG3

(Specification 2030)

Unit 3: Contemporary Geographical Issues

Report on the Examination

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General

This report on the A2 GEOG3 examination focuses on aspects of the question paper and its construction, the nature and demands of command words and the importance of key words, as well as its assessment question by question. With the availability of the Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA) it is now possible for centres to see not only the performance of their own candidates on a question by question basis, but also to see information on the relative popularity of each question, and the degree to which it was successful in the examination context. Consequently this report will not comment in a detailed fashion on these aspects. A number of general characteristics were evident:

1. The majority of candidates attempted two physical geography questions and one human geography question, with a significant proportion (50%) answering Question 19 (the Plate Tectonics essay Question). The most popular set of Questions overall were the structured Questions (10, 11 and 12) testing the World Cities option.
2. There were very few rubric contraventions, which is pleasing to report. However, for those candidates who did break the rubric, the outcomes were significant. Centres are requested to ensure that candidates are made well aware of the rules regarding question choice. When rubric is contravened, examiners are required to mark the whole paper and then take the best scoring marks (by option) to the candidate's advantage. In most cases this meant that one of the structured options was disqualified.
3. Some candidates answered the questions in section by section order, Section A first, followed by Section B and so on; others chose to answer Section C first or second. Centres are asked to consider whether it is in the candidate's best interest to leave the 40 mark essay to the final part of the examination. If the essay is unfinished then this does affect the overall mark the candidate can achieve as the essays are assessed in their totality. There was some evidence that some candidates ran out of time, though not in large numbers, and hence, poor time management may have contributed to lower marks for those concerned.
4. Most centres used the new AQA answer booklet, with the peach coloured cover and edging and small boxes for candidates to write in their question choices.
5. On a more administrative level, examiners noted an increased number of either transcribed or word-processed scripts. Also, there seem to be more instances of illegible handwriting.
6. Finally, it is pleasing to report that the full range of marks was achieved which is encouraging as all examination papers should discriminate effectively.

GEOG3 is an entirely optional paper, and teachers may be tempted to just read those sections of this report that relate to their chosen areas of study. However, it is suggested that they read all of the following report, especially as some of the types of data stimulus will 'move around' to the other options in no particular sequence, and it would be wise to become aware of the major areas of concern for any format of data stimulus. For example, the maps of Figure 4 – Question 10 - presented the issue of 'data waffle' which may repeat itself in other options in subsequent series.

The nature of the examination paper

The examination paper consists of two types of questions: structured questions and long essays. Each of the structured questions, both Physical and Human, were constructed to the same format. The mark allocation for each of these was 7 marks, 8 marks, and 10 marks, and for each the philosophy behind the nature of the tasks was the same.

The 7 mark Questions

This required the candidate to examine a data stimulus (for example an image, a map, a photo, a set of maps, a passage) and in each case to understand what it is showing and then 'comment on' what he/she could see. In Question 04, Question 07, Question 10 and Question 13 additional commands were given to guide the candidates a little more. In each question material that was described or 'lifted' was awarded Level 1 credit. Candidates had to do more than this though – they had to infer other geographical aspects from the data that were not immediately obvious.

Two examples will illustrate this. Firstly in Question 01, candidates recognised the mid-Atlantic Ridge and gave detail of what created it involving convection currents and sea-floor spreading. However, the thrust of the question was the 'extent to which' the image supported the theory of plate tectonics – candidates had to link the evidence back to the theory explicitly to gain Level 2 credit.

Similarly in Question 13, candidates could easily state that Toyota's R&D plants were located in developed nations, often referred to as MEDCs. The subsequent comment was often on the lines of why they were located there – hence, most candidates referred to higher levels of education or skills in those countries. This last statement is not obvious from the data – it has to be inferred based on prior knowledge or understanding. So, in each case, candidates are being required to demonstrate wider geographical processing and/or thinking. Further points on individual questions will be given below.

