GCSE

Geography A

General Certificate of Secondary Education **1986**

Report on the Units

June 2008

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CONTENTS

GCSE Geography A (1986)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Chief Examiner's Report

General Comments

The sixth examination of the specification with its three different components proved to be a genuine test of candidates' geographical knowledge, understanding and skills application. The successful candidates had learned a comprehensive body of knowledge that they could use to support their understanding of key geographical concepts. They had also acquired the ability to apply their geographical skills both in practical situations and through map and data interpretation.

The comprehensive nature of the examining system allowed all candidates to demonstrate their strengths and there were many excellent examples of high calibre geography. Many centres have obviously put a great amount of time and effort into preparing their candidates and they are to be commended on this.

This report on the examination is based upon comments from the many examiners and moderators who were responsible for judging the work of candidates. Hopefully its use to teachers will be the advice it contains which they can pass on to future candidates, so that they can also maximise their examination performance.

Candidates, particularly in the higher tier papers, coped well with the questions which were marked by using levels criteria. Centres are reminded that all case study sections in papers 1 and 2 and extended answers in papers 3 and 4 are marked in this way. The work done at INSET meetings to illustrate how the marking criteria are applied has proved very valuable. Many candidates included place-specific information in their case study examples and therefore accessed the highest level. Where candidates are still writing vague, general answers they need to be taught how such answers can be improved. The use of case study templates is illustrated in the revision guide which has been published to support the specification (see below for details).

Although the examination system is perpetual it must be remembered that in each year the examination is a unique experience for that group of candidates. Consequently the following advice may be useful to candidates about to embark on their final preparation for the 2009 examination.

- Obey the rubric instructions in paper 2;
- Read each question carefully;
- Pay particular attention to key words which are often emboldened, also 'command' words and words which set the context or scale of the answer;
- Recognise any change of emphasis within the question focus;
- Recognise that questions are usually based around a theme which will provide a link between sections;
- Do not repeat the same answer in different sections - such answers do not gain double credit;
- Be precise when using information from maps, graphs and diagrams;
- Relate questions to examples and identify appropriate case studies which have been learned;
- Learn the details of case studies to give them authenticity;
- Use the number of marks available for a section as a guide to the number of points needed;
- Develop ideas and extend answers in order to increase the marks which can be awarded;
- Re-read and check the answers if there is time at the end of the examination;

- Ensure that the correct equipment is brought to the examination including pen, pencil, ruler, rubber and calculator. (Centres should ensure that some loose-leaf paper is available for purposes such as measuring).

The following books have been published by Hodder Murray to accompany the specification:

- A New Introduction to Geography for OCR Specification A
  ISBN 0-340-74707-2
- A New Introduction to Geography for OCR Specification A Revision Guide
  ISBN 0-340-87643-3
- A New Introduction to Geography for OCR Specification A (Foundation edition)
  ISBN 0-340-88674-9

Some centres continue to ignore instructions concerning the examination. These are a great cause for concern from examiners as it makes their task more difficult. Two requests from examiners of paper 2 in particular to speed up their marking process are:

1   Insist that candidates record the number of the questions that they have answered on the front page of the answer booklet.
2   Attach any extension sheets to the main answer booklet with a treasury tag. Do not merely insert loose papers inside the answer booklet.

1986/01 Paper 1 (Foundation)

General comments

The paper was considered appropriate for the ability range of foundation candidates. There were plenty of opportunities for the C and D grade candidates to demonstrate their abilities, and the resources and structured tasks provided all candidates with the opportunity to achieve positively to some extent, as candidates were able to access information from the diagrams, maps, photos and graphs provided. There were examples of well constructed answers across the paper.

Many candidates achieved more than half marks and the range of marks was very wide, suggesting that it differentiated very well. In general marks were a little higher than last year, although there remains a core of very weak candidates with exceptionally poor linguistic skills and little geographical knowledge and understanding. Overall, the skills questions were generally well answered and the case studies were tackled better than in previous years. However, place specific detail was still lacking in quite a number of candidates' answers, which would enable them to reach level 3. The stimulus material in all the questions was utilised well by candidates.

Pleasingly, candidates seem to be moving away from one-word answers and writing in sentences. Bullet points, adopting the notion of one mark for each point, are less evident than in the past. Level response marking seems to have reduced the use of bullet points now as more centres grasp that quality not quantity is rewarded in the long answer questions. There were a pleasing number of good quality, detailed, case studies this year. Candidates are getting better at giving a named example but still need to focus on making their answers 'place-specific' in order to score at level 3 on the long answer questions.

Fewer candidates seem to be leaving the case study questions blank and many are trying to answer the question set rather than writing all they know in the hope of getting some marks. Candidates it seems are being advised to at least make general points even where they have not revised/retained the name of an example and/or specific facts about it. Whilst the 'natural hazards' case study answers were often very detailed, the 'National Parks conflicts' case studies tended to be vague. The 'energy production' case study question sometimes included good place specific references but the 'LEDC migration' case study question seldom did so.

As in recent years there was little evidence of candidates being entered for this tier who would have been better entered for the higher tier. More candidates appear to be using appropriate geographical terminology.

It appeared that all candidates had enough time to complete the paper, those sections that were left blank were done so due to the candidate being unable to answer the question, or not possessing the motivation to do so, as opposed to not having enough time.

There were several examples where no responses were given, for example, the graphs and completion tasks. Do pupils always check through their script when they think that they have finished? This along with the development of simple answers would do more than anything else to gain more marks.

Comments follow on specific questions:

Question 1

(a)(i) Most candidates could identify correctly the three coastal landforms from the photograph. Occasionally candidates indicated they thought there was a sand spit and occasionally a bay was wrongly identified – the features may well be at one end of a bay but there is insufficient evidence in the photograph for this to be an accurate response.

(ii) Most candidates correctly identified that the features were formed by erosion although some made no response, possibly as they had missed the question because there were no lines on which to respond.

