Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2020

Pearson Edexcel GCE

In Geography (9GE0)

Paper 2

October 2020
Publications Code 9GE0_02_2010_ER

Introduction

Given the national decision to use teacher's grades for awarding A-level grades in 2020, 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 the final question was only a couple of paragraphs long, restricting marks scored.

Around 70% completed questions on Regenerating Places (question 3) and 30% completed questions on Diverse Places (question 4). About 45% answered questions on Health Human Rights and Interventions (question 5) and around 55% 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.
- There were some very descriptive answers to the 8-mark essays and also to the 20-mark essays. These are unlikely to reach beyond lower level 2.

Question 1 (a) (i)

Candidates were required to read data from the scatter graph showing the relationship between GDP per capita (PPP) and Gender Inequality Index (GII). The majority of candidates were able to do this successfully, with a limited number inaccurately reading the GDP.

Question 1 (a) (ii)

Candidates were required to calculate the range of the GII data shown on the scatter graph. Here all that was required was to identify the country with the highest GII, in this case Afghanistan and take it away from the lowest GII, in this case Belgium.

Question 1 (a) (iii)

Candidates were required to draw a line of best fit to show the negative correlation evident on the scatter graph. Here candidates needed to draw a line in the middle of the points and aim to have an equal number of points above and below the line of best fit.

Some candidates incorrectly identified a positive correlation.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates wrote a competent essay here, with a focus on the role that gender equality could play in increasing national incomes.

To achieve an upper level 2/ level 3 answer, assessment was required. Some answers were able to assess how far gender inequality impacted on the national incomes per capita shown in the resource. Reasons included the traditional roles of women in the poorest countries and the restrictions that this had on their ability to access jobs outside of the household. Candidates were able to identify that not all countries matched the relationship and countries like China had a higher GII than expected given its GDP. Reasons included the role of TNCs in driving access to job opportunities for women and the role of state owned businesses.

To reach top of level 3 a judgement was required, perhaps identifying that GDP can be impacted by other factors such as access to key resources such as oil or that a gender pay gap still exists in most countries, including those who have a low GII.

The most successful candidates centred their response on the resource as directed and were able to suggest clear and rational reasons for the pattern shown. Some candidates however, produced a generic response which didn’t reference the countries shown in the figure nor other appropriate countries.

Question 2 (a)

On all 4 (and 3) mark questions, centres are encouraged to advise candidates to go for a broad ‘starter reason’ which can then be extended. Many candidates score 2 marks here, but fewer are able to go on to achieve all 4 marks by building a developed answer.

Here candidates needed to explain how key resources are being impacted by the rising middle-class consumption in emerging superpowers. Some candidates drifted off topic by focusing on the impact on climate change for example, rather than the key resource as directly by the question.

Frequently students focused on the key resource of oil as referenced in the question, but this was not compulsory as any key resource e.g. water would have been appropriate. Common starter reasons were the rising wealth leading to greater demand for energy to facilitate transport and household appliances, rising demand leading to increasing oil prices and increased demand for fossil fuels due to rising car ownership.

Question 2 (b)

Whilst most candidates demonstrated a good level of knowledge regarding TNCs, the challenge posed by the question was to focus on what role TNCs could play on developing the **economic** importance of superpowers. For example, TNCs can be used by superpowers to maintain global influence through dominating economic production, as well as through soft power via glocalisation.

The quality of the evidence used in support was variable. For example, the best candidates used examples such as China’s TNCs playing a neo-colonial role in African nations and Gazprom demonstrating the differing role that state TNCs can play in the development of superpowers.

Weaker answers in lower level 2 had clear knowledge of TNCs and their functions but used this information to describe what TNCs do instead of focusing on the link to their role in increasing economic importance of superpowers.

Successful answers assessed the role that TNCs played but recognised that other factors such as IGOs are used by superpowers to control the flow of trade through trade blocs for example. They also recognised that despite TNCs often being independent entities, their roles were largely determined by government decisions and their openness to TNCs acting within their borders.

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 line graph showing changes in unemployment rates in Hartlepool and England. Responses tended to focus on the financial crisis and the role of migration. Candidates struggled to extend their responses to obtain the full 3 marks, which could have been gained by linking the financial crisis to the closure of industries so locals struggled to find alternative employment leading to high competition for the jobs that were available.

Question 3 (a) (ii)

Candidates were required to suggest plausible reasons as to why Hartlepool's unemployment rates are likely to remain higher than those in England.

Whilst there was no expectation that candidates had studied Hartlepool, the strongest answers recognised that Hartlepool was located in the north-east of England and as such the role of deindustrialisation may have played a role in the high levels of unemployment. Other answers included key concepts such as the north/south divide or application of the core/periphery model to explain the variation in infrastructure, funding etc. which could have led to persistently high unemployment rates shown in the figure.

Question 3 (b)

Candidates are required by the specification to know their local place in depth.

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

Weaker candidates struggled to be explicit regarding how key changes such as migration and government policies had impacted characteristics such as education levels, ethnicity, deprivation or life expectancy in their local areas. As such these responses rarely achieved higher than level 2. In addition, a candidate's local place was often unclear with largely generic statements which could have been applied to any location.

Centres and candidates are encouraged to ensure that the local place has an appropriate scale. Answers which focused on 'London' for example, struggled to clearly explain the international and global influences, and instead relied on concepts such as globalisation to suggest how London as a whole had changed.

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 whether successful regeneration always resulted in changing the perception of an area. The best candidates clearly outlined that regeneration could be assessed through a range of different measures. These answers then used these measures to provide a structured response which reviewed which measures would be used by the different range of stakeholders involved in the regeneration process.

The majority of candidates took a case study approach in answering this question, with Cornwall being a popular example.

Level 1 answers tended to show 'isolated elements' of geographical knowledge, with generic sweeping statements with a limited understanding of the key concepts of perception or how to judge success.

Level 2 answers tended to use the case studies to describe the key changes that had been bought about through regeneration of the area.

A good approach which often reached level 3 was to evaluate how much perception had changed at the end of each case study that was introduced. In this way, candidates were able to build towards a partially coherent conclusion.

Level 4 answers demonstrated understanding that perception of success varies with stakeholders and as such regeneration projects are very unlikely to be seen as successful by all stakeholders involved. Successful examples included Cornwall’s range of projects, Tower Hamlets, Glasgow and Kings Cross.

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 two contrasting population pyramids for Northumberland and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Responses tended to use information from the resource as a springboard, focussing on Newcastle's university or the rurality of Northumberland. Candidates struggled to extend their responses to obtain the full 3 marks, which could have been gained by selecting a broader starter reason such as migration and then gaining the additional marks by identifying a reason for the young migrating to Newcastle and the older residents migrating to rural Northumberland.

Question 4 (a) (ii)

Candidates were required to suggest plausible reasons as to why there might be variations in cultural diversity between the two locations.

Whilst there was no expectation that candidates had studied either location, the strongest answers recognised that given the urban nature of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, it could attract migrants from other countries for employment and education, thus increasing the cultural diversity. As a result, the built environment of Newcastle would likely reflect its increasing diversity, resulting in more migrants being attracted. In comparison, Northumberland with its rural context, could lack employment opportunities, resulting in an ageing population.

Weaker candidates tended to repeat information from 4(ai) without suggesting how migration for example could impact the varying cultural diversity. Instead the answers tended to be descriptive or lack a range of ideas, for example, describing different types of food found in a location without considering other plausible reasons.

Question 4 (b)

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

The question expected candidates to explain how regional and national influences affecting their local place. The best candidates had specific government policies for example the role of the Commonwealth Act in creating an ethnically diverse population or through the use of supporting evidence.

Weaker candidates struggled to be explicit regarding how key changes such as migration and government policies had impacted characteristics such as gender, age, life expectancy and migration in their local areas. As such these responses rarely achieved higher than level 2. In addition, candidates' local places were often unclear with largely generic statements which could have been applied to any location.

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 different criteria may be used to measuring the success of change in diverse communities. The best candidates clearly outlined that management of change could be evaluated through a range of criteria. These included economic criteria such as unemployment levels and social criteria such as crime levels. These answers then used these measures to provide a structured response which reviewed which measures would be used by the different range of stakeholders involved in the process.
Level 1 answers often misinterpreted the question and instead introduced criteria that were inappropriate to the scale the question demanded, for example using Human Development Index (HDI).

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 why stakeholders used different criteria because their perceptions of issues and priorities for management do not match. For example original residents of diverse communities are likely to include criteria such as avail lability of affordable housing, is unlikely to align with those of property developers.

Level 4 answers had clear supporting evidence through a range of examples, as well as explaining that determining the level of success varied between national and local stakeholders. Successful examples included redevelopments in Tottenham and Handsworth and the Slough Aspire.

Question 5 (a)

On the whole candidates struggled with this question, as many students focused on explaining the role of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and as such were not able to explain the role that the Geneva Convention plays in protecting human rights.

Candidates often understood that the convention aimed to set out rules for engaging in war. However, candidates struggled to pick up the remaining marks as they lacked geographical understanding of the specific rules laid down or the role of the international court in bringing charges against human rights abusers.

Question 5 (b)

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

Reasons given for the variations in rates of life expectancy increase included the increased availability of medical care and vaccinations in Asia and differences in lifestyles in the developed world. Candidates often recognised that Europe and North America's life expectancy was already high, as such, there were smaller rates of increase to be made. A minority of answers also explained that developed regions needed to tackle issues such as poor diets and smoking in order to further extend life expectancy in these regions.

Many answers did not explain the reasons but gave generic reasons for rapid rates of life expectancy, rather than tailoring the reasons to the countries shown in the resource. Such answers tended to stay in level 2.

A small number of candidates described the trends shown in the resource, rather than recognising the command word of 'explain', as such these candidates were not answering the question set and often failed to pick up marks on the question.

Question 5 (c)

The question expected candidates to explain how IGOs have promoted neo-liberal market and trade policies for economic development.

Many candidates struggled to answer this question effectively as they didn't have a clear understanding of who the IGOs were and as such largely generic reasons were given for promoting trade policies. Candidates should have studied a range of IGOs such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Word Trade Organisation and the roles they play at the global stage.

The best candidates clearly linked the role of World Trade Organisation to the promotion of free trade and were able to explain how this promoted economic development. Other candidates explained how trade blocs could facilitate free trade amongst member states, whilst protecting against external products through tariffs and subsidies.

Question 5 (d)

The question expected candidates to evaluate how far military interventions have helped reduce human rights abuses. Level 2 answers tended to discuss military intervention through a case study approach. Whilst candidates are expected and encouraged to include relevant case studies, it is important that this information is used as supporting evidence rather than a regurgitation of learnt material.

Level 3 answers began to focus on how far military intervention tackled improving human rights and included ideas on why this might have been successful or not successful.

Level 4 answers then evaluated between different examples of military intervention to create a ‘balanced argument', considering why direct military intervention was more or less ineffective in one example than another, and coming to a 'rational supported conclusion'.

Answers that explained different military interventions with limited reference to how they had been successful or unsuccessful in reducing human rights tended to stay in level 2 or low level 3.

Human rights abuses were successfully discussed through examples such Syria, Rwanda and Iraq.

Question 6 (a)

On the whole candidates managed to pick up at least one mark on this question. Most candidates focused on the idea that the emergence of new nation states often results in conflict over territory or resources. 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 lose focus on the question and instead discussed why there may be conflict between nation states, rather than focusing on ‘new nation states’ as the question dictates.

Question 6 (b)

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

Reasons given for the differences in the foreign-born population included high levels of migration from Mexico to the USA to seek employment, the strict migration policy of Australia and the high numbers in Germany due to the mass influx of migrants from the Syrian conflict. Candidates often covered a range of reasons using the countries identified in the resource.

Level 3 candidates were able to recognise the proportionality of the figures shown in the resource and explain the reasons for this.

A small minority of candidates appeared not to use the resource provided and as such gave generic reasons as to why levels of foreign-born varied without explicit reference to countries.

Question 6 (c)

The question expected candidates to explain why governments and NGOs had differing opinions about the growth of tax havens.

Many candidates struggled to answer this question effectively as they didn’t have a clear understanding of the role of tax havens and so failed to explain the different opinions of governments and NGOs. Candidates should have studied the growth of low-tax regimes and how many governments have accepted them but NGOs have raised objections.

The best candidates clearly explained how TNCs used tax havens to increase their profits and as a result governments may well object to the lost taxes but on the whole most governments had accepted tax havens. Other candidates explained why NGOs were against tax havens due to their role in facilitating the widening of economic inequality or failing to pay enough tax.

On the whole this question was not well answered by candidates.

Question 6 (d)

Success here depended on candidates understanding the role nationalism has played in the development in the modern world and how its rise could prevent globalisation. Candidates used a wide range of examples such as Scotland, Catalonia and the USA.

Descriptive answers provided examples of countries which prevented globalisation such as North Korea, with limited understanding of the role of nationalism within this, and these tended to remain in level 2. Top level 3 and level 4 answers gave more comparative and evaluative examples, with a clear argument about how nationalism could or could not prevent globalisation.

The best candidates also used a variety of examples such as Iceland, France and Venezuela to suggest that nationalism could to some extent limit globalisation. Whilst others argued that the dominance of western capitalism made it increasingly difficult for nationalism to truly prevent the spread of globalisation.

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.

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