The 8 mark Questions

These questions were thought to be the most straightforward for candidates, testing as they do knowledge and understanding of relatively narrow and focused areas of the specification. The command words used in the questions were perhaps familiar to candidates and less challenging. However, they were again often the most disappointing in terms of outcome. Many candidates simply did not seem to know the material they were being asked questions on, either in sufficient detail, or with the degree of sophistication required at this level. Many answers were very generalised and simplistic. The worst performing questions of this type were Questions 11 and 14. Further points on individual questions will be given below.

The 10 mark Questions

The 10 mark questions take the knowledge and understanding that a candidate has into a slightly higher level of intellectual thought. These questions require him/her to apply that knowledge and understanding in a situation that necessitates one or more of analysis, evaluation, discussion and interpretation. This is flagged up in the questions by the use of more complex commands such as 'In what ways...vary', 'Discuss', 'Assess' and 'Evaluate'. Performances here were more varied. Some candidates addressed this aspect of the question well; others simply described the chosen area of content without any sense of the nature of the task. Differentiation was, therefore, achieved quite successfully and more detail on this will be given below.

The 40 mark essays

These questions are synoptic in design and they are also open-ended in terms of their demands, to varying degrees. There is no correct or perfect way to answer any of them, and candidates should be encouraged to have confidence in going about their task in the knowledge of this. The 'Notes for Answers' provide some guidance on the nature of content that could be included and also suggestions as to how synopticity could be achieved, but once again, it should be re-iterated that candidates can 'set out their stall' and assemble their own argument within the broad parameters of the question set. It is however, important that the argument is completed and rounded. It is assessed in its totality. In some questions candidates are also asked to express an overall view or opinion – 'to what extent do

you agree with this view/statement?’ Candidates should be encouraged to be confident about this – they can have their own opinion so long as their argument supports it. They do not always have to find the middle line, or be obliged to follow the accepted view. For this type of question we welcome critical and lateral thinking.

The essays are assessed using a generic mark scheme, which is given in tabular form. All the essays are assessed according to five criteria and examiners allocate a level, to a maximum of 4 levels, for each of these criteria before awarding a summative level and then deciding on the mark to be awarded within the range of marks available. The five criteria are:

- Knowledge of content, ideas and concepts.
- Critical understanding of those concepts and ideas, including the processes that underpin them.
- The use of case studies to support the argument.
- Evidence of synopticity – the degree to which candidates can synthesise geographical themes and recognise the roles of values, attitudes and the importance of decision making at a variety of levels.
- Quality of argument – the degree to which an argument is constructed, developed and concluded.

In this examination series a few minor modifications were made to the essay mark scheme compared to that of 2010. Firstly, to access Level 3 for the ‘Use of case study’ criteria, examiners had to be satisfied that the case studies were being used to support the argument rather than being there to ‘pad out’ the answer. Such case studies also had to have a degree of development or detail, rather than just names and locations. Secondly, under the ‘Quality of argument’ criteria, examiners assessed the degree to which the candidate recognised the task set, and how well he/she stayed on focus for that task. It is far better for candidates to be focused than to write ‘all I know’ type answers.

It is pleasing to report that a wide range of responses was evident in these essays – with full marks being awarded on several occasions. As an exercise in discrimination, they were successful and some candidates are to be congratulated on the quality of their responses to these questions. It is wonderful to behold the depth of intellectual thought and processing, combined with an accuracy of knowledge and an ability to write in a targeted and interesting manner that some candidates possess.

Command words and key words

This is not the forum to write at length regarding the precise meaning of command words, but it is still worthwhile to comment on the degree to which candidates self-penalise by not responding to the precise demands of the questions, in particular, failing to take note of command words and key words. Some examples illustrate these points:

1. **Question 03.** Here candidates were required to describe the ways in which volcanic activity varied according to the type of plate margin. On too many occasions candidates gave two separate accounts, one for constructive plate margins, and one for destructive plate margins, with the bare minimum of comparison. Some answers gave no link word at all. Hence, the marks awarded were often restricted to the top of Level 2.
2. **Questions 12 and 15.** To gain the maximum level, candidates had to respond to the higher level command of ‘*evaluate the effectiveness of*’ and ‘*assess the...impact of*’. Some candidates gave little indication of effectiveness or assessment at all – specific description alone remaining within Level 2; others gave statements such as ‘it is/was effective/significant...’ without any attempt to say how this view could be recognised or supported. These were complex tasks and candidates needed to recognise the complexity and respond with sophisticated statements that were appropriate for this level.
3. **Question 18.** A discussion of the *consequences* of the chosen separatist pressures was required, yet there was a great deal of historical background, or reasons (the focus of Question 17), provided which was not required.