(iii) There were relatively few candidates referring to the actual processes of erosion but those who did so tended to show good understanding and used appropriate terminology. Many answers were simply expressed yet valid answers, identifying the sequence of cave and arch formation, followed by the roof of the arch collapsing. There were a few misconceptions suggesting that the stack has been built up from deposited material, or that the stack has physically moved away from the cliff. Some candidates linked erosion erroneously with tides coming in rather than waves. Some diagrams were included, but only on rare occasions did they enhance the quality of the answers.

(b)(i) Most candidates could speculate that the houses would not have been built so close to the cliff edge but relatively few could link the material on the beach to its erosional source (ie that the cliff must have slumped or fallen onto the beach.)

(ii) Better responses identified the soft/clay material as a factor coupled with strong wave action or lack of cliff protection. There were some candidates who referred only to tides.

(iii) Some candidates scored full marks for a simple list, providing the appropriate terms were used – eg sea wall, gabions, groynes, revetments, rock armour etc. Descriptions were acceptable, however they required some clarity, and when describing sea walls for example many candidates failed to convey any clear sense of what the wall would be constructed from and/or where it would be placed (ie on/next to the cliff).

(c) There were some full mark answers for this case-study where the candidates were given a wide scope of natural disasters to choose from. There were good answers with place specific details (eg death tolls/dates) of earthquakes such as Kobe and volcanic eruptions such as Mt St Helens. River floods tended to be less place specific, and thus generally less high scoring, though good answers were seen on the Mississippi and Bangladesh floods. Weaker candidates gave lists of briefly expressed general knowledge such as 'people died, homes were lost', etc limiting their answers to level 1. Candidates need to understand how easy it is to link points to score Level 2 such as 'houses collapsed killing people inside' and `gas pipes were broken leading to fires`. Relatively few candidates used recent and/or local examples, though there were a small number of specific answers relating to the flooding in Boscastle and Sheffield, the latter possibly through personal experience. Some candidates used the recent China earthquake, but were generally unable to go beyond simple statements, probably picked up from news bulletins rather than through real study.

Question 2

(a)(i)   Almost all attempts were correct, although there was a significant number of non-responses, which again suggests some candidates are not reading all the instructions/questions.

(ii)   Most candidates observed correctly that the number of squatters had increased and many could give appropriate figures to indicate the magnitude of the change. Some candidates had not read the question carefully and lost marks by only describing the change in total population, or by using figures prior to 1980.

(iii)   Many candidates scored the mark but some only wrote the word 'deaths' which is not appropriate. Some gave numbers, such as 4 million, whilst others gave 'infant mortality' as their response, which is only part of the death rate.

(iv)   Most candidates could show their knowledge of the `migration` element by giving an alternative word such as `move`, and better candidates also showed their knowledge of `rural` and/or `urban` settlements to gain full marks. Weaker candidates just changed the word order and used the same terms as the question stem, whilst some expressed their answers in terms of an international migration which is inappropriate.

(v)   There were few answers scoring more than Level 1. Most candidates could identify the `less/more jobs` angle but few were able to suggest what type of jobs might be on offer in the city such as 'in factories/offices' and hardly any were able to give place specific information. Where candidates did write about both pushes and pulls it was usually a simple list of opposites such as `more/less jobs`, `no/better education` which cannot access extra credit. The overuse of the vague 'better' was also far too common – candidates need to expand on how the feature is better eg `piped water`, `higher paid jobs` etc.
Far too many expressed this migration as if it were an international one with Mexicans going to California being a common example. Simple points at level 1 could be scored from these answers but candidates need to study urbanisation in the context of a named example of internal migration in an LEDC to cities such as Rio de Janeiro or Mumbai.

(b)(i)   Many candidates scored full marks for straightforward observations of the photos. Weaker candidates could not describe the problems with the `shacks` beyond the idea that they are 'poorly-built'. Here candidates could have gained marks by saying what they are made of, or that they could fall down or let in rain etc.

(ii)   Some candidates who had scored well on the identification of the problems in part (i) gave less clear ideas about the solutions or failed to say how the authorities would be involved. There were few ideas about municipal housing being built and phrases like 'build better shelters/houses' did not identify who should do this or how. There were some good responses about self-help schemes and the donation of building materials and some very simply expressed but ultimately valid ideas about giving them food and/or clean water.

Question 3

(a)(i) Most candidates are familiar with this simple skill and scored both marks, although there were some very weak, inaccurate and careless attempts, drawn without rulers. A minority of candidates did not realise that the whole of the bar needs to be shaded and the were a few very weak candidates who began each segment at zero. Again there were some non-responses suggesting that candidates do not spot these completion type tasks because there is not a set of lines to write on and they are not reading their examination paper carefully enough.

(ii) This was generally poorly answered, although some candidates did realise that the majority of their clothes and electrical goods are being made in LEDCs such as China leading to loss of manufacturing jobs in UK and some were aware that manufacturing has become highly mechanised in order to reduce labour costs. Many answers related the change only to changes in the other segments (ie the increase in tertiary employment) which is a true statement but not a reason for decline in the secondary sector. There was a common misconception with question that the reason why there was a reduction in secondary industry, was a result of immigrants working in the UK for lower wages.

(iii) As in part (ii) it was rare to see good answers relating to demand for /growth of specific services – most candidates stated that it was because people were better educated or wanted more pay – a superficial answer which neither explains the increase of jobs in the tertiary sector nor takes into account the preponderance of low-skilled, low-pay jobs within it.

(b)(i) Some candidates knew that shoe-shining is a service/tertiary activity but far too many gave `primary` as their response, which suggests that they equate this sector with low skilled work rather than the extraction of raw materials.

(ii) Most candidates scored at least one mark for the idea that the boys would not have a good education/qualifications, and others for stating that there were few other jobs available/high unemployment levels. However few could make any further points such as the higher demand for services like this from a larger and more affluent urban population, or the relatively low cost to set up such activities.

(c)(i) Most candidates could give the name of a fossil fuel or one of its derivatives such as petrol or diesel. A few weak candidates simply wrote the words 'fossil fuels` again and some said `nuclear` which may illustrate a common misconception about that form of energy.

