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Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2021

Pearson Edexcel A Level

In Geography (9GE0)

Paper 2

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Introduction

Given the national decision to use teacher's grades for awarding A-level grades in 2021, there was a significantly reduced entry this series. Timing did not seem to be an issue for most candidates, as most completed the paper in full. However, there were papers where either the final question was only a couple of paragraphs long or candidates had run out of time, restricting marks scored.

Around 73% completed questions on Regenerating Places (question 3) and 27% completed questions on Diverse Places (question 4). About 35% answered questions on Health Human Rights and Interventions (question 5) and around 65% answered questions on Migration, Identity and Sovereignty (question 6).

Centres may like to focus on the following:

- 20-mark essays work best if there is a plan, perhaps written and certainly in the mind of the candidate.
- A conclusion is required for the 20-mark essays, and the level 4 mark scheme says that this should be 'rational, substantiated'... and have balance and coherence. It should do more than repeat what has been covered in each paragraph. This means it follows from what has been covered in the essay and refers to evidence from the essay.
- All essays should be 'supported by evidence' (third bullet point in the mark scheme). This might be a series of located examples, case studies, or facts or data, including evidence from the resource booklet (where appropriate) or a candidate's geographical knowledge.
- Use of time in an exam is a skill. Candidates have to complete two 20-mark essays on this paper, forming a large percentage of the marks. Candidates are advised to leave at least 25 minutes of the exam time to complete the second essay.

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were to explain one reason why free trade policies are promoted by international economic organisations. Those candidates which explicitly referenced an International economic organisation found it easier to articulate why they promoted free trade policies, whilst those who discussed the adoption of free trade policies in a more generic manner struggled to move past two marks.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates wrote a competent essay here, with a focus on the role the social costs and benefits that the global shift had brought to a range of locations across the world.

The question focused on social impacts, so whilst there was some overlap with economic impacts, those that only addressed financial implications were not fully answering the question.

To achieve an upper level 2/ level 3 answer, assessment was required. Some answers were able to assess the extent to which the global shift brought social costs and benefits. Costs discussed included the impacts of health and wellbeing, as well as the depopulation and increasing crime levels in deindustrialised regions.

To reach top of level 3 a judgement was required, perhaps identifying the global shift had created both winners and losers in contrasting locations across the world

Question 2 (a) (i)

Candidates were asked to calculate the percentage increase in military spending shown in Figure 2. This is a standard mathematical skill that students should be taught using a range of data sources.

Despite this, a significant number of students were not able to score marks in this question. A common mistake was candidates who divided the 2017 figure by the 2000 figure and then multiplied this by 100.

Other common mistakes were candidates who failed to show their workings out, therefore they lost a mark in this case, as well as those who gave their answer to 2 decimal places rather than one as directed.

Question 2 (a) (ii)

In this second maths based question candidates were asked to calculate the ratio of military spending in USA vs China. A number of students were unable to simplify the ratio down by dividing both sets of data by the greatest common factor. In this case candidates needed to divide both data sets by 205 to gain a ratio of 3:1.

Question 2 (a) (iii)

This one-mark question asked candidates to identify the country with the fastest growth rate in military spending. Candidates on the whole were successful in identifying China, however some stated that the USA had the fastest growth rate. In this question

candidates could have worked this out by taking the 2017 spending and dividing this by the 2000 spending and multiplying this by 100.

Question 2 (a) (iv)

On the whole candidates showed a good level of understanding of the factors that were required to achieve superpower status. Candidates did often reference Figure 1 in their responses but this was not required for this answer.

Weaker answers in lower level 2 had clear knowledge of the role that hard power could play in the establishment of a superpower but a lack of detailed explanation and a coherent argument limited their response.

The quality of the evidence used in support was variable. For example, the best candidates used the USA as an applied example of the role that hard power can play in the establishment of a superpower. This was then often contrasted to the historical power of the British Empire and the emergence of China.

Successful answers also came to a clear judgement on the role that hard power had to play in the creation of a superpower. This inevitably required candidates to have discussed the role of other factors such as soft power in the creation and maintenance of superpower status.

Question 3 (a) (i)

3-mark questions, like the 4-mark questions at Q2(a), 3(ai) and 4(ai), require a starter reason, extended this time for two further points. They are based on a resource, and there should be a link to the resource in the answer. This does not have to be a direct quote or use data, but might be an idea or an example triggered by the resource.

In this case, the resource was a table showing a range of data for four urban areas in the UK. Candidates needed to suggest a plausible reason for the differences in average weekly wages shown in the urban places. Responses tended to focus on variations in employment sectors and candidates that took this route were able to explain the link to levels of education and thus the necessity for higher wages. Candidates that struggled often tended to offer more than one reason for the differences and thus limited themselves in gaining marks as these reasons tended to be simplistic and not fully developed as required by the question.

Question 3 (a) (ii)

Candidates were required to suggest why urban places in less successful regions may suffer from a spiral of decline.

Whilst the majority of candidates had an understanding of the concept of a spiral of decline, many were limited by general statements without specific examples to support. The best responses applied the spiral of decline to a named example for example The Rust Belt in the USA and used this to explain the process.

Question 3 (b)

Candidates are required by the specification to know their chosen places in depth.

The best responses had a clear sense of place and candidates were able to link their understanding to the question focus of **demographic** characteristics.

Weaker candidates struggled to be explicit about the changes in demographic characteristics that their chosen place had experienced. This meant these responses tended to be largely focused on the cause of the change rather than the changes in the demographic characteristics that the question was asking for.

Candidates in level 3 were able to discuss changes to the age structure and ethnic composition for example, as well as the reasons for the changes taking place.

Question 3 (c)

Candidates are required to write two 20-mark essays in this paper. The command word in these questions is 'evaluate' and answers needed to find logical connections and relationships, produce a full and coherent interpretation supported by evidence from their geographical knowledge and understanding, and then present a balanced argument with a substantiated conclusion. Candidates struggled to achieve the top marks at Level 3, and very few reaching Level 4.

Candidates were required to evaluate the reasons why regeneration strategies are often controversial. The best candidates showed a clear understanding of the idea of controversy and as such were able to discuss how this was shown through their chosen examples. These answers then often discussed a range of stakeholders and examples to introduce different reasons for the controversy arising.

Level 1 answers tended to show 'isolated elements' of geographical knowledge, with generic sweeping statements discussing different regeneration strategies.

Level 2 answers tended to use the case studies to outline contrasting regeneration strategies and what was positive and negative about these.

A good approach which often reached level 3 was to contrast a more and less controversial regeneration strategy. In this way, candidates were able to build towards a partially coherent conclusion.

Level 4 answers demonstrated understanding of the power and influence of different stakeholders and the role that this places in the level of controversy that surrounds a regeneration strategy.

Question 4 (a) (i)

3-mark questions, like the 4-mark questions at Q2(ai), 3(ai) and 4(ai), require a starter reason, extended this time for two further points. They are based on a resource, and there should be a link to the resource in the answer. This does not have to be a direct quote or use data, but might be an idea or an example triggered by the resource.

In this case, the resource was a table showing a range of data for four urban areas in the UK. Candidates needed to suggest a plausible reason for the differences in the percentage of foreign-born people. Responses tended to focus on people being attracted to those of similar ethnicity and therefore similar beliefs.

Question 4 (a) (ii)

Candidates were required to suggest plausible reasons as to why urban places have different population growth rates.

Some candidates wrote generic statements which limited them to level 1, whilst level 2 candidates were able to use the figure provided to suggest reasons why Blackpool may have a declining population in comparison to the growing one shown in Coventry.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates are required by the specification to know their chosen places in depth, the best responses had a clear sense of place and candidates were able to link their understanding to the question focus of changing **cultural** characteristics.

The question expected candidates to explain how their chosen place had been impacted by changes to the cultural characteristics. Weaker candidates struggled to explicitly differentiate what cultural meant and as such were drawn towards more generic changes regarding demography.

Whilst stronger candidates could articulate how changes in the population of their chosen area had brought about changes in the built environment e.g. shops/ buildings and shared spaces.

Question 4 (c)

Candidates are required to write two 20-mark essays in this paper. The command word in these questions is 'evaluate' and answers needed to find logical connections and relationships, produce a full and coherent interpretation supported by evidence from their geographical knowledge and understanding, and then present a balanced argument with a substantiated conclusion. Candidates struggled to achieve the top marks at Level 3, and very few reaching Level 4.

Candidates were required to evaluate why changes in land use in diverse areas are often controversial. The best candidates clearly understood the meaning of the word controversial and used this to evaluate a range of different projects. This therefore tended to centre on the impact of diversity in terms of the range of perceptions that this could bring to a land use change.

Level 1 answers often struggled to move away from description of land use changes that impacted diverse places

Level 2 answers tended to be narrow in the range of ideas that were discussed.

A good approach which often reached level 3 was to evaluate how differing perceptions of stakeholders could lead to controversy. For example, original residents of diverse communities are likely to be resistant of changes, whilst young residents with less community ties are likely to embrace changes.

Level 4 answers had clear supporting evidence through a range of examples, as well as explaining that the level of controversy often stemmed from the level of influence and power that different stakeholders held.