4. **Question 12.** A fundamental key word concerned the number 'one'. Candidates should concentrate their answers on the requirement for a limited set of information. Examiners had to tease out the better answer on behalf of the candidate but, more importantly, it meant that the candidate was in effect wasting time by giving more information than was required.

The final part of this report will now examine salient points regarding each of the individual questions.

Question 01

Most candidates did state something appropriate and relevant about the nature, or strength, of the evidence **shown in the image** to support plate tectonics theory. Evidence quoted usually revolved around references to the mid-Atlantic ridge, and the apparent 'jig-saw' fit of the North American and the Eurasian/African continents. However, many candidates move towards palaeomagnetism, the fossil mesosaurus and convection currents, none of which could be seen in the image. Few candidates were able to discuss some of the more subtle pieces of evidence such as the apparent 'better fit' of the continental shelves, or the role of the transverse faulting on the sea bed of the Atlantic Ocean. The number of candidates who referred to South America, South Africa, and in some cases, the Pacific Ocean, was alarming. Equally, some far-sighted candidates were able to identify trenches and destructive margins, together with hot spots and even Hawaii.

Question 02

Responses to this question were polarised. Those who correctly identified the theme of the question – minor forms of extrusive volcanic activity – often gained good marks. Those who wrote of either major volcanic landforms, or of intrusive landforms, tended to struggle to gain much credit. Answers to this question were generally good.

Question 03

As stated earlier, the main issues here concerned the lack of understanding of the task. Many candidates felt obliged to write all they knew about volcanic (and seismic) activity at plate margins - and also whilst in the area of subject content of volcanoes, hot spots and Hawaii. So, there were often lengthy accounts of each of constructive, destructive and conservative plate margins – the processes, the landforms and in some cases the hazardous events. A more targeted response examining the variations in volcanic activity between constructive and destructive plate margins was what was required, and gained high levels of credit. Some candidates were able to illustrate their points with precise references to actual volcanic events, and this was pleasing to see. However, it was possible that many candidates lost valuable time in the examination on this question, as several answers were as long as some essays.

Question 04

Centres are asked to note that this question had two commands for the candidates. Firstly, they had to describe the global distribution of insolation at the Earth's surface as shown on Figure 2. Most candidates could identify areas of high and low levels of insolation, and were able to quote values from the map to support their description. What confused many candidates was the fact that insolation was lower than expected in equatorial regions. The second task – to comment on the distribution – was therefore a little more challenging. Many candidates were able to explain the variations in terms of angle of incidence of the sun's rays (and the added factor of thickness of atmosphere) – though some candidates believed that the Equator being 'nearer to' the sun was the key factor. Few could link the distribution to the occurrence of cloud, or the lack of it. Atmospheric albedo was relevant, though surface albedo was not. Nevertheless, most candidates accessed Level 2.

Question 05

This question produced a wide range of responses and diagrams. Examiners imposed a maximum of 6 marks where no diagram of any nature was given. Most candidates were able to describe the layering of the atmosphere, though with varying degrees of accuracy and precision, as well as provide some description of each layer. A good account of at least two layers accessed Level 2. However, there was a great deal of confusion amongst candidates regarding the various 'spheres' and 'pauses' that make up the atmosphere. Many candidates did know the names of the layers, but not necessarily in the right order.

