GCSE

Geography A

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J380**

Examiners' Reports

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Geography A (J380)

EXAMINERS' REPORTS

Chief Examiner's Report

Centres have worked hard in preparing candidates for this specification and the way in which they have accepted and adopted the ethos behind it is commendable. Some very good geography has been identified and it is hoped that the comments provided by this report prove both informative and helpful to future cohorts.

In the Extreme Environments Unit (A671) it was obvious that many Foundation candidates had thoroughly enjoyed the course and the varied opportunities which it presented for innovative and active learning. At Higher Tier candidates utilised the resources provided with some confidence, but should be encouraged to always endeavour to process the information in some way in their answers. Candidates, at both tiers, seemed to be entered appropriately.

Unit A672, Controlled Assessment, saw a much higher entry this year and provided the moderating team with a wide variety of work to consider. It was particularly pleasing to see centres contextualising the investigation titles, so making the geography more personal and therefore more relevant to the candidates. It was also heartening to see a number of centres adopting fieldwork and primary data collection for both investigations. While this is not a requirement of the specification it did appear to motivate candidates and give them a more holistic understanding of the issues under scrutiny.

In Unit A673, Similarities and Differences, Foundation candidates should be encouraged to offer more place-specific details in their answers, as opposed to more generic descriptions that could apply to almost anywhere in the world. By way of contrast, some Higher Tier candidates offered some very detailed and perceptive knowledge of their chosen places, offering place-specific detail in their answers.

The first examination of Unit A674, Issues in our Fast Changing World, gave candidates the opportunity to discuss food disparities across the globe. The candidates seemed well-prepared for the examination and the resource booklet was used by many candidates very effectively. At Higher Tier it was very pleasing to see candidates make reference to topical geographical events, such as current events in Libya. This gave candidates opportunities to display their knowledge in a real-life context. Centres deserve praise for preparing their candidates so thoughtfully through the use of recent events that lie within the candidates' own experience.

The many opportunities offered by this specification for the study of topical, relevant geography gives candidates the chance to make sense of their complex and ever-changing world in a meaningful way. It is hoped that centres will build upon their experiences to date, and further develop and share their innovative approach to teaching GCSE Geography.

A671/01 Extreme Environments (Foundation Tier)

General Comments:

The paper was considered appropriate for the ability of foundation candidates, the wide range of marks suggesting that it differentiated well. Almost all candidates made a genuine attempt at answering all questions, suggesting that, whatever their ability, candidates had benefited from studying the unit. It was obvious that many candidates had thoroughly enjoyed the course and the varied opportunities which it presents for innovative and active learning. At the same time the basic geography skills, knowledge and understanding should not be allowed to take a back seat.

Many candidates produced some good geography and, provided they had read the questions carefully and responded to the command words, they were well-rewarded.

Most candidates were correctly entered for this tier. Only a small minority wrote answers showing greater sophistication and understanding, suggesting that they would have benefited from entering the Higher Tier.

The paper contained a wide range of structured and resource-based tasks in order to provide candidates with the opportunity to achieve positively by demonstrating skills and understanding using the resources provided. Many were able to take these opportunities. Some candidates would have benefited from practising their skills and increasing their confidence and competence in using resources such as maps, graphs and photographs. There were also opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding with opportunities for extended written answers. Most candidates attempted to write in detail, and include relevant information which they were able to recall. Some tried to develop their ideas and include relevant specific details relating to the extreme environments which they had studied. It is important to demonstrate such knowledge and understanding to achieve the higher grades.

The following advice should be shared with future candidates:

- Read through the whole question before writing answers to any part so repetition of answers is avoided;
- Be familiar with command words used. Highlight these, along with any other key words in the questions, and write answers which are relevant to the question asked;
- Use the mark allocations in brackets as a guide to the amount of detail or number of responses required. Do not spend too much time answering those questions worth few marks, but make sure that those worth more marks are answered in more detail;
- Make sure that the focus of each response is correct, rather than including all facts about the chosen topic or area;
- In answers which need extended writing develop each point wherever possible rather than writing extensive lists of simple, basic points;
- Look carefully at all the resources such as maps, graphs, diagrams and extracts. Use appropriate facts and statistics from resources to back up an answer and try to interpret them by making appropriate comments, rather than just copying them.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

Q1(a) This was generally well-answered and the rubric was appropriately followed. Only a few candidates did not achieve both marks here.

Q1(b)(i) Some candidates coped with this well by referring to precise ideas such as the remoteness of Mingulay, storms, cold/wet weather, remoteness and the difficulty of making a living. Others were too vague, giving answers such as 'extreme weather' and 'harsh' conditions which needed to be qualified for credit.

Q1(b)(ii) Most candidates were able to achieve the two marks here, the most common answers being 'grazing sheep' and 'rock climbing'.

Q1(c) There were some very good answers written where candidates not only compared the climate of Mingulay with that of a desert which they had studied but also backed up their statements with accurate statistics from the graph (about Mingulay) and from their own knowledge (about a desert). The most common errors made were to read the bar graph as temperature and the line graph for rainfall and/or not to make a comparison. It was acceptable for candidates to write separate accounts of the climate of each of Mingulay and the desert, however the use of comparative words such as 'more' or 'higher' is effective when the command word used in the question is 'compare'.

Question 2

Q2(a) Candidates need to be able to describe the global distribution of deserts and the location of any specific areas which they have studied, referring to latitude and using compass directions. Some candidates could demonstrate the basic knowledge that deserts are located on or around the tropics, on the western sides of land masses. There is a common misconception that deserts are located on the Equator, therefore many candidates did not gain both marks.