(ii) Most candidates gained credit on the idea that fossil fuels are finite and will run out. Better candidates also understood, perhaps due to recent experience with petrol prices, that they would become more expensive, and others referred successfully to global warming/greenhouse gases.

(iii) This was generally poorly answered although better candidates identified the unreliability of wind/solar etc and/or the negative response to the installation of such structures as wind turbines. Far too many wrote about our dependence on fossil fuels which wasn't sufficiently relevant to the question set. Very few identified the limiting siting issues of renewable form of energy.

(d) There were some valid, but rarely place-specific, answers about coal mine closures and the effects of unemployment on health and other local businesses. There were equally valid but limited responses about wind farms, usually relating to local impacts such as visual pollution or noise. Where candidates chose nuclear power (eg Chernobyl) their answers were rarely relevant to the question but focussed on radiation, cancers and deaths, all of which may be more memorable and exciting for candidates to study, but not relevant to this case study.

Question 4

(a)(i) Many candidates circled the correct response although some opted for the idea of banning buildings completely.

(ii)   The Lake District was the most common correct response, and the Peak District was often written despite the question stem requiring two OTHER National Parks. Some candidates only gave an incomplete name such as 'Beacons' or `Moors' or `Pembrokeshire` while some, in the absence of knowledge, tried to give local beauty spots such as Cannock Chase.

(b)(i) Candidates generally scored at least two marks. The most common errors were giving "Millers Dale" which is not a settlement or stating that the limestone could be moved by river/air or motorway, none of which are based on map evidence. Those who had seen the proximity of main roads sometimes gave highly unlikely forms of road transport such as cars or buses.

(ii)   Better candidates usually scored on the idea of more employment and/or greater profit for the quarry owners. Those who focussed on the availability of more limestone could adequately state what this might be used for, indeed many wrongly suggesting it would be used as a fuel.

(iii) Some candidates gained credit for the visual impact of a `bigger hole in the ground`. There were weak answers about `noise` or `dust` which needed to be elaborated (from what? or causing what effect?). The weakest candidates clearly thought that limestone is a fuel which is burnt to give off carbon dioxide.

(iv)   Whilst most candidates could make reference to beautiful/natural scenery better prepared candidates scored full marks by expanding on this, giving examples of natural scenery and/or activities likely to be undertaken or referring to the tranquillity they afford. Very few expressed ideas of proximity to large urban populations or the ease of access, with motorways close to the edge of some National Parks.

(c)   It was rare to see a level 3 answer as few were able to give any place-specific details such as the Hope Valley or Castleton. Some candidates did not relate the conflicts to the actions of tourists at all, referring solely to military use or quarrying for example, and in some cases describing conflicts between the such non tourist related activities. Where they did this it was often at a simple level such as 'tourists make noise/drop litter/leave gates open' which merely stated problems rather than describing conflicts between tourists and other land users, thus failing to access Level 2 marks. Most candidates who successfully wrote about conflicts, achieving level 2, focussed on tourism and farming. Many knew there was a conflict between the military and tourists but did not adequately describe this conflict.

1986/02 Paper 2 (Higher)

General Comments

The paper allowed widespread differentiation. There were many excellent answers in which candidates demonstrated a thorough grasp of geographical principles and a detailed knowledge of place specific case studies to support their argument. The mean mark for the paper was slightly higher than in 2007. However, it was suggested by examiners that some schools might still be entering candidates for the higher tier who may be better suited to the foundation papers. A strong characteristic of weaker candidates is vagueness in many of their answers, especially where case study knowledge is required. If candidates are to reach level 3 in case study sections there is a requirement that their answer is place specific in addition to being comprehensive. A good way to test this requirement is for candidates to read their answer and 'cover up' the name of the case study. A suitable answer will be recognisable about a particular place or event through the detailed references being made.

Where case studies were on familiar topics candidates scored well, as in questions 3 and 4. However, where case studies were not so well rehearsed, as in questions 5 and 6, answers were sometimes inappropriate or lacked detail.

Examiners felt that some weaker candidates did not understand what was required in some questions because they did not take notice of key words such as 'natural environment' and 'farming system', or they did not understand terminology used in the question, for example 'diversification'.

A number of misconceptions were apparent in the answers of some candidates. They did not know the difference between the cross section of a valley and the river channel. They also confused cross section with long profile of the valley. Some candidates mixed up 'push' and 'pull' migration factors. Others did not distinguish between conflicts and problems which result from tourists in National Parks.

The following advice may help candidates to improve the general standard of answer on this paper.

- Aim to develop each idea so that their answer does not emerge as a list of similar points.
- Read the entire question carefully before they begin their answer. Decide what is an appropriate case study and fulfils the requirements of the question.
- Take note of the key word, which may be emboldened, so that the answer is relevant to the question.
- Use the mark allocation as a guide to the amount of detail or number of responses required.
- Use resources such as graphs and diagrams carefully in order to make use of the information they include.
- Plan your time carefully as there was some evidence that candidates were rushing to complete their final answer or leaving it incomplete.

Questions 2, 3, 5 and 8 were more popular in each section. It is inevitable that given choice some topics in the specification will be more appealing to candidates than others. Nearly all candidates answered their four questions in numerical order and progressed through the four sections from A to D. There was little evidence of any attempt to evaluate questions before starting to answer them or to make rough plans for answers. Candidates are again advised to read through the whole paper before they begin their answers in order to pick out their best-known topics to start with. Also they should plan their answer in order to check relevance to the

question before it is too late. Generally candidates scored highest on questions 1 and 2 and lowest on questions 5 and 6.

Very few candidates infringed the rubric requirement; however this breach of regulations tended to be centre specific. Candidates must be informed of the rubric as part of their preparation for the examination, particularly as there is no rubric requirement on paper 4. Time management may have been an issue for some candidates who appeared rushed in writing their fourth answer. Some candidates also lost marks by mis-reading or misinterpreting sections and consequently writing irrelevant answers. For example they explained why China has a high birth rate in question 3, and described the causes of rapid industrialization in question 5

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

(a)(i) This was answered correctly by most candidates who used the scale accurately. Some candidates did not use the scale but guessed the value, usually stating 30 or 35 cumecs.