Question 06

This Question proved to be a good discriminator. It is unfortunate to report that too many candidates confused 'altitude' with 'latitude', or read the question to be 'altitude circulation'. Hence, such candidates wrote at length erroneously (often with illustrative diagrams) about the general atmospheric circulation. However, other candidates did write about the impact of altitude on temperature, precipitation and winds (both local and global) and were able to support their answers with place specific information. Answers regarding ocean currents were better, with some excellent material being offered on the impacts of each of the North Atlantic Drift (or Gulf Stream) and the Labrador Current on the climate of the British Isles and the eastern seaboard of Canada and the USA respectively. Material relating to the relative heat capacities of water and land had to be adapted to the theme of the question for it to be relevant. Candidates who accessed a Level 2 degree of quality, on both altitude and ocean currents, accessed Level 3 overall.

Question 07

Candidates found this image relatively straightforward to both describe and comment on. They were able to identify that lines of trees had been planted to screen off areas of either housing or business, and also roads, from each other. Few realised that the vegetation had in fact been planted prior to the business park in particular being established, and that it is a fine example of the planned use of matured vegetation. Nevertheless, comments relating to sound barriers, aesthetic qualities and wildlife corridors were mentioned by many, together with more specific references to the use of vegetation for recreational purposes in identified areas. Perhaps the major aspect of concern here was when many candidates referred to such things as polluting industries, 'nice' gardens and allotments.

Question 08

Many candidates regarded this as a rehash of a previous question in the January series on the vegetation succession relating to a lithosere. The key word in the question was 'wasteland'. Consequently, to achieve the higher level, examiners had to be convinced that the succession being described was in a wasteland context. The processes are very similar to that of a lithosere; it is the species that mark different stages that become crucial in this context. Nevertheless, most candidates were able to refer to the infamous Oxford ragwort, with fewer referring to the Japanese knotweed.

Question 09

Whereas the previous question was answered reasonably well by many candidates, this question was answered less well. There were clues in the question that were missed by many. The plural was used more than once – ecologies, routeways – and there was another hint in the use of the word 'distinctive'. However, many candidates wrote of ecologies on 'routeways' without any attempt to categorise what that term may have included. Better responses wrote of ecologies on railways (and here Oxford ragwort featured strongly again), roads (or motorways), canals and some even discussed paths through woodland. Having made this distinction, it was easier to describe and explain the means by which distinctive ecologies have evolved. Another area of weakness was the failure to identify specific species or plants, other than the plant twice mentioned previously. For example, many candidates wrote that motorway verges had halophytic plants, but could not name any. The best answers also discussed ecologies in their widest sense and made reference to specific animals, birds and insects that have been encouraged in such habitats.

Question 10

There was a logical progression to the question – the candidate had to describe the pattern of economic deprivation shown in Figure 4A. There was no requirement to explain this pattern. Then, the candidate had to comment on the ‘degree to which’ the level of deprivation had changed by using Figure 4B. Some answers were very lengthy, comprising of a ‘Cook’s Tour’ of colours and numbers, without any real sense as to what it all meant. A number of answers were undermined by an inability to correctly identify ‘east’ and ‘west’.

Examiners were looking for a mature description of the pattern of deprivation – the high levels to the north-east and on the coastline, and lower levels further west and to the south-east. Some candidates thought the map was of the whole of the north-east of England, rather than one town (Hartlepool). The changes that have taken place, again should have been commented on with more of an overview – the area to the west is becoming even less deprived, i.e. wealthier, which could indicate a suburbanised area perhaps. The port areas which had high levels of deprivation in 1999 appear to have improved – possibly due to a regeneration scheme or gentrification. Although the town as a whole has ‘improved’, were the disparities of wealth widening within the borough?

Question 11

As with some of the other 8 mark questions, this question was not answered well. Candidates could define the process of urban decline and give many general factors for its occurrence, but they did not offer much exemplification of, or sophistication on, the generic reasons that they offered. Consequently, many answers remained in Level 1 as they had not responded to the instruction ‘With reference to examples...’. Even candidates that named cities such as Sheffield, or Manchester, or London failed to say why those cities, or preferably parts of them, had declined. Better responses were able to refer, say, to the decline of shipbuilding in Belfast and to the urban decay in some identified parts of Glasgow. Some decided to write at length about the impact of out-of-town retailing areas, as well as give a catalogue of their advantages or outline their stages of growth and characteristics; but this could only be relevant if they then said that as a result some identified shopping centres/CBDs have declined. Following on from the question on suburbanisation in 2010, this is an area where centres need to encourage greater specificity to raise the standard of responses.

