

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Geography A (J380)

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Overview

Centres have continued to work hard to prepare candidates for the challenges that this specification brings. Once again candidates have displayed some excellent geographical understanding and skills and it is hoped that the comments provided by this report prove both enlightening and helpful for the future.

In **Unit A671, Extreme Environments**, it was obvious that most Foundation candidates appeared to be entered for the correct tier and the vast majority of candidates made a genuine attempt to answer all of the questions they faced. Those that used appropriate terminology and included place detail to develop their ideas did particularly well. At Higher Tier those candidates that utilised the resources effectively, displaying a sound knowledge of the places that they had studied in the process, produced some very good answers. The best answers were focused and fluently written, and candidates developed their ideas well. It was felt that a number of candidates were entered inappropriately for the Higher tier, an issue worth careful consideration by centres when making entries in 2013.

In **Unit A672, Controlled Assessment**, an increasingly varied range of innovative geographical work was seen. The moderating team reported that centres that encouraged their candidates to prepare concise pieces of work, immediately addressing the investigation title, proved once again to signify best practice. It is also very pleasing to report that significantly more candidates integrated their analysis with their maps, images and graphs in this series, following advice offered in previous reports. It was also worth noting that an increased number of centres offered fieldwork opportunities to support both Investigation titles this year.

In **Unit A673, Similarities and Differences**, the majority of Foundation candidates attempted all questions. The candidates' ability to interpret photographic evidence varied; this is an important skill that should be an ongoing focus for centres. Most candidates were able to name their place and their non-UK place and an increasing number of candidates could state place-specific knowledge and display a clear understanding of 'their place' and their 'non-UK place'. At the Higher Tier many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do and there was a reasonable understanding of generic exam command words. However, there was a significant number of candidates who chose to 'describe' rather than 'explain'.

In **Unit A674, Issues in our Fast Changing World**, the Foundation paper produced a wide variety of marks, so differentiating the candidates very effectively. However, a number of candidates misinterpreted exam command words, specifically '*describe*' and '*explain*', mirroring those comments made for A673 Higher Tier. This, understandably, limited the candidates' ability to reach the top level of those questions requiring longer answers. At the Higher Tier this did not materialise as an issue this series with most candidates discriminating correctly between the two terms. However, a significant number of candidates wrote long paragraphs to short answer questions, often achieving full marks in the first couple of sentences; many felt time-pressured in the later questions as a result. A final piece of advice from the examining team is that if a structure for the answer is provided in the question, the candidates should be reminded of the need to stick to it.

Geography 'A' continues to offer candidates the opportunity to study topical, relevant and engaging geography, so helping candidates begin to make sense of their complex and ever-changing world. It is hoped that centres will continue to build up their expertise, and further develop and share their innovative approach towards teaching GCSE Geography.

A671/01 Extreme Environments (Foundation Tier)

General Comments:

The paper was considered appropriate for the ability of Foundation Tier candidates. Overall there was a wide range of answers and most candidates appeared to be correctly entered for this tier. Almost all candidates made a genuine attempt at answering all questions and, providing they had read the questions carefully and responded to the command words rather than writing generally about a topic, they achieved success. Answers from those candidates who were able to use appropriate terminology, include place detail and develop their ideas, particularly in those questions involving extended writing, were very impressive. Indeed there was some evidence that a minority of the entry would have coped very well with the demands of the Higher Tier paper.

Most of the candidates wrote legibly and to a reasonable standard and there were very few scripts where it was impossible to decipher answers. It appeared that all candidates had enough time to complete the paper; where sections were left blank it was probably due to the candidate being unable to answer the question, rather than to not having enough time.

As in previous years the paper contained structured and resource-based tasks giving candidates the opportunity to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding. Many were able to take these opportunities. Some candidates would benefit from more practice of their skills, for example the use of various types of map, graph and photographs, along with learning the factual information more thoroughly, in order to acquire the required knowledge and understanding.

The following key points should help future candidates:

- Provide opportunities to practise map reading, including the use of keys and scales – use basic atlas maps for example.
- Stress the importance of reading questions carefully and, if it helps, encourage the use of a highlighter in class and in the exam to make key words and exact instructions stand out.
- Do as much practice from past papers as time allows to illustrate the importance of reading questions carefully, to ensure that answers are relevant. Teachers should share mark scheme principles with students and spend some time teaching exam technique, ensuring that candidates are familiar with the meaning of common command words used.
- Stress the need to learn and to understand basic geographical vocabulary. Refer to the terms provided in the specification for guidance.