(ii) This was frequently answered incorrectly. Too many candidates were confused about the direction in which the river was flowing and thought that tributaries lead off the main river. The Kielder reservoir was also often given as a reason for the lower flow at Rede Bridge. There was little reference to drainage areas or the evidence in the isohyets; in fact where the latter were considered they were often confused with contours. Many candidates mistakenly focussed their answer on velocity rather than discharge.

(iii) Many candidates understood that the reservoir would manage or reduce the flow at Tarset, but failed to gain the second mark available.

(b)(i) Identification of the landforms was usually correct, but surprisingly there were candidates who could identify neither of the features.

(ii) This was badly answered and few scored over half marks. Most candidates wrote at great length about the changes to the river channel rather than the valley and, although their knowledge of characteristics of the upper and middle courses was sound, generally they did not answer the question. Those who considered the valley discussed it in terms of the river not flowing so fast in the middle course as the land was not so steep, thus referring to the long profile of the river, not the cross section of the valley. Some candidates did gain credit for mentioning the changes in erosion processes, but descriptions of the cross-section changes in the valley were very limited. More able candidates described the changes well, but found it difficult to explain them. A small minority of able candidates only suggested vertical and lateral erosion. Diagrams were sometimes used but rarely well.

(c) Nearly all candidates selected an ox-bow lake and the question differentiated well. Many candidates showed good understanding of the formation process and scored high marks with effective, annotated diagrams. However, some answers were only worth marks in level 1 for statements such as 'the meander is cut off'. A surprisingly large number of weaker candidates reversed erosion and deposition on outer and inner bends. Vague references to erosion on the meander bend would have been improved and worth a mark in level 2 if the part of the bend where erosion occurs and why it occurs here had been stated. Similarly, the neck of the meander narrowing was often explained or shown clearly on a diagram, but detail in terms of the fact that the river breaks through in time of flood, was often missing. Few candidates explained why the ends of the old meander become sealed off. Candidates who wrote about levees or floodplain scored less well.

Question 2

(a)(i) Most candidates recognised the two features correctly but some stated X was an arc. A few candidates thought that X was a cave and Y a stack.

(ii) The question differentiated well and there were many excellent explanations of the formation of a stack, referring in sequence to cave and arch formation and subsequent collapse of the arch.

(b)(i) Many candidates recognised the cliff top houses. There was less reference to other ideas such as slumping or collapse. Few recognised that the process of slumping had occurred and indicated rapid erosion. The evidence of 'rocks on the beach' was not enough to gain

credit as it could have been referring to material moved there by the sea. Some candidates thought the large blocks on the shore had originally formed part of the cliff rather than recognising that they were remnants of protection measures.

(ii) Many candidates scored full marks easily. There were many references to impacts on houses or property, the need to move away and difficulty in selling a house or getting insurance. There were also detailed references to the impact on tourism, farmers, roads and other businesses. There were also many references to the cost of protection schemes and the possible conflicts they would bring. Candidates' case study knowledge came in useful here as well as in part (c).

(c) The vast majority of candidates focussed on the Holderness coast. There were many excellent accounts which included much place specific detail. The answers comprised developed statements about how gabions, groynes, revetments and sea walls work; these statements scored marks at levels 2 and 3. Many candidates wrote at great length about why the area they had studied actually needed some form of protection and what exactly was being protected. They also described the effect that groynes often produced further down the coast. Neither of these was required by the question. Distinguishing features of different methods, such as 'sea walls deflect the waves and are solid so actually prevent the waves from reaching the cliff', 'rip raps absorb the waves' energy so they have less force with which to attack the cliff' were clearly stated by able candidates. By comparison, the answers of weaker candidates tended to be very brief with mere mention of the type of defence and then often repeated statements as to how they actually worked in reducing the effects of rapid erosion. Most just stated that 'defences take the force of the waves', or 'stops the waves hitting the cliff'.

Question 3

(a)(i) This question was well answered although a minority candidates quoted incorrect figures as they had not read the question properly and stated figures for 2005.Another weakness of some answers was the failure to focus on change.

(ii) Most candidates showed a good understanding of reasons for a falling death rate and wrote comprehensive answers covering a wide range of causes, focussed on health care, food supply and aid.

(iii) This was also well answered. However, weaker candidates merely stated the converse of their answers in part (ii) such as a decline in health care. The most common suggestions were drought, famine, war and disease generally, or a specific disease such as HIV/AIDS.

(iv) Population dynamics has been well taught by centres and most candidates stated far more than the three reasons required here.

(b) Almost without exception, candidates chose China's one child policy. Very occasionally candidates chose to write about Kerala in India. On the whole, answers were detailed, but many candidates spent overlong on the background for the need for the policy and an evaluation of its effects. Although this showed a solid understanding of the whole issue, marks were only awarded for the answers that met the requirements of the question. At best it was a waste of candidates' time, but it could have had more serious consequences as some candidates hardly focussed on describing attempts. Candidates needed to give details of the benefits or incentives given by the government, the role of the 'granny police' etc to gain marks in level 2. Weak responses were characterised by statements that were too general, such as 'give the people incentives or withdraw their privileges' or 'the authorities killed every second child'.

Question 4

(a)(i) Many candidates scored full marks, but a significant minority scored zero because, even though they knew the correct factors they described them from the angle of 'pull' factors, which was not asked for in the question.

(ii) The question differentiated well. There was scope here for many ideas and candidates expressed them well. Answers ranged from very simplistic to those which explored in depth the impact of the loss of people with skills. An error from some candidates was a focus on the closure of rural services as if the question was focussing on rural depopulation in MEDCs.

(b) This was correctly answered by 99% of candidates..

(c) The majority of candidates scored high marks easily on this section. By using the two photographs there were plenty of stimuli for ideas, or they used their own knowledge.