Q2(b) This question was generally well-answered and most candidates were able to identify two pieces of evidence which suggest that a hot desert is extreme. Note the command word is 'give', thus the quoting of relevant phrases such as 'nights of ice', 'where is the well?' or 'blisters on faces' was all that was required. Some candidates went beyond this, suggesting for example that 'blisters on faces' reflected the hot daytime temperatures, however, as long as the candidate gave the evidence, they were awarded the marks. Indeed interpretation without evidence was not credited.

Q2(c)(i) The rock pedestal was usually correctly identified. Fewer candidates identified the wadi.

Q2(c)(ii) Those candidates who clearly described two features of the landform, such as the steep sides, wide floor or rock debris from the dried-up river were well-rewarded. Clear and accurate analysis of photographs did not appear to be a strength of some candidates whose descriptions were either too vague for credit, referred to features other than the landform (eg the vegetation) or attempted to explain how the landform had been created despite the command word 'describe'.

Q2(c)(iii) Perceptive candidates gained the marks, mainly for reference to flash floods and river erosion. There were many candidates who simply repeated 'running water', referred to wind erosion or focused on the need for water to sustain plants, animals and occasionally people in the desert. It appeared that many candidates were not familiar with the formation of a wadi, one of the desert landforms which the specification lists for study.

Q2(c)(iv) There were some well-labelled diagrams which showed that candidates had understood fully the role of wind abrasion in the formation of rock pedestals. Some of the less well-prepared left the diagram blank. It needs to be stressed to candidates that they need to learn their diagrams for geography exams. Those candidates who were successful gained credit, typically, for the ideas of wind blowing, carrying sand and abrasion to the base of the rock. Some others recognised the significance of more and less resistant rock and others commented on the significance of exfoliation and/or frost shattering.

Question 3

Q3(a)(i) Most candidates correctly linked one of the two photographs with a polar or mountain environment, though some did not indicate which type of extreme environment they had chosen.

Q3(a)(ii) Many candidates were able to describe two features of the extreme environment in the picture which they had chosen. Many referred to the ice or snow (in both pictures) although a number were able to identify polar bears and/or Inuit and recognise that hunting was taking place in Fig. 3A. Some candidates who chose Fig. 3B impressively identified features which they had remembered from their studies such as arêtes and pyramidal peaks, and many commented on steep slopes and/or base rock faces.

Q3(b) Some candidates thought all that they had to do was to explain what kind of films could be made in these extreme environments or they mentioned films which they had seen. Some even referred to the difficulties of filming and described the ways in which polar or mountain environments are extreme. Quite a few made the point that making films would be a help to the local economy or people without really understanding what the question was asking. Good answers typically referred to ideas such as the beautiful scenery, the scope for making adventure films in a dangerous setting and the opportunity to make informative films and documentaries as the areas were suitable for filming wildlife or extreme activities. Whilst candidates did not often score the full three marks, some excellent ideas were seen, including references to the fact that artificial sets would not be needed and that (in polar areas) filming could take place 24 hours per day in the summer season.

Q3(c) The ability to relate what they had learnt about these extreme environments and to translate that into how they would feel about spending time there was a challenge for some candidates but there were some very good answers where candidates tried to imagine being in the chosen environment, displaying specific knowledge about their chosen case study area. A few candidates did not state or even imply how they felt, which was what the first question asked, and this made it very difficult to award credit. Those who did generally went on to explain their reasons, many developing their points fully to produce a convincing piece of extended writing.

Question 4

Q4(a)(i) This was well-answered by many candidates. The command word was 'identify' thus ideas needed to be extracted from the text. It is vital for candidates to respond to the command word. Some candidates explained why they thought it may have been hard (eg lack of oxygen, freezing temperatures) instead of simply identifying the challenges.

Q4(a)(ii) Most candidates were able to think of some appropriate items here, explaining the need for them clearly and precisely. There were some excellent references to various types of protective clothing and footwear, climbing equipment and a GPS/compass/map. In order to gain the mark candidates needed to provide a valid explanation which not all candidates could do as they tended to write simplistic ideas such as 'warm clothing to keep warm'. Better answers focused on specific equipment used in extreme environments, weaker answers tended to list things needed on an overnight camp in the UK. There were many references to food and water. It would be unlikely that enough water would be carried for a full expedition in a cold environment – better suggestions referred to a portable stove to melt ice or purification tablets. 'Food' required some development – dried food which could easily be carried or 'high energy food' as expedition members will need a high calorie intake as they are using lots of energy.

Q4(b)(i) Depending on the choice of mountain or polar area, students were able to answer well. There were some excellent answers relating to Antarctica, the Himalayas, the Andes and the Arctic. It is advisable for students to have case studies of relatively small areas in order to learn

specific details. Generally 'Arctic' answers were somewhat vague, whilst 'Svalbard' answers were more precise and 'Altiplano' answers tended to be more precise than 'Andes' answers. In order to access full marks some detail was needed – candidates needed to write more than single words such as 'tourism', 'settlement' or 'research' and many did so. Some candidates identified an area then ignored the area which they had chosen when describing its uses – this was particularly evident from the less well-informed candidates who chose Antarctica and described how oil is being extracted from there in large quantities.

Q4(b)(ii) This question required candidates to explain how the use of their chosen area may damage the natural environment and candidates who focused their answers correctly, typically referring to loss of habitat, animals being harmed/scared and the impacts on food chains, did particularly well. Marks were awarded for simple points or developed ideas. Most candidates tended to give simple ideas rather than developing their answers but most candidates, providing they had read the question properly, could at least refer to simple ideas such as litter and footpath erosion. References to 'pollution' needed to be qualified. A common misconception was that the use of polar and mountain environments is responsible for global warming and that the indigenous population is part of the natural environment – or maybe the candidates who wrote about the impacts of global warming or the impacts on the Inuit, Sherpas and residents of the Altiplano had not read the question carefully enough.

