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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Geography (WGE04) Paper 01

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As last year this was a very small entry so general comments made here need interpreting with particular care.

Once again, the research undertaken by candidates was generally good with an appropriate range of case-studies chosen and good recall shown by many when in the examination hall. Sourcing and referencing was much patchier and, sometimes, the evaluation of the sources was a little naïve. For example not all 'broadsheet' newspapers are reliable and not all Wikipedia entries are inherently unreliable.

The most obvious discriminator that helped distinguish between the successful and less successful reports was how they used the research information on their analysis, how well they pulled together their analysis in their conclusions and, above all, how clearly their reports reflected the question that they were asked to address rather than how carefully their research had followed the pre-release steers.

The introduction should always give the examiner a clear indication that the candidate is focused on the title which will, in almost all circumstances give them something to contest. Weaker reports gave no clue as to what this contestable idea might be and thus could very well have been pre-prepared statements about the topic in general. A useful exercise is to use exemplars to explore how well candidates have addressed the question set in their opening remarks.

Obviously, the lack of an opening focus could also impact on the quality of the analysis. A common and very useful model to follow is to encourage candidates to offer on-going evaluation after each piece of evidence is presented using, whenever possible the keywords or more properly the key contention in the question. This not only helps keep them 'on topic' but also gives some something to pull together in their conclusion. These were too often not much more than repetitions of earlier statements couched in assertive language without drawing sufficiently on the evidence actually proffered earlier in the reports.

There are a number of devices that centres might wish to employ to help their candidates improve their analysis. Briefly stated these involve equipping candidates with the tools of recognising variation at a number of scales, both spatial and temporal, and recognising that different 'players' will very often have different goals and very different access to power.

Spatial variation is the central business of the subject so it would be useful if candidates were more alert to its impact. To offer a randomly chosen example, the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has the highest mean income of any UK administrative area but also has some of the most deprived streets in London. Temporal variation is no less significant; if asked about the costs of the Tohoku tsunami event in 2011 it is reasonable to remark that one of the most dramatic consequences, the inundation of the Fukushima nuclear facility is an on-going cost that cannot be estimated at this time.

There are many other flexible concepts that would help candidates develop arguments and counter-arguments in their approach to report writing. Candidates should spend a little more time on deconstructing key words so that, for example, they offer a view of how one might measure 'ineffective governance' (Option 1); how one might judge 'most important' (Option 2); how one might estimate 'greater cultural diversity' (Option 3), or, finally, how one could evaluate 'the most serious treat' (Option 4). These phrases, very often, provide

the focus for the report and failure to identify them is the single most apparent cause of weaker reports.