(d) The case study differentiated well with some candidates giving excellent, place specific accounts of improvements, usually in South American cities such as Rochina. There were many references to self help schemes. Many excellent answers provided detail regarding building materials, water tanks on the roof to collect rainwater, the fact the people themselves dug the ditches for the government-supplied pipes etc. Some candidates made the mistake of writing over-detailed introductions to the required answer, which then tended to lack the detail required as the candidates felt they had already written a large amount and, by that stage, had probably forgotten exactly what the question had asked. Vague answers referring just to the building of schools was only worth a mark in level 1. Those candidates who extended this idea to the importance of education in obtaining jobs that would bring in a steady income to further improve quality of living standards, gained a mark in level 2.Weaker candidates could do little more than produce a list about giving the inhabitants 'better houses, water, health care, education etc.

Question 5

(a)(i) Most candidates answered this question successfully. However, it exemplifies the importance of reading the question carefully. It asked for a difference and similarity in the *change* in the employment structure. So candidates who wrote that 'the percentage employed in primary is always higher in Egypt', missed the point that the question was about change.

(ii) There was a wide discrepancy in the quality of answers to this question. There were some excellent developed pieces of writing about the impacts of foreign competition on the primary and secondary sectors, which demonstrated a good understanding of the situation. Other excellent answers recognised the effects of mechanisation on the percentage employment in primary and secondary industries. Another detailed focus was on the fact that as income and standard of living have improved in MEDCs there has been an increase in demand for consumer goods, which has resulted in a growth in the retail sector. The need for more services to maintain a technological lifestyle was also a factor discussed by the more able candidates. The reasons for the growth of the tertiary sector were generally less convincing. Many candidates simply referred to high wages or good qualifications and ignored the expansion of sectors such as health care, education, retailing and tourism. Another common answer that was not worth any credit was that tertiary employment has increased due to employment in primary and secondary decreasing.

(b)   Most candidates mentioned the lack of skills or qualifications and the lack of alternative ways to earn money in the formal sector. Some weaker candidates wrote at length about why these people needed to earn money, but the emphasis should have been on why many people do this type of job to earn money.

(c)   Overall this question produced the weakest case study responses. A range of LEDC countries were used as examples but some were clearly inappropriate. Some candidates did not seem to understand the word 'impact' as they concentrated their answers on all the different industries that had grown in their chosen LEDC. Many also concentrated their answer on why the industries had been attracted there. Many candidates only made level 1 statements such as 'low wages was a result of rapid industrialisation'. If this was developed in terms of general exploitation of workers, or in terms of enabling people to better their quality of life by improving housing conditions, diet etc., then candidates scored a mark in level 2. Generally the best case studies were focussed on South Korea with much detailed information being included.

Question 6

(a)(i) This was generally correct.

(ii) The question was generally well answered, with most candidates scoring full marks through making the comparison between more small farms in Wales and more large farms in East Anglia.

(iii) There were many incorrect references to physical factors such as climate and soils. Most candidates did recognise the influence of farming type but there was little reference to the cost of land or intensity of land use. Land availability was often mentioned but without any focus on competition from urban land uses.

(b)(i) Most candidates knew a definition of the term. A common error was that some candidates thought that it meant growing crops as well as keeping animals. Also candidates wrote about changing land use but spoiled their answer by implying that the whole of the farm had been given over to an alternative land use.

(ii) Many candidates only scored one mark here for reference to a gain in profit. Many thought farmers were altruistic in nature and set up paintballing out of the goodness of their hearts to entertain the local young people. Others suggested that tourist related activities such as holiday cottages would attract tourists, but failed to develop the idea. The fact that these businesses are set up to meet an increasing demand for leisure activities and thus generate additional income was often lost. Several excellent answers considered the fact that 'pick your own' enabled farmers to reduce their labour costs as well as avoiding the 'middle man'. Some rare but excellent answers referred to the impact of EU policies or the availability of EU grants for diversification.

(iii) A variety of changes were suggested. Mechanisation, subsidies, quotas, set aside land, Common Agricultural Policy were the most popular, and most candidates were able to score 1 or 2 marks.

(c) Subsistence rice growing in the Ganges Valley was the most common detailed case study. There were many excellent answers which contained details of inputs, processes and outputs. Weaker candidates tended to focus on human inputs. So labour intensive methods were described, but often there was insufficient development of ideas to merit marks in level 2. Other comprehensive answers focussed on shifting cultivation in Amazonia and the El Sahir project in Egypt.

Question 7

(a) Most candidates showed an awareness of what a National Park is. Usually two marks were scored by reference to 'beautiful scenery' and 'preservation'.

(b)(i) This question produced a wide range in quality of response. Many candidates made the error of using 'near' or 'close to' instead of being specific. Other candidates gave distances from the name of the settlement rather than the shaded area showing its location. However, where candidates tackled the question in the right way they easily scored maximum marks.

(ii) The question differentiated well. Weak candidates scored one mark for reference to 'jobs' but then vaguely mentioned various types of pollution. In contrast well-prepared candidates developed points and provided a balance of benefits and problems. They developed their ideas on pollution in terms of the type, source and effects on the local community.

(iii)   This was generally well answered and candidates made reference to a number of restoration strategies. However, some candidates seemed to think that the natural environment is designed for the use of people and any infilling and landscaping is done with boating and golf courses in mind. A common error was the reference to screening by trees rather than restoration after quarrying has finished.

(c)   Generally the case studies had been well learnt. Some conflicts, however, included quarrying and others did not include tourists, so gained no credit. The problems tourists cause were well described but often it was not clear with which land use they were in conflict. If this was the case the answer was restricted to level 1. At a higher level many candidates did understand the idea of conflict and described appropriate examples, usually those between farmers and tourists, but other examples were seen, including the impacts of military use on tourism. For example, the issues with the military on Dartmoor and the problems of traffic congestion for the locals in places like Widdecombe were clearly explained and obviously place specific. The conflicts with farmers were more generally stated.

Question 8

(a)   There was a large range in the quality of response to this question. Some candidates had a detailed understanding of the processes involved in the greenhouse effect and included lots of details. At the other extreme were candidates who remain totally confused between the greenhouse effect and ozone depletion. A common weakness was that candidates referred to sunlight rather than radiation.