Question 12

The key here was for the candidate to select one appropriate partnership scheme, and to then evaluate its effectiveness. At the outset some candidates chose inappropriate schemes by choosing to write about Urban Development Corporations such as the London Docklands (LDDC), and the Merseyside Development Corporation (Albert Dock) – schemes which are rooted in the early 1980s and which were not partnerships. The specification makes a very clear distinction between gentrification, property-led regeneration schemes [the Urban Development Corporations (UDCs)] and partnership schemes. Partnership schemes were set up from the 1990s onwards with a clear difference in philosophy from the UDCs of the 1980s - namely to purposefully involve local communities and local government in the decision-making processes.

The decision was taken to award credit for discussions on the UDCs to the maximum of Level 1, assuming there was sufficient material to merit it. This decision was taken so as to be fair to both sets of candidates – those who knew something of an inappropriate scheme, and those who interpreted the question correctly. The same principles applied to gentrification and to those answers based on improvements to spontaneous settlements in the developing world, such as Dharavi in Mumbai. A key element was also the candidate’s ability to state who the partners were – even for some UDCs it was possible to state that more recent developments in the same area had a partnership element to them.

With few exceptions, most answers to all scenarios suffered from the same problem in that the candidate spent a lot of time outlining the background issues as to why the area needed regenerating. He/she then failed to present much in the way of detail about the actual scheme and its aims, other than very general points. Effectiveness was difficult to evaluate; often there were no criteria against which it could be judged. Some ‘schemes’ were still in the planning or building phase and it was almost impossible to assess how effective they might be. Others were ‘city-wide’ and included different approaches from different time periods; hence, it was difficult to tease out parts that were creditworthy. Centres do need to select a scheme that has tangible outcomes; this would have been so much easier if candidates had looked at a case study that has, or almost has, run its course. There

is a huge range of such schemes within the UK and around the world, but a key differentiating element has to be the candidate's ability to categorise the appropriate scheme under the correct heading.

Question 13

This question in common with the previous one, required a response to two commands – to describe the information shown on Figure 5 and then to comment on it. Many candidates found this a straightforward task to complete and maximum marks were common. However, some candidates created problems for themselves at the outset by stating that most manufacturing plants were in LEDCs – which they are not. Better responses recognised that there are subtle variations in the distributions of the two elements – R&D plants are based primarily in the developed world for reasons such as the skills base and also to respond to local variations of vehicle specification. Manufacturing plants exist in both the developed world and the developing world – the former to meet market demands and possibly to bypass tariff restrictions, and the latter to satisfy rising levels of demand and possibly cheaper wage expectations in named NICs. Many candidates mentioned the benefits of coastal locations which examiners did not accept as being valid based on a map of this scale.

Question 14

As stated elsewhere, responses to this question were frequently generalised and over-simplified. Furthermore, there was too much emphasis placed on reasons for location rather than 'growth'. At this level examiners can expect detailed, specific and sophisticated reasons for the growth of TNCs. Candidates will have studied case studies of a range of TNCs in a variety of locations and should be able to give some precision in their response as to why these TNCs have spread their influence across the world. Two developed reasons for growth accessed Level 2; for many this was not achieved.

Question 15

Similar issues occurred here, though not as widespread. Better answers separated out the social and economic impacts (though it is accepted that they do overlap) of TNCs, and also gave both positive and negative accounts. Such answers were often well-supported with good use of case studies. There are many well-documented case studies available, the most common referring to TNCs such as Coca Cola, Nike, Shell, Primark and Dyson. It is pleasing to report that many candidates did attempt to give a balanced view of their impacts – positive and negative, economic and social. Weaker responses tended to write 'all I can remember' type of responses and the examiner had to tease out the relative impacts on behalf of the candidate. Some candidates based their entire answer on one TNC, which restricted their argument somewhat. Finally, those candidates who were able to give an overall assessment of impact, as required by the question, accessed Level 3.