The detailed comments on questions below highlight the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1(a)(i)** This was generally well-answered. Most candidates followed the instruction and marked one cross carefully on or north of the 32°C isotherm. A few drew several crosses and were penalised if any of their attempts were incorrect, or they drew crosses close to, but south of, the isotherm.
- 1(a)(ii)** Whilst there were a significant number of correct answers, some candidates missed the part of the question which said '*of Mauritania*' and shaded the entire area of the map between the 100mm and 300 mm isohyets. Some shaded all the way to the southern border of Mauritania rather than the 300mm isohyet.

- 1(b)** This was quite well-answered overall with many candidates referring to the lack of cloud and a good proportion of the more well-prepared candidates referred in some way to the high angle of the sun. A lot of candidates missed this second mark, mentioning the proximity to the Equator or the tropics but not explaining why this resulted in high temperatures. Answers about the lack of rain were not relevant.
- 1(c)(i)** The majority of candidates gained 3 or 4 marks for this question. Where marks were lost it was usually due to getting the first missing answer and/or the last one incorrect. A common error was to refer to the desert '*shrinking*' instead of '*spreading*' in the final response, despite the fact that most had recognised that less rain is falling.
- 1(c)(ii)** Nearly all candidates identified at least one of the correct responses. Some however did not get marks as they gave responses such as '*off-road driving*' and '*drilling for oil*'. Candidates need to be encouraged to think carefully what is being asked, and in this case, they had to look for responses which identified how people make desertification worse, not just activities which can take place in a desert.
- 1(c)(iii)** This was generally well-answered with many candidates scoring marks for the ideas of crop failure, starvation and death of either people or animals (or both). Quite a few also mentioned migration and/or shortage of fuelwood. Some generalised that there would be water shortages but did not relate this to drinking water or to people in any way.
- 2(a)(i)** This was well-answered with almost all candidates following the rubric and scoring full marks.
- 2(a)(ii)** This was generally well-answered, with many candidates getting the marks for the ideas that camels are used for personal transportation and for carrying heavy loads, though there were other relevant ideas included. Some candidates repeated information from the previous answer, stating why a camel is suited to the desert rather than how they are used by people.
- 2(b)** This was a question which succeeded in differentiating between the candidates. Most were able to score at least 1 or 2 marks with simple statements, usually about features of a cactus, though other plants were mentioned by some candidates. There were some very pleasing Level 3 answers, including developed statements about adaptations with reference to good examples using technical vocabulary such as ephemeral and xerophyte.
- 3(a)** Most candidates scored the mark and common choices were the Himalayas, the Andes, Antarctica, Svalbard and Alaska. Some candidates named examples of areas which were much too vague. For example, for a mountainous environment, some wrote '*Scotland*' or '*Wales*' or '*Peru*' with no qualification as to which part of the country was classed as an 'extreme environment'. Quite significant numbers also wrote '*The Arctic*' as their example though clearly in class they would have studied a precise location north of the Arctic Circle.
- 3(b)** Almost all candidates were able to choose the correct photographs to match their extreme environment.
- 3(c)** Many candidates were better at describing what they saw in their chosen photograph rather than at explaining why the area was extreme in relation to human use of the area. They described the features of the area in detail but with no explanation. For example they would describe the terrain as being '*steep and rocky*' but without an explanation; that doesn't make it an extreme environment, just a steep, rocky one. The weakest answers were purely descriptive and they earned candidates a mark within Level 1, however those who did explain issues such as those connected with climate, accessibility, resource and food production went on to obtain Levels 2 and 3 – the latter if the explanations were developed.