(b)(i)   This question was generally well answered and most candidates recognised the general relationship.

(ii)   The question asked why the contribution was different and so some sort of comparison needed to be made or implied. Some candidates failed to do this. Some statements here were relevant but too extreme, eg 'LEDCs have no industries'.

(iii)   The candidates showed good understanding of what needs to be done to reduce the causes of global warming. Answers were very detailed in many instances. Some, however, were vague with ideas such as 'use cars less', without saying how this might be achieved. Weaker responses only considered the actions of individuals in the house or in using transport. Fewer candidates considered the national perspective, but when they did it was usually to comment on the development of renewable resources.

(c)   The tropical rain forest case study usually focussed on the Amazon Basin. Some candidates showed detailed knowledge, particularly in terms of the causes of deforestation. The names of mines and the ore mined was stated, similarly HEP stations were named. These clearly place specific answers often enabled candidates to reach level 3 as the impacts on the local wildlife habitats and soil were also well explained. Weaker candidates listed simple level 1 statements about the causes of forest clearance – for mining, roads etc., with similar statements about the impacts – loss of habitat, flooding etc. A common error was to also write about the human impact on indigenous tribes.

1986/03 Paper 3 (Foundation)

It was felt that the examination was accessible and wholly appropriate to foundation level, at and that it differentiated fully between candidates within the grades catered for, C to G. Virtually the full range of marks was seen, with most candidates using their time well to score over half of the available marks, a considerable improvement in overall performance on previous years. All candidates appeared to have enough time to complete the paper and many attempted to write extended answers, and refer to map evidence, where required.

The clear improvement in the overall standard on previous years suggests that centres have taken on board advice given in previous examiners' reports and during recent INSET sessions, ensuring that candidates have been well prepared to cope with the demands of this type of assessment.

As in Paper 1 there were several examples where no responses were given, typically the graphs and completion tasks which offer easy marks for those candidates who possess the basic skills. It is sad that many marks are lost by candidates who simply do not take the time and care to ensure that they are completing all tasks.

Comments follow on individual questions.

Question 1

(a)(i)   The majority of candidates answered this question correctly. The most common error was 'Midfield'.

(ii)   Plotting the route of the railway line varied between candidates. There were many who did not offer an answer, but most scored at least 1 mark for a reasonable attempt and many scored both marks. Inevitably weaker candidates lacked accuracy in their plotting, not seeming to have the basic map skill of using grid lines to plot a route, and many used a single line rather than the correct symbol.

(iii)   The majority of the candidates answered this question correctly though some clearly could not use the scale and offered either 0.3 km or 13.0 km.

(iv)   Whilst many candidates gave an example of a service and answered this question correctly, errors included 'church end' and 'cemy' and 'car park'. This suggests students have misunderstood what the word 'service' means.

(b)(i)   The majority of the candidates answered this question correctly, indicating good graphical skills, though a minority were inaccurate, largely through lack of care. This was another question which some candidates missed out, presumably as they do not read the instructions in full but only look for lines where answers are required.

(ii)   The majority of the candidates answered this question correctly.

(c)(i)   Care was needed with the scale thus some candidates read the graph incorrectly and thought the answer was 7.1% or answered 72%.

(ii)   Most candidates answered this question correctly, understanding how the graph shows negative population growth.

(d)(i)   This relatively simple question produced a whole range of answers. Many candidates were successful, though others reversed south east (ie `east south`) or reversed the direction (ie

`north west`), whilst others gave a directional description (ie `along the railway`) rather than a compass direction.

(ii)   This was very well answered by many candidates.   Most developed their answers well and referred confidently to issues such as congestion/time of journey, convenience, cost and environmental issues.

(iii)   Again some excellent answers were written by many candidates. Whilst some made only brief references to issues such as noise, visual intrusion and the impact on the both individual privacy and the local natural environment, others developed one or more points fully to gain full marks. The word `object` was clearly not known by some candidates, whilst a few appeared to misunderstand the question and wrote about the railway and why that should be brought back.

(e)   The question differentiated well. Weak candidates wrote about the attractions of living in the area and not the reason for locating the new settlement there. When reasons were suggested these were often only level 1 statements, with little or no explanation (eg `near to Cambridge` `flat land`). Weaker candidates got distracted by irrelevant information on the map, (e.g. golf course, pubs and coniferous woods). Stronger candidates obtained full marks, sometimes in a couple of short but well stated explanatory sentences, which incorporated map evidence. Far too many students thought the disused railway was still in operation with some also suggesting an airport of international stature was a reason for business to locate there! More care and practice is needed to read and interpret human patterns shown on an OS map.

Question 2

(a)   This question involved the use of the OS map and aerial photograph in conjunction with each other in order to then give a grid reference of a feature. There were more correct answers than incorrect ones though substantial numbers of candidates selected the wrong grid reference. Whether this is because they could not cope with this simple map skill (6 figure references) or whether they had not practised the recognition of features shown on an aerial photograph on a map of the same area is impossible to tell. More practice in this is needed, and this is possible by using readily available images of all areas on websites such as Google Earth.

(b)(i) Many candidates were successful in recognising farmland and housing and marking their letters in appropriate places. Some candidates read the question incorrectly as they covered the whole of the map with 'F's and 'H's. This was acceptable provided every one was correct.

(ii)   Whilst there were some good responses referring to field shapes and sizes, land uses and hedgerows many candidates were very vague in their answers (eg different colours of the fields) and some did not describe the farmland at all, and just wrote about the general features of the area such as roads, factories and houses.

(iii)   This question differentiated well. Some identified all three options correctly but others struggled with all three parts of the task, particularly the first one, not realising that the prefix `M` is used for a motorway.

(iv)   There were many correct answers here though some candidates had not read the question properly ie `Why was it important to locate the factory in a fruit growing area?`, thus a common error was choosing the irrelevant statement 4 about exporting jam.

(c)(i) Most of the candidates correctly identified an input and a process, however some did not know what a process was and gave an output as their answer instead.

17

(ii) Many candidates gave two different pieces of evidence (typically machines and computers) though some just concentrated on photograph D.