Question 16

This question presented another variety of data stimulus – a passage of text. With such a stimulus, there is an understanding that candidates have to invest a little more time in taking in what the data is telling them. Hence, the expectations of outcomes are less demanding than for other questions on this paper. For many candidates comments consisted largely of paraphrasing or 'lifting' extracts from Figure 6 without any attempt to classify or comment on the causes of the conflict, or its resolution. Such material could not progress beyond Level 1. Better responses recognised, for example, that the main driver of the conflict appeared to be territory and resources – often potentially valuable resources. There were clear nationalist issues too, possibly associated with different cultures and ethnicities. There has been a series of international approaches to conflict resolution and yet local animosities are keeping the conflict alive. For the time being, it is a less well-known conflict which has the potential to widen, especially under the current 'Arab Spring'.

Question 17

This question was answered quite well. As with Question 14, the key to a good response was to provide specific, detailed and/or sophisticated reasons for the development of separatist pressures. Weaker responses referred to generic factors – religion, geographical isolation, culture, etc – without any sense of place of where these factors apply. Another weakness was that some candidates gave too much historical background (and often ventured into the area of the subsequent question - consequences) which wasn't always relevant. Also some answers concentrated on one case study, which to some extent is self-penalising. Examiners can expect to see breadth as well as depth in this topic. There were also some issues which applied to the use of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as a case study which will be addressed below.

Question 18

There were some excellent, highly detailed and knowledgeable responses to this question. These answers examined a range of consequences, were balanced, and demonstrated a clear recognition of the complexity of the issue of separatism around the world. A good starting point was to recognise that some areas have non-violent consequences, whereas others there were issues of violence. Case studies used included Wales, Scotland, the Basques, the Quebecois, the Kurds, Chechnya and the former Yugoslavia. Some candidates referred to the situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories. This is an area of on-going international conflict, and conflict resolution, and therefore, is perhaps better used elsewhere in the specification. However, whereas an argument based on the desire of Palestinians to seek autonomy from Israel is valid, the argument tackled from the opposite direction – namely, the Israelis wanting to keep Palestinians out of their country by, for example, building a wall is not valid. Further aspects of this conflict such as the issues of water management in the West Bank are also difficult to link to separatism.

The essays

As was pointed out earlier, Question 19 was by far the most popular, whereas Question 21 was the least popular. There was a fairly even spread of responses to the human essays, Questions 22, 23 and 24.

Question 19

To some extent the overall performance on this question was better than the equivalent of last year. There was more of an attempt to address the demands of the question than to have extensive paragraphs of previously learnt case studies, although there was still some considerable evidence of this. Equally, there was some evidence of theme-based essays having been prepared in some centres, followed by deliberate attempts to 'shoe-horn' those essays into the requirements for the one in this examination. It is good that centres are encouraging candidates to think about the requirements of this question in this way, as 'write all you know about a disaster' questions will never be set. However, this should be balanced with the need to answer the question tabled, and not one which may be close to it. As anticipated there were many accounts of the Tohoku earthquake in March 2011 – but the majority reverted to case study 'dumps' rather than apply them to the question set. This was a pity as that particular event could have been used to good effect for both sides of the argument.

This question asked candidates to discuss whether earthquake impacts are more determined by human factors. There was an implicit request to consider the alternative view – namely that physical factors such as magnitude, location and nature of the area affected may have an effect. Many answers failed to address this aspect and many of those that did, tended to pay only a fleeting reference to physical factors. Better responses were more balanced and perhaps most importantly they answered the question set and came to a view which was mature, coherent and perceptive. These also tended to be interesting to read, in itself a useful guide to the final mark to be awarded.

However, some candidates spent time discussing the extent to which the earthquake had been **caused** by humans which was invariably a rather fruitless argument.