- 3(d)** The term '*physical process*' was not known by many candidates who wrote instead about a landform. Others did not read the question properly and went on to describe a process common in an area of temperature extremes, such as exfoliation, or the formation of a rock pedestal in the desert by wind abrasion. Many who named a landform did briefly allude to its formation, sometimes scoring a mark or two for a relevant process within their answer. There were some very good answers on calving and frost heave, however the majority of those gaining full marks were about freeze-thaw.
- 3(e)** Many candidates gained marks for simple statements about loss of habitat, crops not growing, animals dying, flooding or avalanches. Some candidates appeared to be unaware of the concept of 'climate change' and wrote about the general difficulties of living in a mountain or polar climate, whilst others wrote about the weather getting colder rather than temperatures increasing.
- 4(a)** This question was generally well-answered with many candidates scoring 3 or 4 marks. Some vague responses stated '*to see what it's like in an extreme environment/to experience it*' or '*because it will soon have gone*' – more was required than this. Candidates could either answer from the perspective of what visitors could do when they get there (e.g. climbing, skiing, hiking, viewing wildlife etc.) or from the point of view of increased affluence, changing tastes in holidays or increased access to areas of extreme environment.
- 4(b)** This question was wrongly interpreted by some candidates who wrote about how mountains/polar regions can be dangerous for tourists. Those who reached Level 1 usually mentioned problems connected with litter and animals being scared away by tourists. Level 2 or 3 answers concentrated on both positive and negative impacts of tourism and referred to either economic or environmental impacts. Top marks were only awarded to candidates who were able to include place detail, with some candidates successfully referring to examples such as the Himalayas, Machu Picchu or Alaska as their example.

A671/02 Extreme Environments (Higher Tier)

General Comments:

The level of difficulty was appropriate for Higher Tier candidates, many of them understanding the requirements of the questions, making good use of the resources, and showing an appropriate knowledge of the issues and concepts being tested. The paper challenged high performing candidates yet allowed all some positive achievement, thus there was a wide spread of marks. It is to be noted, however, that there were several questions which resulted in either marks of zero or No Response from a significant minority of candidates. This is a reflection of a considerable number of candidates being entered inappropriately for the Higher Tier and struggling.

There did not appear to be any time issues as most candidates were able to complete the whole paper, most attempting to answer each question and using their time effectively with varying degrees of success. Those who would have been able to cope far better with the demands of the Foundation Tier have already been mentioned, however it has to be said that an excellent standard was achieved by candidates from many centres. Their answers showed an outstanding grasp of the content tested and an in-depth knowledge and understanding of those extreme environments studied, including 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.

Weak responses, characteristic perhaps of those who were inappropriately entered, included misinterpretation of questions, inability to respond to the command words and/or key words, and poorly focused answers which lacked both detail and precision.

The following key points should help future candidates:

- Provide frequent opportunities to practise using and interpreting a variety of resources, including maps of various types, graphs and photographs. Candidates need to study the resources carefully, using appropriate facts and statistics to back up an answer and interpreting them by making appropriate comments, rather than just copying them.
- Stress the importance of reading questions carefully and, if it helps, encourage the use of a highlighter in class and the exam to make key words and exact instructions stand out, for example whether the question is asking about the impacts on the natural environment or people, or whether it is asking about processes or landforms.
- Do as much practice from past papers as time allows to illustrate the importance of reading questions carefully, to ensure that answers are relevant. Teachers should share mark scheme principles with students and spend some time teaching exam technique, ensuring that candidates are fully conversant with the meaning of all command words used.
- Stress the need to learn and to use, wherever possible, geographical vocabulary. Refer to the terms provided in the specification for guidance.
- Encourage candidates to 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. They should know how to 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.

The detailed comments on questions below highlight the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1(a)** More astute candidates realised that, as the cross was placed between the isotherms and isohyets, the answer was not 50mm or 100mm, nor was it 32°C or 38°C. Any intermediate value was acceptable or appropriate words which conveyed a correct interpretation, such as *'hot and dry'*. Surprisingly, a significant number of candidates copied the values from the isolines, even though the crosses were some distance from them.
- 1(b)** Answers to this question varied in quality from very well-detailed responses gaining full marks to those showing no real understanding. The latter tended to include unsupported references to trade winds, the Hadley Cell or a lack of clouds. Many answers focused on processes in Equatorial regions but did not manage to link these with the dry conditions in the desert. Some candidates did not achieve any marks as they merely described the location of deserts in terms of their latitude and did not actually explain why they were arid as the question required. Most correct responses focused on high pressure and sinking air, clearly recognising how that would result in a lack of rainfall. At the very top end there were some excellent explanations of the significance of rain shadows and cold ocean currents.
- 1(c)** Most candidates were able to describe trends such as the overall reduction in rainfall totals or the fluctuation in amounts before and after the late 1960s, however many only scored two of the three marks as there was a reserve mark for the accurate use of statistics and years. Some did not attempt to do this despite the clear instruction in the question to do so, and many attempts were inaccurate. Candidates need to be aware that when the question relates to change over time, then two dates and two accurate figures are needed to go with them.
- 1(d)** There were many excellent detailed responses here including place references. In general candidates seemed to be more confident writing about the problems for people rather than for the natural environment. There were some irrelevant answers and parts of answers that gave detail about the causes of desertification rather than the problems.
- 2(a)** On the whole this was well-answered and many candidates showed their knowledge of the nomadic lifestyles of indigenous desert tribes, backing up their comments with examples (e.g. Bedouin). Others gave weak responses referring vaguely to *'farm animals'* or *'growing crops'*. Some even wrote about oil extraction. There were a significant number of candidates who did not respond to the question, suggesting that they were not familiar with the word *'indigenous'*.
- 2(b)** The majority of candidates were aware of the conflicts arising from issues such as oil exploitation, solar panels and tourism and many gave reference to a place or the name of a tribe, even though they were not always able to develop the reasons for the conflict with any clarity, many using vague statements such as *'they disturb the lifestyles'*. Very few candidates addressed *'To what extent'* conflict exists by making an evaluative comment, thus were unable to access full marks. Some candidates simply described the other land uses without developing the idea of conflict.
- 3(a)** Most candidates at least entered Level 2 for detailed description of the photograph. The explanation of why the area is extreme needed to be linked to difficulties caused for people who either live or visit the area and some candidates gave detailed descriptions but did not make the links with people. However, there were some excellent examples of detailed and perceptive answers which gained marks at Level 3.
- 3(b)(i)** Most candidates gave an appropriate named area, though some named an area which was far too broad (e.g. Arctic) and some did not understand that the focus of the