A671/02 Extreme Environments (Higher Tier)

General Comments:

The level of difficulty was appropriate for higher tier candidates, most understanding the requirements of the questions and showing an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the issues and concepts being tested. Resources were generally used with skill and some confidence although some candidates 'lift' material rather than interpreting it and using it effectively.

There was a very wide range of abilities entered for the paper, many writing fluently to produce high quality answers. There were plenty of opportunities and challenges, so that able and well-prepared candidates could demonstrate what they knew, understood and could do. The less demanding and/or more structured tasks were designed to provide all candidates with opportunities for positive achievement; even so a significant minority of candidates appeared to have been wrongly entered for the higher tier and would have benefited from being entered for the foundation tier as they struggled with even the most elementary of tasks. Some of these candidates tended to misinterpret questions, failing to take notice of or understand the command words and/or key words. Some lost marks where extended writing was required, where answers were poorly focused and lacking in detail.

In contrast a superb standard was achieved by candidates from many centres. Their answers showed an outstanding grasp of the content of the unit and an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the issues tested, including a range of case studies. Good practice was demonstrated by those candidates whose answers were focused, and fluently written, showing good development of ideas in the longer answers and using specialist terms where appropriate. Such candidates no doubt benefited from the advice passed on to them by their teachers from previous reports which are repeated here to share with future candidates:

- Read the entire question first before answering any part, in order to decide which section requires which information, to avoid repetition of answers;
- Highlight the command words and other key words so that answers are always relevant to the question;
- Use the mark allocations in brackets and the space provided in the examination booklet as a guide to the amount of detail or number of responses required. Do not spend too much time on those questions worth few marks, but answer those which are worth more marks in detail;
- Read each question carefully and take time to think about what information is needed to answer it. Make sure that the information included in the answer is relevant, rather than including all facts about the chosen topic or area;
- Develop each point fully rather than writing long lists of simple, basic points. It is better to fully develop two or three ideas rather than write lists consisting of numerous simple points;
- Use geographical terminology wherever possible, for example names of physical processes, incorporating them to show understanding of them rather than just listing the words;
- Study the resources such as maps, graphs, diagrams and extracts carefully, using appropriate facts and statistics from resources to back up an answer and interpreting them by making appropriate comments, rather than just copying them;
- Choose case study areas with care, naming the area studied as precisely as possible. Often answers which relate to an area of limited size (eg Prudhoe Bay) are more effective than ones which focus on a huge area (eg the Arctic), as the latter answers tend to be less specific.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

Q1(a) Most candidates were able to provide a basic definition and communicate that extreme environments were difficult places in which to survive. Some candidates went on to develop their answer and earn the second mark, typically by explaining the reason for this in relation to climate, landscape or remoteness.

Q1(b) Candidates could argue either way here, indeed many of the outstanding answers observed that Mingulay may well be considered extreme when compared with other parts of the UK but not when compared to hot deserts, mountains or polar areas. To achieve the highest level of response candidates needed to justify their views with developed reasoning, backed up by supporting data. The climate graph, map and written text were well-used by the candidates who wrote top quality answers. Some candidates relied merely on the use of the written text; some just 'lifted' sections which, without development, achieved only Level 1 marks. Some candidates used the climate graph but reversed the data for temperature and precipitation, therefore making statements about the climate of a Scottish island which displayed no logic (eg temperatures below zero in the summer). Candidates need to become familiar with the use of standard climate graphs during their course so that they can interpret them with confidence. They should think carefully about what they write and ensure that it makes good sense.

Q1(c) Generally candidates performed well on this question. Most picked up on the island being valued by rock climbers and for sheep grazing. Some candidates mentioned the bird life (sometimes copying out the information about the different types) without linking it to people who would value that (ie bird watchers).

Question 2

Q2(a) Responses were variable. Whilst many candidates did pick the correct option too many thought that deserts were located on the Equator. Candidates should be aware of the global distribution of deserts – it is basic geographical knowledge which is required in this unit.

Q2(b) The majority of candidates identified Poem B as the poem better describing the hot desert as an extreme environment and justified their choice by either explaining why they had rejected Poem A or why they had opted for Poem B, typically giving quotations backed by their sound knowledge of the extreme features of hot deserts. There were some very impressively written responses commenting on the style of the poems, the use of metaphors and similes and the feelings evoked by it, although, to get full marks, all the candidates needed to do was to show their geographical knowledge and understanding. A small number of candidates chose Poem A – they tried to justify their choice by explaining that it described features of deserts (eg sand dunes), however the question asked which poem better describes the desert as an 'extreme' environment.

Q2(c)(i) Most candidates recognised the rock pedestal, some using the term 'mushroom rock' which was accepted. A smaller number of candidates recognised the wadi.

Q2(c)(ii) There were many very good, detailed answers here showing a good understanding and knowledge of the physical processes that create hot desert landforms. Most candidates chose erosional landforms rather than depositional landforms, many choosing rock pedestals such as that shown in the photograph. High quality answers on rock pedestals invariably used appropriate terminology with great skill, explaining how processes such as abrasion contributed to the development of the landform. Very good answers were seen on other landforms, for example sand dunes and zeugen, although candidates who chose to write about depositional landforms tended to be less specific in terms of the processes involves. A minority of candidates wrote about processes such as freeze-thaw and exfoliation without linking these with landform development which the question clearly required.

Question 3

Q3(a) Generally well-answered, with more candidates selecting Fig. 3B rather than Fig. 3A. There were some impressive references to named glacial features from some candidates who chose Fig. 3B but some candidates went much further than required by the command word 'describe' and explained the formation of features such as 'a corrie' rather than actually describing what they could see in the resource material. There were some references to features like 'lack of oxygen' and 'strong winds'; clearly these are features which may be expected in such areas but credit could not be awarded as they could not be seen in the paintings.