Question 20

In the great majority of occasions candidates decided to write about urban climates, with all of its associated subject content – temperature, precipitation, wind, pollution, etc. Such material was not irrelevant, but it did have to be tweaked in the direction of the Question which was the 'extent' of 'modification'. Examiners were sometimes presented with highly detailed theoretical accounts of

urban climates, with hardly an example in sight and no significant attempt to address the thrust of the question. Hence, candidates scored well on the Knowledge criterion, but less so on the Critical Understanding, Use of case studies and Quality of argument criteria. It is surprising that very few candidates appreciated that urban areas can only modify in a small way the prevailing climate conditions in which they find themselves, and that this modification is maximised at certain times of the day, and year. Very few candidates considered the effect of city size. Even small urban areas have a heat island effect, but the relationship between temperature (urban) vis a vis temperature (rural) and city size is not a simple linear one. Some candidates argued that temperatures in a city such as Singapore were higher than temperatures in London; but the question asked about the extent to which urban areas modify their climate; i.e. in the local context. Inevitably several candidates attempted to bring in a global dimension and made reference to the impact of global warming – it was difficult to see how this could be relevant.

Question 21

The context of this question was within the chosen tropical biome of study. Some centres' candidates opted to discuss this with reference to more than one biome, possibly referring to a fragile environment which came from another part of the specification. Examiners had to make the decision as to which was the better biome, in terms of addressing the demands of the question.

Although an unpopular question, there were some encouraging responses to it. Many candidates discussed the dilemma posed in the question in the context of either the tropical wet/dry savanna or the equatorial rainforest. For the former, there were some interesting discussions centred on the Serengeti National Park and for the latter, the various parks and ecotourism venues within the Amazon region, featured. Discussions of threats to biodiversity were often good; but a clear understanding of 'standards of living' was less strong and hence, the strength of debate was somewhat weakened.

Question 22

This essay offered tremendous scope for candidates to discuss the degree to which planning and management issues in urban areas depended on the level of economic development of the country in which they occur. Consequently there were some wide ranging responses which touched on the redevelopment of spontaneous settlements in the developing world, regeneration schemes in the developed world, as well as issues associated with the management of waste and transport in cities around the world. Some answers were extremely well-argued, whereas others floundered in the potential mass of information that they could have written about and yet chose to remain within abstract generalities. Better answers tended to consider the nature of the planning/management process and the degree of legislation or regulation within the system. Though there was a wide range of case studies that were utilised, perhaps the ones based on the London Olympic site, Sao Paulo, Dharavi and Curitiba were the ones that stood out the most.

Question 23

As with the previous question there were some very strong answers to this question as well as some very weak ones – the latter being lost in sweeping and simplistic generalities. This question was very open-ended and candidates could compile an argument that either supported the statement, or one that suggested that there were other 'driving forces' such as huge and powerful TNCs, financial mechanisms emanating from the developed world and also widespread changes to global communication systems. Some also developed an argument over time, stating that the original NICs (the Asian Tigers) are now somewhat eclipsed by the newer NICs of India and China, and these in turn are being pressurised by the developing economies of Brazil, Russia and the oil-rich states of the Persian Gulf and central Asia. Weaker responses tended to describe the role of TNCs and trading blocs without explicitly linking these to the question theme; they did not appreciate that these might be alternative driving forces. As has already been stated, there is no fixed or expected response to such a question – candidates were encouraged to compile an argument based on evidence and come to a view. Consequently they could be very interesting to read. (It is perhaps a little disappointing that such confidence, perception and maturity is not always present in responses to some of the physical based essays.)

Question 24

This was perhaps the most open ended of the essay titles, especially as there was no dedicated area of content for its study, other than the option title 'Contemporary conflicts and challenges'. However, there was a full range of responses, some very mature and perceptive in their analysis of the issue. The majority of answers were embedded in the context of Afghanistan, though some others were based on the Israeli/Palestinian situation and in particular the Gaza Strip. Some answers were more thematic in the sense that they looked at various interpretations of 'security' – water, food, energy and tenure. In such instances a variety of case studies were examined in less depth than those based on one geographical area, but the approach was just as valid. In all cases the theme of development was examined in terms of economic development, which of course included incomes, health, education, though some candidates also addressed cultural and political development. The better responses were very contemporary and it was pleasing to see that candidates of this option were not only being encouraged to keep up-to-date, but also that they themselves had done so with interest.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion