Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Geography (WGE02)
Paper 1 Geographical Investigations

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Introduction

This was the ninth sitting of WGE02 Geographical Investigations and whilst the entry remains relatively small, this year's entry still had a particularly challenging backdrop against the ongoing global pandemic.   This continues to affect patterns of learning as well as opportunities to collect first- hand primary fieldwork data. Those that did enter this series are once again, to be commended on their achievements and resilience.

As in previous years the fieldwork in Q3 this series was somewhat mixed – but this to be expected for this particular group of learners given the likely opportunity cost of not being able to do much fieldwork. Once again, there is confusion around the stages in the enquiry sequence (particularly presentation and analysis) which is essential for a successful outcome in this exam.   Those that focussed too much on describing the data collection rather than what the questions required, answers were as always, self-penalising. There were also some very good fieldwork answers which were judgemental and reflective (Q3d) but for this series these were very much in the minority.

The success of this "familiar" part of the fieldwork (all of Q3) really does depend on how suitable the fieldwork is that is set-up by the teachers and school itself. It is of course recognised that for this cohort in particular it would have especially challenging during the 2021-2022 period.   However, Centres are reminded to keep the fieldwork aims both **manageable** and **achievable**.   It's simply too ambitious and unanswerable, e.g. those students who find themselves investigation the impacts of London's Crossrail, or similar large-scale projects which are, as yet, incomplete. Similar examples exist from the locations that schools are based in different cities. Centres would be well advised to review the manageability and appropriateness of their fieldwork, particularly whether it is actually possible to reach a realistic conclusion give the location, scale and data collection methods.

As in the previous series, most candidates managed to answer all questions on the examination paper and few 'blanks' were encountered.
Those relatively new to teaching this part of the specification may be reminded:
- The paper totals to 60 marks and candidates are given 90 minutes to complete the paper.
- This exam paper consists of 5 questions, with the last two being paired options. In most cases each question is slightly ramped in demand with longer, cognitively higher questions at the end of each sub-section.
- Questions 1 and 2 test a mixture of AO1 and AO2 skills, whereas Question 3 (compulsory), 4 (Option 1) and 5 (Option 2) are based largely on fieldwork which is examined as an AO3 skill for this particular exam.
- Neither the Sample Assessment Materials nor the any of the live examination papers have ever used the command word 'describe'. Candidates should be reminded that there are few marks for just

descriptions, and description should be used as a means to an end i.e. leading to an explanation, not an end in itself.

Overall Impression

The overall impression given by examiners was that the paper has discriminated well between candidates and has proved accessible. However, examiners did provide some observations in terms of candidate performance which centres should be mindful in future preparation of candidates for this exam. These included:

- Breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the unit specification varied considerably, even with this relatively small sample of candidates. There was variation especially in knowledge and understanding of the physical geography on Q1 with many lacking the terminology and confidence to deal especially with both Q1b and Q1c. Once again, many also found it difficult to understand the command "examine", failing to recognise for example that other factors or processes can influence the formation of coastal landforms.
- Although stimulus response material was provided some candidates are still not applying their knowledge accurately or relevantly. Many candidates still have problems in using evidence directly from the resource (an AO2 skill) in order to be able to generate a successful answer. Questions which use the command "Identify" e.g. 2(a)(i) are common. A number of candidates incorrectly described the trend in the housing data, rather than writing about a problem.
- Some candidates had a poor knowledge and understanding of the fieldwork questions, especially Q3d when there was a tendency to write generically around fieldwork and their data collection experiences, including some of the ways fieldwork was followed-up. Instead, they need to give explicit focus on the part of the enquiry pathway that is being examined – in this the links to the title or question. For this question, some failed to get into the L2 or L3 mark band as their answers were simply too basic and non-specific in terms of sampling design, equipment and / or place.
- In addition, there was often a lack of fluency and structure in the longer answers, many candidates just describing and explaining, rather than a focus on assessment or evaluation when appropriate. The AOs (Assessment Objectives) remain very important for this exam as in previous series.

Question by question feedback

Question 1 had a focus on the Crowded Coasts part of the specification (Topic 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). As in previous series, these questions are about responding to the resources which have been provided, i.e. the Sediment Cell diagram / model. As recommended in previous exam feedback, rehearsing how to respond to photographs, data, diagrams and maps is an important skill to encourage prior to taking the exam, for example by using these resources as starters at the beginning of lessons. This will give confidence and competence allowing candidates to deal with features from a map, patterns, trends, anomalies as well as interpret photographic

evidence. Q1aii was challenging for many. There were lots of answers referring to non-transport processes.

Q1c also presented a challenge for a number candidates with a lack of clear understanding of processes and the link to landforms (2.3.2). The mark scheme identifies these as AO1. It also indicates that these ideas would be particularly important in respect of AO2, i.e. the interpretation, assessment and judgment as well as recognition of the human activity for example (e.g. coastal management) that also impacts on the development of coastal landforms.