Q3(b) This proved challenging, though it did discriminate as a minority of candidates wrote excellent answers which developed ideas relating for example to the beauty of the areas for paintings, the opportunity to make action films in dangerous settings, or the existence of inspiring settings to write musical compositions. Descriptive words like 'beautiful', 'calm', 'dangerous', 'interesting' were of course valid but they needed to be incorporated into answers in such a way as they explained why these areas are represented in the media, rather than just offering a description of them as extreme environments. The key to real success was to try to link the points being made with different types of media rather than making general comments, though some credit was awarded for these (eg beautiful scenery) providing the question was being answered. Quite a few candidates wrote generally about films that they had seen which involved mountains/polar areas (eg Touching the Void and Michael Palin documentaries) but the answers did not always address the question, being descriptive rather than offering any valid reasoning.

Q3(c) Some candidates simply listed their feelings; others began to explain how people use their chosen environment which suggested that had they misinterpreted the question. It was a pity that some did not express their own feelings about staying in their chosen environment which was an integral part of the question. Other candidates communicated their feelings well by developing their points and linking them to the climate or landscape, referring to place-specific details from the case study area. Many candidates achieved Level 2 by developing appropriate ideas – many more could have been awarded Level 3 had they quoted specific details, names or facts and figures. A number of candidates wrote about plant and adaptations as well which, although it showed knowledge of their chosen area, did not answer the question.

Question 4

Q4(a) Most candidates understood the requirements of this question and interpreted the source materials, with which they were provided, very well. Some candidates developed their answers to show their knowledge, introducing extra information, however they could not be credited for this as the command word was 'identify'.

Q4(b)(i) There were many good case studies here – the Andes, Antarctica and the Himalayas particularly. The question differentiated well, some excellent answers were given with detailed and place-specific information about the various uses of the area, whilst others offered little detail in their description to back up their brief references usually to 'tourism', 'research' or 'mining'. It is imperative that candidates learn details of their case studies of extreme environments and include these in their answers rather than just making simplistic generalisations. In addition they must make sure that the detail they include fits with their chosen area. The references made by some candidates to oil exploitation, the Inuit or polar bear hunting in Antarctica for example, do not help to make their answers convincing and are surprising to see on a higher tier paper.

Q4(b)(ii) Many candidates did not read the question carefully here and described how their chosen area was threatened by global warming. Furthermore some referred to threats to both 'indigenous cultures' and 'the natural environment' rather than choosing one or the other. Provided they addressed the question correctly most could explain what the threats were but many did not explain 'to what extent' they were threatening.

A672 You as a Global Citizen – the impact of our decisions (Controlled Assessment)

General Comments:

The moderation of the controlled assessment tasks in June 2011 saw a greatly increased entry and work seen from the larger cohort proved very illuminating. This report will identify some good practice, which will inform centres and candidates so that future cohorts are able to maintain, and build upon the quality of work seen so far.

For Task 1, centres chose from the full range of tasks although Investigation A, relating to fairly traded goods, proved the most popular. The investigations in Task 2 attracted a more even entry profile although Investigation C, with a focus on the impact of the development of a new retail area, was selected more frequently.

The candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the investigation titles, utilised some good fieldwork opportunities, and marks were awarded that spanned the full mark range.

It was very pleasing to see many centres contextualising the tasks so that they became more relevant to the candidates' own experiences, although it was noted that this did lead to, on occasions, a significant move away from the published titles. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their knowledge and understanding relating to the set tasks, but should not lose the focus of the investigation. Candidates that did seemed to become a little confused as their investigation progressed, with most of this confusion manifesting itself in their concluding statements. Weaker candidates did not suffer the same fate as they usually had the investigation title as a heading which served to keep them more on track.

Centres that encouraged their candidates to prepare concise pieces of work that went straight into addressing the investigation titles showed the best practice in this session. Additionally, those candidates who integrated their analysis with their maps, images and graphs seemed to produce work that was more complete than those who did not. Analysis in this way also ensured that all data was analysed and seemed to also help candidates when drawing overall conclusions from their data.

A number of centres offered candidates choice in which investigation they followed. This is entirely acceptable, and gave them additional opportunities to display their imagination and initiative (AO3). All centres should remind candidates of the need to include a wide range of data collection techniques; the use of bar or pie charts alone are, at GCSE level, skills that all candidates should be moving away from.

Much effective fieldwork evidence was seen with a number of centres adopting fieldwork for both investigations, although this is not a requirement of the unit. There was some evidence of fieldwork being carried out that was not planned with the investigation title in mind, rather trying to 'fit' the title to the fieldwork experience after the event. This, not surprisingly, did not benefit the candidates.

An increasing number of centres now request candidates to include bibliographies in their work – most certainly good practice. Those candidates who were asked to quote the sources for their work also seemed to produce work that was concise and focused on the investigation title. While the moderating team recognise the difficulties that the controlled assessment regulations pose to many centres, it was heartened by the quality of the geography seen from many of the candidates. A reduced use of ICT has affected the presentation of candidate work, but those

candidates who planned effectively, researched diligently and utilised all at their disposal in an ordered and concise manner, were able to display some excellent geographical understanding and skills.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Task 1A encouraged many centres to develop questionnaires although it was felt that a number of candidates failed to focus sufficiently on the impact of fairly traded goods on people. In one centre candidates included detailed graphs to show the increasing popularity of fairly traded produce, which was then linked to the changing impact upon people. In another, a plan for the school to become a beacon for fairly traded goods clearly inspired the candidates; historical data was then used to make comparisons more meaningful. Highlighting real places tended to aid the candidates as it allowed them to research in detail how fairly traded goods had an impact on real people, giving their conclusions far more depth. Posters, booklets and PowerPoint presentations proved popular, and each gave candidates opportunities to access the full mark range.

Task 1B, investigating the impact of the internet on shopping patterns, saw questionnaires used effectively to assess public opinion and allowed many candidates the opportunity to display their flair for research. In the best work seen, specific groups of people were questioned about their shopping habits which seemed to help candidates in their planning and evaluation.

Task 1C saw candidates write about something that they had direct and personal experience of, such as a local professional football team. Many wrote with a passion, researched in detail and displayed good insight into how different leisure pursuits affected other people. The moderating team was very impressed by the candidates' response to this investigation; it was clear to see that many of them were absorbed in their work.

Task 2A saw Sheffield's Meadowhall and the Birmingham's Bull Ring used to identify how the design of a retail area can affect different groups of people. Candidates used floor plans and footfall surveys to good effect, and their data collection gave them plenty to analyse and discuss in the high control phase of the controlled assessment process.

Task 2B, asking how a retail area could become more sustainable, saw an interesting mix of work. The choice of retail area seemed to make a difference here, with those candidates who chose to study a complete town instead of a retail area within a town finding it more difficult to draw meaningful conclusions.

The opportunities afforded by Task 2C allowed candidates to produce some excellent assessments of recent retail changes. One centre chose to look at the impact of a rather earlier development, explaining that its impacts were only just really being felt. This was entirely appropriate and worked well, showing how centres can maximise their use of local circumstances to really engage candidates' understanding of local, topical geography.

A673/01 Similarities and Differences (Foundation Tier)

General Comments:

The level of challenge was deemed appropriate for foundation candidates and very few questions received a *No Response*. Most candidates were able to name their 'your place' and their 'non-UK place', though fewer candidates could state place-specific knowledge particularly in relation to their non-UK location (in these cases there were too many generic statements which could relate to anywhere in the world).

Many candidates were successful at interpreting some of the data sources provided and were able to use the evidence given to their advantage, however this was not the case for all candidates and it should be an on-going focus for centres to develop candidates' skills. Literacy skills regarding grammar and spelling were limited in many cases; few could accurately use subject-specific language. Centres must continue to develop candidates' abilities to describe both locations using subject-specific language. Many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do and all candidates appeared to have adequate time and completed the paper.

A significant number of candidates misinterpreted exam command words specifically 'similarities' and 'differences' and 'How your UK place may change in the future'. Centres need to remind candidates that descriptions between 'nations' as opposed to UK and non-UK places will not be credited. It was positive to read candidates responses where they had a clear understanding of their 'your place' and their 'non-UK place', however the use of place-specific references was fairly limited; this affected candidates achieving Level 3. Many candidates provided generic descriptions about changes in their 'your place' and a significant number of candidates wrote everything they thought might happen in the future in that UK place.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Q1(a) Most candidates interpreted the map and achieved full marks.

Q1(b)(i) A significant number of candidates wrote about the housing in the two areas not the 'street pattern'. There was little use of subject-specific language – few candidates accurately used terms such as cul-de-sac. A significant number of candidates drew comparisons between the two areas of Sheffield.

Q1(b)(ii) Most candidates could accurately compare the differences between the housing to 2 marks. There was little use of subject-specific language – few candidates accurately used terms such as 'terraced' or 'semi-detached'. Some candidates wrote about other features of the street such as the bus stop/Premier shop in Heeley. Some candidates made personal judgements about the housing types – this gained no credit.

Q1(c)(i) Many candidates used the 'close to' prefix and then listed shops/jobs/public transport etc. There was little qualification of why the stated feature was an advantage and for whom.

Q1(c)(ii) This question was well-answered by most candidates. Some candidates focused on a single theme eg traffic congestion (a common choice) and then wrote about subsequent problems with noise, accidents and problems parking. Many candidates did not qualify why the

area might be 'noisy' or 'polluted'. Some candidates thought that anti-social behaviour and crime was rife in areas such as Heeley – this generalisation was also evident in Q3(c)(i) and Q3(c)(ii).

Q1(d) Most candidates achieved at Level 2. The higher-achieving candidates knew their 'your place' well – they could accurately identify named transport links with specific destinations eg "Manchester is linked by the M62 to Liverpool and Leeds". However, most candidates could name an identifiable link but finished their statement with 'all over the UK' or named a generic transport link such as motorways going to specific destinations eg London/Edinburgh etc. Some candidates were inaccurate with motorway numbers eg "the M1 starts in Liverpool and goes to London".

Question 2

Q2(a)(i) There was a significant number of candidates who wrongly identified 'primary sector jobs'. Many candidates thought primary referred to education and stated 'teacher' as their response.

Q2(a)(ii) Many candidates interpreted the wording of the question and responded "it's how long you are expected to live". Some candidates thought life expectancy was linked to a person's working life.

Q2(a)(iii) Many candidates accurately answered this question.

Q2(a)(iv) Most candidates who had correctly answered Q2(a)(iii) were able to quote statistics supporting their judgement. Those who did not quote statistics used vocabulary such as 'highest/greatest/longest' to describe development statistics in comparison to other countries. Candidates who wrongly identified a country in Q2(a)(iii) were awarded no marks.

Q2(b)(i) Most candidates achieved 1 mark. Some candidates confused 'non-UK place'/country/continent. Most candidates referred to Mumbai in India.

Q2(b)(ii) Many candidates were unable to identify a place-specific similarity between their 'your place' and their 'non-UK place'. Too many candidates wrote about generic similarities eg "both have schools", "both have transport". Differences were more accurately identified – candidates commonly referred to differences in levels of development or employment in different job sectors.