(d) The question differentiated well and most candidates attempted an answer – to some degree they showed awareness of issues such as transport and market, with a lesser focus on workforce or relocation costs. Some mistakenly focused on the idea that the fruit was produced locally and so had not fully understood the information provided. Those more able candidates who focused upon the transportation of materials from the ports to the factory via the motorway network were able to access level 3, providing they quoted some evidence from Fig 2c or the OS map. A significant number remained at level 2 as they failed to quote some map evidence. A common misconception was that if the factory moved, then people would stop buying the jam as it wouldn't be local anymore and the farmers wouldn't have a job anymore.

1986/04 Paper 4 (Higher)

General Comments

The overall level of performance of candidates was better than that of 2007. Generally candidates scored better on question 1. It is pleasing to report that candidates appeared to have enough time to complete the paper and include extended answers where required in the last section. They need to be reminded to check through their answers, if they have time. This may eradicate some of the careless mistakes. This year there was a continued improvement in the application of basic map reading skills such as usage of the key, estimating area, using grid references and reading compass directions. Advice from previous years that centres should give more time to practicing past questions in order to improve basic map skills appears to have been followed.

It is important for teachers to impress upon their candidates that this paper is not just a test of geographical skills. One third of the marks on the paper are allocated to the understanding of geographical issues. This year the topics of settlement and industrial location tested this objective.

Examiners still expressed concerns about the failure by some candidates to understand a key word such as location. Also some candidates lost marks by failing to use map evidence or give figures when they were required.

Three pieces of advice that may help to raise the standard of candidate responses are:

- Read each question carefully and note the specific instructions and command words
- Read all questions in a section and plan ahead so that the correct focus is given in each answer
- Use the mark allocation as a guide to the amount of time to spend on an answer

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

(a)(i) Most candidates answered correctly. Willingham or Rampton distracted some from the correct answer.

(ii) A significant proportion of answers were outside the tolerance limits for the estimation, a common error being 1.5 sq km. Usually where answers were inaccurate there had been an over-estimation of the area. A minority of candidates gave ridiculously large figures, failing to show understanding of the scale of the O.S. map extract.

(iii) Most candidates gave comparative answers and scored over half marks. A minority of candidates gave the correct heights but failed to give the unit (metres). This was a careless way to lose marks. Accuracy was required in referring to heights with a need to carefully identify the height of contour lines. Consequently answers that identified Dry Drayton as being at 20m or 50 m were not credited. Some candidates also lost marks by misreading the question and basing their answer on Bar Hill instead of Dry Drayton (presumably a carry-over from the previous question). The section about services was well answered and allowed candidates to make good use of the O.S. map key.

(b)(i) Most candidates plotted the bar correctly. Where candidates went as far as −3.2 it showed carelessness in a question which, again, demanded accuracy.

(ii) Most candidates recognised the different changes in population and supported their answer with accurate reading of figures from the bar graph.

(c) As intended this question proved to be a good discriminator and there was a large range of answers which gained credit. The most frequently recognised benefits were reduced congestion, quicker journey time and increased accessibility. Also candidates referred to usage of the old railway line and the provision of a new service for people without a car as other benefits. Common errors were that candidates did not name a feature or settlement when referring to accessibility, and 'pollution' was not always qualified.

(d) This question also proved to be a good discriminator, with candidates scoring the full range of marks. Candidates recognised a number of advantages of the location, most frequently referring to flat land, roads and nearness to settlements. More able candidates developed these basic ideas such as 'there are good road links *so* residents can travel to Cambridge to work' and 'there is lots of open, flat land available *for* development of housing estates'. The use of map evidence allowed candidate to score the top marks.
Weaker answers were characterised by a number of mistakes. Candidates thought the airfield would still be operational in the future; the railway would provide a quick rail link to Cambridge; the byway would be a major transport route. Some candidates wrote at length about the amenities of the area, such as the golf course and services available in neighbouring villages. They failed to distinguish that the focus of the question was advantages of location rather than advantages for residents.

Question 2

(a)(i) Most candidates were able to give a six figure grid reference within the range of tolerance. Pleasingly there were very few candidates who gave four figure references or got the six-figure reference the 'wrong way round'.

(ii) Candidates made good use of the aerial photograph in giving a range of answers. Common responses picked out flat land, arable land or crops, and hedgerows.

(b)(i) Most candidates correctly identified the two features shown on the photograph. The only common errors were the identification of a 'track' at Y and at 'pond' or 'reservoir' at Z.

(ii) The question proved to be a good discriminator and gave rise to a range of answers. The best answers made full reference to distance and direction of the factory from named settlements or features. To score full marks candidates needed to include a least one reference to distance or direction. Some candidates wasted time by not only describing but also explaining the location. Another error was making reference to a church or windmill or road junction without being specific about which one. The weakest answers were characterised by a list of 'near to' statements; such answers were limited to one mark.

(iii) Most candidates were able to suggest two reasons for the original location of the jam factory. The most common answers referred to cheaper transport and the need for fresh fruit, because fruit is a perishable commodity.

(c) Again most candidates scored two marks on this section, making full use of both photographs. A minority of candidates failed to notice the very prominent computers.

(d) The final question gave candidates another opportunity to produce some extended writing. The question allowed for good differentiation. The best candidates wrote coherently about why the factory has remained at the same location, basing their argument on the ease with which raw materials could be obtained, the availability of markets, both local and more distant, and the significance of industrial inertia and the prohibitive cost of re-locating the factory. Where some candidates scored less well they wrote at length about transport routes but failed to tie them in to the acquisition of specific raw materials or selling products at markets. Occasionally answers became repetitive on the theme of raw materials sources and transporting them to the factory. This idea was limited to one developed reason.

1986/05 Coursework

The standard of coursework in 2008 was consistently high. We continue to see excellent practice and often outstanding work.