Question 5 (a)

On the whole candidates performed well on this question with candidates able to explain why life expectancy varied within a country. However, a small number of candidates discussed a reason linked to the development of different countries which failed to focus in on the 'within' element of the question.

The best candidates chose a reason that was relatively broad, for example, level of deprivation and then used this to explain how this impacted on a range of factors such as diet and the choice to drink/smoke, which ultimately impacted on life expectancy.

Question 5 (b)

Candidates were directed to use figure 5 for support in answering this question.

Reasons given for the variations in success in reducing poverty included levels of access to education, poor governance and openness to foreign direct investment. Some candidates struggled to apply their own knowledge to the countries shown in the figure and as such did not tailor the reasons so tended to stay in level 2.

Whilst stronger candidates were able to apply their own knowledge of reasons for variations in success in tackling poverty, through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for example, and consider which of these were applicable to the countries in the resource.

Question 5 (c)

The question expected candidates to explain why economic development may have negative impacts on minority groups and the environments in which they live.

Some candidates struggled to answer this question effectively as they were discussed minority groups as a whole rather than identifying specific named examples. In these cases the responses tended to focus on overall loss of cultural and being forced off their land, but were not effectively detailed to move to level 3.

The best candidates clearly applied named examples, for example, the First Nations and explained how they had and their local environment been impacted by development.

Question 5 (d)

The question expected candidates to evaluate the view that global differences in human rights inevitably results in geopolitical interventions. Level 2 answers tended to answer this by discussing a range of human rights abuses across the world and the geopolitical interventions that had taken place to combat this. These responses missed the nuance of the question in discussing the word 'inevitable'.

Level 3 answers began to consider why some countries engaged with human rights abuses were not subject to geopolitical interventions whilst other countries were.

Level 4 answers then evaluated why there was variations in geopolitical interventions by considering the fact that some countries with human rights abuses had close relationships with the USA or held strategic or resource importance. The best responses also discussed that countries which had agreed to uphold the UDHR were in fact accused of human rights abuses themselves e.g. USA and the human rights of prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay.

Question 6 (a)

On the whole candidates managed to pick up at least two marks on this question. Many candidates focused on the idea that colonial powers had divided nations without consideration for ethnic groupings and therefore they were seeking recognition in areas around the world. Additionally candidates discussed the rise of conflict as a result of ethnic divides, with the best candidates including examples such as Sudan.

Weaker candidates tended to struggle to build up a linked explanation as the question asked for one reason. In these cases candidates often would give a second reason in an attempt to pick up marks, so the strongest explanation had to be taken for credit.

Question 6 (b)

Candidates were directed to use figure 6 for support in answering this question.

Reasons given the mixed attitudes of governments to the emergence of tax havens included reducing government revenue from Corporation Tax and governments gaining from employment and spending from the TNCs.

Candidates however tended to have a very narrow view of tax havens and more work could be done on upskilling candidates' knowledge on tax havens in centres.

A small minority of candidates appeared to have limited understanding of tax havens beyond the simple idea of them paying limited tax to countries where they sell their products.

Question 6 (c)

The question expected candidates to explain why globalisation may cause political tension within nations.

On the whole candidates tended to focus on tensions created by cultural changes in traditional communities. This is a narrow view and their candidates missed opportunities to discuss other political tensions created through variations in government investment for example.

A small number of candidates focused on political tensions between countries and as such failed to score marks as they were not answering the 'within' focus of the question.

Question 6 (d)

Candidates were asked to evaluate the view that increased globalisation inevitably results in international migration. Success here depended on candidates' use of applied examples, with the best using contrasting examples such as Japan, Australia and the USA.

The best responses tended to recognise that international migration had been encouraged by the majority of countries due to the economic benefits brought by these migrants. However there was also consideration that political pressure had been key to some countries restricting migrant numbers, therefore over-ruling the ease at which people could move due to increased globalisation.

Weaker responses tend to describe why migration was happening in areas around the world, but were unable to provide a balanced response but identifying areas of the world where international migration was not 'inevitably'.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Make sure you allow enough time for the final 20-mark question on this paper.
- If a resource is provided for a question make sure you refer to it, but do not restrict your answer to quoting from it.
- Use ideas, geographical terminology and parallel examples from your studies over your A level programme to help you write an answer to the question set.
- Whether using a resource or not, make sure you plan an argument to help you structure your essay. Do not just start and hope an argument will evolve. Often it does not, and the essay will be disjointed.
- If you find you are describing an example you have studied, stop and think through how you can use it to answer the question set. Add an extra couple of sentences to make a very clear link back to the question itself.
- Use paragraphs in every answer on this paper, except the 3-mark and 4-mark questions.
- Make sure each paragraph has a 'mini-conclusion' where there is evaluation and a link back to the question.