Q2(c) A significant number of candidates could accurately describe temperature patterns across the year or refer to specific, accurate average temperatures or temperature ranges. Many candidates knew a name for the climate type in their 'non-UK place' eg 'monsoon' or 'tropical'. Far fewer candidates could quote accurate rainfall statistics with many confusing units of measurement – mm/cm/m. Most understood the monsoon pattern of rainfall and could accurately name the appropriate months but candidates largely guessed at how much rain falls; this ranged from "10 mm a month" to "2,000 cm a month". This would suggest centres need to develop candidates' accuracy in quoting rainfall statistics.

Question 3

Q3(a) Many candidates answered this question correctly though some candidates misinterpreted the command words and underlined a variety of phrases in the written source.

Q3(b)(i) Many candidates scored well on this question; most identified 'setting up a business' and some commented on the social benefits of the scheme such as 'feeding the family'. A significant number of candidates simply lifted phrases from the source which weren't credited eg "she bought a bag of flour" or "start using skills and talents". Centres need to develop the candidates' skills to interpret a text and extract the relevant information to answer the question.

Q3(b)(ii) Few candidates were able to identify that additional money and success may cause social division in Otjivero, or that some residents may rely on the funding and so, if it ran out, there would be social problems or that money might be inappropriately spent. Too few candidates could develop their ideas. Many candidates incorrectly referred to 'the Government withdrawing funding' or 'everyone setting up the same businesses and therefore there would be too much competition'.

Q3(c)(i) Many candidates achieved Level 1 on this question. Many candidates misread the command words and wrote about changes which had already happened or changes which were currently occurring, which gained no credit. Credit was given for candidates writing about a number of changes. Most candidates wrote generic answers at Level 1 suggesting the future changes would include more shops/more jobs/more people moving in/more houses being built etc. Many candidates did not develop their description of the change or the reasoning behind it. Most candidates developed a 'brief statement about generic changes' by stating benefits and problems which were a likely consequence – this is required by Q3(c)(ii). Candidates from London, who achieved higher marks, wrote accurately about the likely consequences of the 2012 Olympics. Candidates who achieved higher marks in other areas of the UK were familiar with specific, planned regeneration programmes in their area.

Q3(c)(ii) Many candidates did not focus on 'this change' stated in Q3(c)(i) – but focused on multiple generic benefits and problems from a whole range of changes eg more/fewer jobs, more/fewer places to shop, better transport/more congestion, houses for all/homelessness. Some candidates did not respond to the command words "people who live in your place" – these candidates wrote about benefits and problems to chain stores/councils/government. Many candidates were pessimistic/negative about continuing immigration from EU countries suggesting overcrowding/unemployment and homelessness for current UK residents. Very few candidates were able to quote place-specific benefits and problems of a change stated in Q3(c)(i).

A673/02 Similarities and Differences (Higher Tier)

General Comments:

The level of challenge was deemed appropriate for higher candidates and very few questions received a *No Response.* Higher achieving candidates had developed a comprehensive knowledge of their 'your place' and their 'non-UK place', they wrote in place-specific detail and were able to compare and contrast the locations. However most candidates achieved at Level 2 – their descriptions and explanations particularly in relation to their UK place were generic and could have been applied to any location in the UK. Levelled questions on the paper were effective in distinguishing between the quality of responses.

Most candidates performed well on the skills-based questions accurately interpreting the photographs, map and scatter-graph. Whilst many candidates were able to write effectively about other people's views – all too often these were general groups of people not specific named groups. Centres need to be clear with candidates the difference between 'links' and 'similarities'. Centres also need to develop candidates' knowledge of place-specific detail.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Q1(a)(i) This question was generally well-answered. Those candidates who were not credited did not apply compass directions correctly.

Q1(a)(ii) This question was generally well-answered. Again, those candidates who were not credited did not apply compass directions correctly.

Q1(b)(i) Many candidates compared housing types based on evidence in the photographs rather than comparing street patterns using the map. Successful candidates compared street density between Heeley and Norton Lees. Few candidates used subject-specific vocabulary eg cul-de-sac.

Q1(b)(ii) Most candidates gained full marks for this question.

Q1(b)(iii) Most candidates achieved at Level 2 – 4 marks on this question. Candidates understood the advantages and disadvantages of living in areas such as Photograph A for a range of people. Few candidates managed to develop statements referring to advantages and disadvantages for specific named groups of people. Too many candidates perceived that areas such as the one in Photograph A all contained 'hordes of youths roaming the streets terrorising the elderly and vulnerable residents'. Centres need to consider developing candidates' literacy skills encouraging students not to write huge generalisations or extremes of opinions.

Q1(c) Most candidates achieved at Level 2 – 4 marks on this question. Most candidates identified named transport links from their place to other locations including motorway numbers, rail companies or named railway stations and named airports. The strongest candidates wrote about a range of links including 'school twinning schemes' or specific business and trade links.

Question 2

Q2(a)(i) Most candidates gained full marks for this question.

Q2(a)(ii) Most candidates answered this question well, writing about the relationship between GDP and Life Expectancy in detail using statistics to substantiate their response. Credit was not given for candidates who wrote about 'food' or 'water' without qualification.

Q2(b)(i) This question was generally well-answered. Some candidates confused 'non-UK place'/country/continent. Most candidates referred to Mumbai in India. Other locations studied included Kathmandu, Ghent, Campania, Costa del Sol, Cape Town, Nairobi and Gulu.

Q2(b)(ii) Most candidates compared the level of economic development in terms of MEDC/LEDC. A significant number of candidates wrote accurate, detailed descriptions of their 'non-UK place', including statistical evidence, but didn't draw any comparison with their UK place. Those candidates whose 'non-UK place' was based in an MEDC such as Ghent, Campania or Costa del Sol were limited in their comparisons.

