



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
Geography (WGE01)

Unit 1: Global Challenges

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General Introduction

This was the first year for this unit (WGE01) and it was generally well received by most candidates. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allowed and generally they used the space available well, without need for extra space. The popularity of the option choices was a fairly even split, with just under half the candidates opting for question 5 (46%) and just over half opting for question 6 (54%).

As a general comment, performance across the paper was reasonably consistent; however, it was clear that some candidates performed better on some sections, for example question 2. Candidates should also try to write answers in line with the demand of the question, as it was clear that some had run out of time in the 20 mark essays due to over-writing on the lower mark answers.

Question 1 aii

Many candidates were able to gain some credit describing the pattern of hydro-meteorological hazard. Good answers had a broad geographical base to their answer, e.g. high risk areas along the east coast, while lower scoring answers tended to try and focus on individual places, which is not really useful when describing a pattern. Some candidates found the concept of a pattern a challenge across the whole area of Africa.

Question 1 aiii

The subtle difference in drought and aridity posed an issue for many of the candidates on this item. The idea of a reduced amount of rainfall associated with drought was a concept that many candidates overlooked. They often referred to an area of no rainfall or low rainfall, when in fact we were looking for a relatively reduced amount of rainfall, compared to the norm, to gain credit. References to global warming were often more credit worthy as they showed how areas could reduce their amount of rainfall. Some answers also gained credit when referring to the transition of the ICTZ and the subsequent failure of rainfall. However, many candidates made reference just to areas of high pressure which already had low rainfall. There was some confusion over the changes brought about by El Nino in Africa, as the changes here are not similar to those shown in the Pacific basin and El Nino does not necessarily bring dry weather to the west of Africa. Clearer definitions of drought would help the candidates' understanding.

Question 1b

Many candidates were able to understand the human elements leading to increased risk of flood disasters, common answers included removal of vegetation and urbanisation. Good answers tended to describe the action but then explain the specific reasons for flooding, i.e. the circumstances leading to an increase in surface runoff. Other good answers focused on the increased risk rather than the specific causes of flooding, with common answers focusing on rising sea levels and an increase in coastal populations leading to increased vulnerability. Candidates were often limited by their inability to fully explain their answers in relation to increased risk, rather than their knowledge of factors.

Question 1 c

This was a reasonably well answered question but the focus of answers was not always as per the question, many instead opted to explain the formation of volcanoes when the question asked for an explanation of the global distribution. The focus of many answers was an explanation of convergent and divergent plate boundaries. To access the higher level marks, students needed to comment on the range of circumstances which lead to volcanic activity and also make some attempt to link to the global distribution. Good answers had comments about the majority of volcanoes around the Pacific Ring of Fire or mentioned that only few volcanoes were found mid plate compared to the distribution on plate boundaries. Good candidates were also able to offer explanation for the formation of different volcanoes, often at convergent and divergent boundaries as well as hotspots.

Question 2ai

The majority of candidates were able to recognise a relevant greenhouse gas, the most common answer was methane.

Question 2aii

This was a well attempted answer with many able to easily score 3 or 4 marks for a description of the changes. Good answers compared the changes for each country and therefore were able to easily score 3-4 marks. Most were able to recognise the increase in China and India, while only some noted the decrease for Germany and similar amount for the USA. Candidates who chose to describe the situation in 1993 and then the situation in 2013 found it more difficult as they often missed one of the countries out of their descriptions or they did not include direct comparison.

Question 2aiii

Many candidates were able to score some credit here as they were able to identify and describe a reason for change for at least one of the countries. Lower scoring answers were often generic in approach or lacked the ability to apply specific reasons. Good answers not only gave the particular reason but made specific links between the reason and the changing carbon dioxide emissions. Common answers for Germany focused on the need to reduce carbon emissions as a result of international agreements such as Paris, or instead focused on the global shift of manufacturing away from westernised countries towards emerging economies and therefore the reduction in emissions linked to development of renewable technologies. The main focus identified for China was the industrialisation and increase in manufacturing leading to the increase in emissions.

Question 2b

Candidates coped well with this question as it returned the highest average score for the 6 mark items on the paper. Many candidates were self-limiting by discussing only one reason - often wealth - and often filled the space by discussing how more developed countries were more able to afford defences while less developed were not. It is advisable to avoid mirrored statements if possible. Good answers were able to give a range of reasons for differences, common ones including wealth, technology, geographical location or spatial variations in approach. Level 3 answers often had this

range but also made it clear in their answer why it was easier to adapt in some locations rather than others.

Question 3aii

The most common response to this item was to focus on how communication, via the internet helped manage production. However, the discriminator in this item was whether the candidate was able to suggest how this would help production, rather than stating that it did. Typical answers made reference to improved communications to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings therefore saving money, or to check on the process of production to improve efficiency or logistics of the production process. Most candidates were able to apply their knowledge of globalised manufacturing to the resource.

Question 3aiii

This question elicited many responses which simply regurgitated the definition of globalisation. There was some credit in this, but better answers made specific links to how the aircraft can play a part in this. Common answers included the idea of movement of people to spread culture or the reduction in time travelled between countries to improve linkages and save money. Most candidates were able to offer one idea and score some credit. The main issue for some candidates was offering a second reason, as the question only asked for one.

Question 3b

This item was well understood by candidates, many of whom scored credit for describing the benefits of joining free trade blocs. Common answers made reference to the reduction or removal of tariffs leading to cheaper costs, or made reference to the benefits of free movement of labour. Some also made reference to the improvement in relations between the different member states of the trade bloc and although this is not always the case, it was allowed. Good answers often made links to a particular trade bloc to exemplify their point, even though it was not necessary.

Question 3c

This item was not as well attempted as hoped. Many candidates ignored the point about environment and instead gave a generic answer about the concerns of globalisation. Answers without any reference to impact on the local environment scored zero marks. Good answers were often focused on different types of local pollutants as a consequence of manufacturing, or resource extraction as a consequence of TNC exploitation of the local environment. Some candidates did make reference to global changes to the environment as a consequence of global warming but these did not focus on the question.

Question 4ai

Most candidates were able to correctly name Sri Lanka as the country with the lowest urban population.

Question 4aii

Most candidates were able to identify or describe the positive relationship shown in Figure 4. However, many proceeded to then simply exemplify the

relationship or repeat what they had already said. Only a relatively few answers were able to identify an anomaly in the relationship or describe the anomaly. Therefore, many candidates scored only 1 mark on this response.

Question 4aiii

This item produced mixed responses. Some candidates tried to offer an explanation for only one part of the relationship, either wealth or urbanisation, only some managed to identify links which were common to both. The best answers focused on rural to urban migration and the reasons for this - it is difficult to answer this question without such a reference.

Question 4b

A range of answers were given to this question. At the lower end there was the idea of destruction to the environment due to urban sprawl, whereas the higher scoring answers focused on a range of responses including damage to the surrounding ecosystems, rural decline and associated impact on demographics. Some students focused on the idea of counter urbanisation which was allowed as a relevant answer. Better answers had a context to their answer and set the urbanisation in either less developed, emerging or developed cities.

Question 4c

This answer produced a good spread of marks amongst candidates though there was a tendency for candidates to simply describe the problems of housing in the developing world. Many candidates scored Level 2 answers, between 3-4 marks and were able to offer some explanation of the challenges of meeting the housing needs. It was however, more common to see a summary of the housing problems, with a focus on the development of shanty towns, overcrowding and inability to cope with the influx of newcomers to urban areas in the developing world. The higher scoring answers were able to have explicit focus on the challenges of meeting the housing needs which ranged from lack of space, governmental organisation, funding or the issue of balancing economic development versus housing provision. Higher scoring answers often supported their responses with examples and many were about schemes, e.g. self help or charitable provision to improve housing stock.

Question 5a

This question produced a range of responses from candidates and tended to discriminate well. Many candidates were able to use the resource to answer the question and showed a clear understanding of the resource. A small percentage of candidates tried to answer the question without the use of the resource but this was self-limiting. Of those that used the resource, many had an inclination to describe the changes shown by it. Often generic reasons were given for countries placement in different sections of the resource, such as an anti-global warming stance or a lack of evidence to support warming, or simply the need to make money because a country was rich or developing. Higher scoring answers were able to use the resource and categorise the countries in the sections of the Figure, such as those reliant on oil or fossil fuel trade as part of their development model. Candidates found it easier to offer explanations for the developed nations

and the oil-producing countries but did not find it as easy to make comment on countries such as Costa Rica for having a greater willingness to reduce emissions. Good answers focused on the ecological approach adopted by the Costa Rican government or offered a similar valid reason. Few candidates focused on the fact that no countries were willing to reduce emissions so that temperatures would reduce by less than 2 degrees Celsius and even fewer were able to offer a reason for this. This limited some candidates from reaching full marks.

Overall, the Figure was interpreted well and candidates were able to use and apply their understanding to it.

Question 5b

This item produced a wide range of responses. Many candidates had correct focus in their answers but a relatively small percentage of candidates were able to fully develop their arguments in a meaningful manner. Many candidates achieved a Level 2 or 3 mark in the range of 6-15 as they showed some relevant knowledge and understanding but either failed to provide clear supporting evidence to support their points or lacked clear argument and/or conclusion.

Lower scoring answers tended to focus on the types of prediction and monitoring methods and may have had gaps in their knowledge of these. Alternatively, they focused on one case study of how monitoring and prediction has helped manage a natural hazard, which therefore only partially fitted with the demands of the question.

Higher scoring answers had a grasp of a range of prediction and monitoring methods and showed understanding of why these were used with greater success in some areas than others to reduce the impact of the natural hazard. This would have inevitably been supported with reference to examples of natural hazards to highlight their point. Focus on a range of natural hazards also helped to improve the mark as this often produced a discussion about why some hazards were better managed than others. Answers which made reference to spatial variation and temporal changes often provided the platform for clear discussion as candidates would provide different reasons for the varied success in the reduction of hazard impact.

Question 6a

Candidates tended to have greater success on question 6a than the equivalent question in question 5. Many candidates were able to understand the resource and make reference to it in support of their explanations of the changes in pattern of international migrants. Lower scoring answers tended to either not use the resource, or focus on one aspect of it and try to develop reasons for the changes shown. Some very low scoring answers were overly descriptive and did not attempt to offer any explanations for the changes shown. Good answers tended to offer reasons for most of the data shown, although it was not necessary to explain each part of the resource to score maximum marks. Many answers offered explanations for the European movements linked to free movement within the EU or from areas such as Syria which

have produced refugees. Some commented on the difficulties of movement into Australia due to challenges associated with their border points system while others offered explanations for entry away from less developed parts of the world as a result of economic migration. Often, answers reaching between 8-10 marks had both good range and support in their approach. Overall, the reason for patterns in international migration were understood by candidates at all levels.

Question 6b

Candidates showed a good understanding of this question as many of them achieved high level 2 or level 3 marks. The question required candidates to assess the cost and benefits of globalisation for workers in developed and developing countries.

The lower scoring candidates offered either generic costs and benefits or alternatively only focused on either cost, benefit or developed or developing countries. Some candidates gave answers which focused on the costs and benefits of globalisation without specific focus on the workers, which again was self-limiting. Good answers made reference to both costs and benefits and were able to offer reasons for both developed and developing countries. These reasons often included in developing countries, the exploitation of workers with examples to support, or the opportunity for workers to earn higher wage and use qualifications to earn a higher standard of living. In developed countries common costs included the implications of deindustrialisation whereas common benefits, which were often the hardest to explain, included opportunities to work abroad or work in international companies. Good answers often had a range of ideas and were well supported. They also had conclusions which offered an overall opinion.

General Summary

Based on the performance of the paper this year, here is some advice to help with future series:

- 1) Be clear on the causes of physical process e.g. drought and the cause of volcanoes rather than offering generic responses.
- 2) On 4 mark explain questions, ensure that your reasoning is clearly linked to the demand of the question.
- 3) When describing patterns, try to cover overviews rather than focus on specific places.
- 4) On 6 mark items, try to offer a range of points and support them where possible with examples to give you the best chance of achieving level 3.
- 5) On 10 mark essay questions, ensure that you make full use of the resource and use this as a benchmark for your explanations.
- 6) On 20 mark essays, ensure that you meet all the demands of the question and that you offer a conclusion with sound judgement, rather than just to sum up the obvious general points made.