Only a minority of candidates attempted an "examination", i.e. some sort of evaluative assessment. Instead, may saw it more as a case-study question, in which case their answers ended up too descriptive. Costal erosion was written about but often lacking the terminology, more technical details as well as systems "overview" required to deliver an examination.

Question 2, by comparison had a focus on the Urban Problems part of the specification (Topic 2.4.4). Again, this threw up some similar difficulties for some candidates as in Q1. The vast majority, however, were able to use graphical data in Figure 2 to identify possible problems caused by the increasing house price inflation.

Q2a was generally more successful than Q2a. Many candidates were able to correctly write a reasoned explanation about why there are gated communities, often giving lower levels of crime and security as part of their answer. On occasions, some candidates here provided far too much detail. These are not case-study questions, merely questions requiring a statement of explanation showing some development through the reason chosen.

In Q2b the answers were mixed with some candidates confused by the services aspect, instead thinking it was more to do with housing affordability. Whilst there may be some overlap, not all that was written was relevant. Clearly the words "services" requires more than one example to be provided as evidence. As in previous years, the best answers had 2-3 well-chosen urban places with a good level of detail, e.g. supporting information in the form of numerical data.

The problem for most however, which acted as a barrier to L3, was that they failed to evaluate the importance. Only a few students "took-on" the question by perhaps suggesting the education or health for instance might create the most severe impacts, but that the level of impacts would be controlled by other factors such as the wealth of a city's population. Examiners were not expecting too much writing on a comparative judgement, but it would have usefully been included in the conclusion allowing access to L3. Even a short, single sentence, would have provided enough evidence for the evaluation.

Question 3 is always the compulsory fieldwork question, examining the fieldwork that the candidates has done themselves (the "familiar" fieldwork).
As in previous series, Q3a is usually rooted towards the start of the enquiry sequence. The majority of candidates were able to provide partial explanations around secondary data although there were many who did not

give sufficient depth, detail or development. Others simply provided a definition of secondary data as part of their response which was not credit-worthy.

Q3b was mostly well understood, with the majority providing an appropriate quantitative technique. Some were self-penalising in terms of not providing sufficient development of ideas, therefore getting only score 1 or 2 out of a possible maximum of 3. Other wrote about multiple techniques but only one could be credited. Note that interview with open questions were not considered as appropriate in terms of a quantitative technique.

Q3c demonstrated mixed successes since many were unclear as to the difference between analysis, presentation and data collection. Examiners accepted that data presentation is a relevant pre-cursor to analysis, but too many insisted on writing about what fieldwork they had undertaken. Again, it is key that as part of the preparation for fieldwork, centres are encouraged to share the planning and decision-making process with students so that they understand both the "why" and the "how", even if this is taught as a simulation or using virtual fieldwork. Centres should also reinforce the different stages provided in Appendix 2 of the specification.

Q3d remains the longest question on this paper. As in previous series there were big challenges for some candidates, who still struggle with the command 'evaluate'. Even at AS, this exam does expect a good understanding of both scientific method and fieldwork principles. Yet a lack of awareness of the route to enquiry was often troubling, especially in the context of reflecting on the outcomes against the original title / question. This was all too often evidenced by candidates describing the wrong part of the enquiry sequence. The focus for this question was both stage 91) and stage (7). For this question in particular, candidates are still finding it troublesome to evaluate, preferring instead to list and describe fieldwork techniques and events that they can remember. Remember that the AOs are rewarding for this evaluation and analysis skill, rather than the skill of (fieldwork) recall which is characterised by description.   In Q3 the fieldwork questions cannot simply be describe, and candidates should be reminded of this when they develop their style of writing.
However, given the challenges of Covid-19 over the past 2 years centres and students should be applauded in the way that they were able to provide meaningful fieldwork and virtual fieldwork experiences.

Questions 4 and 5. These are the final, parallel optional aspects of this paper, where candidates can either chose to answer coasts or urban-based question. As in previous series, these were some of the most successful parts of the paper for many candidates, providing good answers that were detailed and specific and that matched the questions set.

As in previous series, Q4a and 5a produced some excellent results from the majority, being able to make sense of the interview plan and recognising the range of advantages it offers. Just stating "clear" or "useful", however, was not enough to get credit without any development of why this was an advantage.

Q4b and 5b were often misunderstood. Crowd-sourced refers to a large and undefined network of people who are predominantly online. It is referred to in Appendix 1: Geographical skills. Most students though it meant "talking" to people, rather being using internet communities online to answer research, survey or feedback questions.

Q4Ci-iii and Q5ci-iii were mostly successful showing how these number skills must have been practised allowing confidence in the exam. A minority of students however failed to accurately plot the data in the scatter graph.