Q2(c) Many candidates were able to accurately quote climate statistics in relation to temperature patterns; fewer candidates could accurately quote rainfall statistics with many candidates confusing units of measurement – mm/cm/m. Many candidates could describe Monsoon rainfall patterns correctly identifying the months June to September as having the most precipitation. Few candidates could relate the effects of the climate on named groups of people. There were many simple statements such as "slum dwellers are flooded out" or "rich residents can afford air conditioning".

Question 3

Q3(a)(i) Most candidates commonly identified 'setting up a business' as a benefit of the project. Some candidates wrote about the benefits of 'improved education for children'. Only a few candidates could develop the idea of the 'multiplier effect'.

Q3(a)(ii) Most candidates were able to identify that additional money and success may cause social division in Otjivero, or that some residents may rely on the funding or that money might be inappropriately spent. Too few candidates could develop their ideas.

Q3(b)(i) Most candidates identified a number of generic changes which might apply to any location in the UK eg more houses/more jobs/more immigrants/more businesses etc and were credited at Level 1. Many candidates misread the command words in the question and wrote about changes which had already happened and gained no credit. The scale of the change varied from the future regeneration of a bus station to the redevelopment of the East End of London in preparation for the 2012 Olympics. Some candidates correctly detailed a place-specific change which would occur in the future in their 'your place' but rather than provide reasons for that change too many candidates then wrote about the impacts which were required in Q3(b)(ii).

Q3(b)(ii) Candidates needed to refer to the benefits and problems of 'this change' (singular) in response to this question. There was some confusion amongst many candidates about realistic impacts of the change they had identified. Many candidates focused on multiple generic benefits and problems from a whole range of changes eg more/fewer jobs, more/fewer places to shop, better transport/more congestion, houses for all/homelessness. Many candidates were pessimistic/negative about continuing immigration from EU countries suggesting overcrowding/unemployment and homelessness for current UK residents. Very few candidates were able to quote place-specific benefits and problems of a change stated in Q3(b)(i).

Those candidates who achieved particularly well on this question wrote about the regeneration schemes in Bradford/Tamworth/Liverpool or the development of the high speed rail link between Birmingham and London or the development of the Olympic site and its use post-2012 Olympics.

A674/01 Issues in our Fast Changing World (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The paper was considered appropriate for the ability of foundation candidates and overall candidates made a good attempt at the whole paper. The resource booklet was used well in many questions and it was clear that, when the candidate had studied the information well, their answers were generally at a higher level. Many of the structured tasks provided candidates with the opportunity to achieve positively, as the candidates were able to demonstrate simple skills and understanding by effectively using the resources provided.

Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of food supply issues in LEDCs, a sympathetic and caring attitude to those facing hunger issues and a positive support for charities trying to help. The maps, graphs and data were well-understood by most candidates and the information interpreted where appropriate. Many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do but some misinterpreted exam command words such as the difference between 'describe' and 'explain'.

The vast majority of candidates was entered for the correct tier and very few would have benefited from the higher tier. There were some candidates who did not have the skills to attempt all the questions with a minority avoiding attempting the questions involving extended writing.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

Q1(a) Generally candidates were able to use the resource booklet accurately to answer this question, although a surprising number left it blank.

Q1(b)(i) The vast majority answered this correctly although common answers included USA and Canada.

Q1(b)(ii) This was a mark that most candidates achieved although the way that the answer was expressed sometimes hid what the candidate meant.

Q1(c)(i) and (ii) The question provoked a range of answers mostly using the resource booklet as a basis but also containing some of the candidate's own ideas. The answers that scored the most marks linked the idea of hunger directly to the issue of hunger whilst other answers tended to focus on ideas such as education but without an explicit link to hunger. There was also a misunderstanding of the term 'poor government' and, instead of dealing with the problem of corruption, focused on the idea that it didn't have any money.

Question 2

Q2(a)(i) This question was answered well although a very small proportion of candidates answered "C" which was in the example.

Q2(a)(ii) Most candidates were able to get three marks on this question. The best answers focused on concrete ideas that Simeon could buy medication as opposed to other more general answers such as it would cure HIV. Some candidates did not provide enough answers thus limiting the number of marks that they could achieve.

Q2(b)(i) Virtually all candidates that gave two ticks got this answer correct.

Q2(b)(ii) This question was not well-answered. Candidates scored one mark for contrasting the two individuals in the cartoon but few realised that both were in poverty and fewer still linked the problem of obesity to poverty in MEDCs. There were a few judgemental statements surrounding the issues of obesity.

Q2(b)(iii) Candidates that answered this question well clearly understood the terms 'social' and 'economic' and tailored their answers appropriately. The best economic answers were based on the cost of NHS treatment to the government and subsequently the taxpayer. The best answers for the social section were linked to social exclusion. Where candidates did not achieve high marks this was generally down to the misinterpretation of the key words in the question.

Q2(c) There were some good answers to this question which combined persuasive language with either the problems caused by food shortages or the way that the charity could help. Good use of the resource booklet allowed some candidates to use facts and figures to fully develop their answers and also to try to use guilt to encourage donations. Answers that scored less well usually encouraged people to give money to the charity but did not say what is was for or how it was going to be used.

Question 3

Q3(a)(i) This was the scheme that was answered the best as it was more inherently linked to food and the concepts involved in food shortages. Where a candidate did not get full marks it was usually due to not making two separate points.

Q3(a)(ii) Dropping debt and having more money to spend on food and other agricultural products was not a link that all candidates made and this concept was the difference between the quality of answers. Some candidates did not discriminate between personal debt and government debt.

Q3(a)(iii) Candidates who linked family planning with having fewer children and fewer mouths to feed answered this question successfully. Candidates who strayed into diseases such as HIV or education had to ensure that their answer linked to food to get the marks and they found this much more difficult.