There was a splendid variety of topics investigated by candidates from urban studies, physical investigations based on river characteristics or coastal systems, honey pot pressures and agriculture. There were still one or two 'Cooks Tours' and 'our day out' but totally inappropriate investigations were rare. Teacher directed enquiries were by far the most popular with less than 10% of Centres opting for the individual approach. Those Centres that did opt for individuality were often impressive and candidates at the top of the ability range produced outstanding work, worth far more than the 25% available.

At least 90% of all Centres' work was a pleasure to moderate - administration efficiently and accurately undertaken, requested samples dispatched quickly and background information supplied. It was only the small minority that were worryingly awful in organisation but it is those that tend to remain uppermost in the mind. (Letter grades on the MS1, marks out of 105, three enquires, SPAG marks……)
The most common administrative errors continue to be:

- Sending all the MS1 documentation to the Moderator: the top copy should go Cambridge, the middle copy to the Moderator and the bottom copy (yellow) is retained by the Centre. As the Moderator copy is a carbon it is helpful to make sure that the marks can actually be seen.

- Not meeting the deadlines: May 15th is the final date for the submission of coursework marks to OCR and the Moderator, it is not merely a recommended date. In a small minority of cases there was a genuine problem and Moderators were sympathetic to this but increasingly it is the same Centres that simply fail to get themselves organized.

- Arithmetical errors: the most common problem being that the MS1 mark was different to that shown on the cover sheet of the individual piece of work. Please check transcripts carefully as it is often the candidate (and hence the Centre's) results that will suffer. One Centre achieved a 55% error rate this year.

- Not indicating on the MS1 which teaching set candidates are in.

As stated last year it is disappointing and frustrating to report that for a small number of Centres a downward adjustment had to be made for the third year in succession. Same coursework, same weaknesses identified, same problems. If marks have been reduced the reason behind the adjustment will be clearly stated in the individual report sent to Centres in August. Very often it will not take much to rectify the situation. For example where the nature of the enquiry is sound and data collection appropriate yet data representation is the weak link, it should be possible to ensure the same mistakes are not made year on year.

For those Centres pushing the tolerance limits a warning shot will have been issued. Take note of the advice as the generous nature of assessment has been noted and will be watched next year.

In only a very few cases did the moderator have to send for a second sample. This is done to ensure that the initial view of a significant downward adjustment is justified. The most significant changes this year were again made to Centres which had a small entry and or were new to the Specification. The situation is often clear – the geography teacher is working in isolation or the member of staff regularly changes. As a result the standard expected for grade C work and above is not always appreciated and the assumption is often made that the work of the best candidate is worth a grade A - this is frequently not the case.

Most Centres should be thanked for the time and effort they put into justifying their assessment and for the background information given to the Moderator. However, there are still Centres that simply state 'no guidance given' (even when it is blatantly obvious that guidance has taken place) and make no attempt to explain anything regarding the nature of the work and or the rationale behind the assessment. Advice and guidance are expected and Centres should not be concerned about stating this either on the coursework cover sheet or in a covering letter to the Moderator. From the disorganised state of the final submissions from a few Centres it was clear to the Moderator that more teacher guidance was needed.

Despite similar comments in previous years there are still Centres that could easily boost their marks via data representation. It is most frustrating when data collection is varied and then only presented using pies and bars. It is perfectly acceptable for Centre staff to advise on data representation which should encourage both a variety of techniques and those of a more complex nature. When candidates rely on using IT packages to produces various graphs it is always a good idea if they know how to use them properly. All too often graphs were labelled as series 1 and series 2 , no units and often not even a title. These ICT hiccups should be addressed before the candidates approach the writing up of their coursework. One of the most popular methods of data collection was the use of questionnaires. When these are well structured and posed valid questions the results can be displayed in a variety of ways and lead to detailed analysis. However, when questionnaires are poorly planned and dominated by yes / no answers they are of little value. Several seen this year had over 10 questions which were simply yes/ no responses – a huge waste of time and effort. Several Centres encouraged their candidates to annotate a copy of their questionnaire to explain why particular questions had been included. This worked well and as a consequence the questionnaire was meaningful and generated useful data.

There was a pleasing increase in the number of candidates using located graphs to present their data on maps. Some candidates used aerial photographs from the internet customised to show their findings across an area. When this is done well it adds a superb spatial element. However caution is still needed when using internet generated maps as too many candidates cut and paste extracts from Multimap and Google which are not integrated or referenced and so add little value to enquiries.

Many investigations included excellent photographs, although annotations were not always as explanatory as they should have been. There were a number of excellent field sketches this year that had been thoroughly annotated and integrated successfully into the enquiries.

One area that has continued to improve is in the writing up of the methodology. Most candidates now include clear details about the data collected – when it was collected, why it was collected and how it was collected. This inevitably gives them a greater understanding of what they aim to achieve and gives the fieldwork a greater sense of purpose.

There is much to be proud of with regard to coursework. The majority of Centre staff work hard to encourage and get the best out of their candidates. The positives far outweigh the annual gripes but these still need to be addressed if all Centres are to strive for a continual improvement in the standard of work achieved.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Geography A (Specification Code 1986)
June 2008 Examination Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01	80	n/a	n/a	52	45	38	31	24
02	80	54	46	38	27	n/a	n/a	n/a
03	40	n/a	n/a	30	27	24	21	18
04	40	30	26	22	18	n/a	n/a	n/a
05	100	79	67	55	43	32	21	10

Specification Options

Foundation Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	126	109	92	76	60
Percentage in Grade		n/a	n/a	n/a	24.9	28.3	22.8	13.7	7.0
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		n/a	n/a	n/a	24.9	53.2	76.0	89.7	96.7

The total entry for the examination was 6 189.

Higher Tier

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	163	143	123	103	78	65	n/a	n/a
Percentage in Grade		15.2	27.6	29.8	18.9	7.6	0.6	n/a	n/a
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		15.2	42.8	72.6	91.5	99.1	99.7	n/a	n/a

The total entry for the examination was 14 330.

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Percentage in Grade	10.8	19.8	21.2	20.7	13.5	7.0	3.9	2.0
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	10.8	30.6	51.8	72.5	86.0	93.0	96.9	98.9

The total entry for the examination was 20 525.

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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