Q3(b) Where candidates were able to achieve the highest marks they were able to take the ideas from the booklet and write about them in detail, producing an answer that linked the idea to how it could reduce hunger and explicitly mentioning whether it was long- or short-term. Candidates who did not achieve the highest marks wrote generally about the scheme describing how it operated but without making the link to hunger. A few candidates did not mention whether they were dealing with long- or short-term schemes and were limited in the mark they could achieve.

Q3(c) This question was generally well-answered with candidates choosing one or two ideas about the future and then developing those ideas ensuring that the answer was linked to food supply. The answers that gave a definite opinion and then justified it were able to get more marks than the candidates who weren't sure or did not know. The candidates who scored less highly generally did not write in enough detail to fully develop the answer, producing a list of problems that could happen but with a lack of detail or link to food supply.

A674/02 Issues in our Fast Changing World (Higher Tier)

General Comments

The longer questions gave candidates the opportunity to show that they had an in-depth understanding of the issues surrounding MEDC and LEDCs and were able to write about the relevant causes and solutions to the problem. The structured questions also allowed candidates to demonstrate their understanding as well as interpret the information given in the resource booklet. The resource booklet was generally used well although credit was given to answers that weren't contained in it. There was also some excellent practice with candidates writing knowledgeably about current events such as Libya, Haiti and Zimbabwe, however, centres are reminded that all of the marks in this paper are gained in AO2 and AO3 so candidates need to apply what they know about these locations rather than recall facts or statistics about them.

Some candidates who did not achieve so much success tended to misinterpret questions so that their answer was not linked to what was being asked. Candidates tended to write about poverty in general, bringing in ideas such as poor education and not making the connection to hunger specifically. Others lost marks where extended writing was required and provided answers that were typically too short and lacking in development, providing a large range of ideas that were briefly outlined.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

Q1(a) This question was generally answered well.

Q1(b) The majority of candidates was able to score at least two marks. Good answers referred to the Brandt Line or the North and South using data from the resource to support their answers. Some candidates who did not achieve full marks either did not use data or tried to explain the pattern rather than describing it.

Q1(c) This question was well-answered with candidates able to describe the pattern and then use data to back it up. The best answers were able to use four pieces of data in their answer. There was also understanding of the type of correlation that was shown with some candidates having completed a statistical analysis of the resources to determine the level of correlation shown.

Q1(d)(i) and (ii) Most candidates were able to achieve at least two marks for this question. The best answers were usually on war, poor government or extreme weather; linking each point they made to the issue of food shortage. Candidates generally did not develop the question fully making one or two valid points with a tendency to then describe how food shortages cause death or how the initial cause may lead to death, such as being shot. There was also some confusion about what constitutes weather with some candidates referring to tsunami, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Question 2

Q2(a) This question generated some well-thought-out answers. Answers that scored highly took the information from the resource booklet and were able to analyse the information, connecting ideas from different resources to link ideas. An example of this was connecting the diseases in Resource 7 to the poverty cycle in Resource 5, explaining how the diseases may have a long term effect on the child's development and subsequent quality of life. Answers that did not score so highly either quoted sections of the resource booklet with little further development or dealt with the ideas individually. There was also a number of candidates who wrote about the diseases in detail without referring to how that may affect someone's quality of life.

Q2(b)(i) The ideas about the cartoon were picked out by the candidates but then they did not necessarily answer the question. Most candidates were able to achieve 1 mark but fewer were able to get the second. There were two reasons for this; firstly, some candidates merely stated the opposite of their first idea instead of making other points. Secondly, candidates made some moral obligation or high value statements about the role of MEDCs or people in MEDCs, especially with regard to obesity.

Q2(b)(ii) This question was not well-answered. Political cartoons and the message that they send out may be an area that centres could concentrate on to further develop their candidates understanding. Weaker answers restated what the cartoon showed without considering why it was misleading. Better answers considered why it did not apply to a whole country.

Q2(b)(iii) This question was generally answered well although there appeared to be some candidates who did not know the terms 'economic' or 'social'.

Q2(c) Many candidates struggled with this question as they did not address the question of why LEDCs or MEDCs had the greater problem. Instead they only described the problems faced on both sides. The best answers focused on the quality of available health care that was available in different types of country and developed ideas on the ability to afford medical treatment. Good answers may also have used figures from the resource booklet to help justify their answer. There were some candidates that commented on the level of danger people were in, arguing that LEDCs had more dangerous diseases but this was not considered valid. In some cases a list-like structure was used and this did not allow for development of the point being made.

Question 3

Q3(a) This question was straightforward for most candidates. The best answers were those related to the Farm Africa scheme as it is most closely linked to hunger, with the ideas on alternative food sources answered the least effectively. Candidates who performed the best were able to link ideas such as education and reducing poverty to hunger, whereas weaker answers ignored the idea of hunger completely. A number of candidates described what the scheme involved, especially those attempting "Drop the Debt", rather than the way it reduced hunger.

Q3(b) This was completed reasonably well with the best answers expanding on the ideas from

Q3(a). The main issues surrounding answers that scored less marks were not directly linking the answer to hunger or commenting on what the disadvantages of a scheme might be.

Q3(c) There was a real range of answers for this question and few candidates scored at a high level. Those that did well adopted a clear structure to their answer, first identifying the problem and then outlining a solution, before spending most of the time explaining why it might be hard to solve. Candidates who chose broad areas such as poverty, climate change or transportation were then able to explain how war, carbon emissions or costs was the problem before explaining why they are difficult to solve. The answers that scored less usually described the problem in detail without answering the question. Candidates who treated 'the right kind of food' and 'the right places' as different ideas, rather than combining the two, provided a much clearer structure to their answer and a most coherent argument.