question was on the natural environment rather than the built environment. Uses of the natural environment of the area chosen were generally acceptable, though candidates offering vague answers such as farming, living and extreme sports, rather than giving a more specific response, lost marks.

- 3(b)(ii)** Answers varied in quality and the question differentiated well. Most answers tended to focus on water and/or food supply, loss of tourism and the related income and some were clearly and fully explained. Most answers were appropriate to the example chosen, although some candidates confused where the permanent population is – for example answers relating to Inuits in Antarctica. Some candidates missed the ‘*people*’ focus of the question and gave answers relating to the natural environment whilst others only gave part of the answer e.g. ‘the glaciers melt’ without developing this to indicate the potential impacts on people. There were some answers which did not understand the concept of ‘*climate change*’, discussing instead the difficulties for people of surviving in an extreme environment, whilst other answers related to impacts of climatic change at a global scale rather than on the study area chosen.

In question 4 some candidates confused landforms and physical features with processes and vice versa. Some realised at the end of the examination and added arrows to indicate that they had answered in the wrong place and were able to be credited.

- 4(a)** Corries, pyramidal peaks and icebergs were the most popular choice of landform or physical feature and there were a number of clear descriptions, including (usually) labelled diagrams. Many candidates included an explanation of the processes involved in the formation of their chosen feature – whilst this did not gain credit, any descriptive points incorporated did. Some candidates wrongly wrote about a desert landform, in particular rock pedestals, and gained no credit as the question clearly asked for a landform or physical feature in a polar or mountain environment.
- 4(b)** There were some excellent detailed accounts of some processes, particularly freeze-thaw, though answers from many candidates lacked precision and explanations on the whole were not well-developed. Where they were, there seemed to be only a simple reference to how they shaped landforms. Many candidates included more than one process in their answer – writing about each of freeze-thaw, abrasion and plucking in a glaciated area for example without developing any. Diagrams varied in quality and quite a few candidates did not attempt to use them.

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

General Comments:

As teachers and candidates become more accustomed to the demands of this specification, an increasingly varied range of innovative geographical work has been seen. This report will identify some good practice, which it is hoped will inform centres and candidates so that future cohorts are able to maintain, and build upon, the quality and style of work seen so far.

For Task 1, centres chose from the full range of tasks although Investigation A, relating to the purchase of one electrical item proved the most popular, closely followed by Investigation C, with the focus on leisure time. The investigations in Task 2 attracted a more even entry profile with Investigations A and C being selected more frequently.

The candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the investigation titles and the submitted marks spanned the full mark range. Candidates have visited some interesting fieldwork locations and utilised some effective fieldwork skills; this was seen more often across both investigations this year, which is very encouraging and testament to the hard work of teachers. It was very pleasing to see many centres contextualising the tasks so that they became more pertinent to the candidates' own experiences, although a few centres once again moved too far 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 display increasing confusion as their investigation progressed and tended to lose focus in their concluding statements. It is advisable for candidates to use the investigation title as a heading at the beginning of their work and they should also be encouraged to return to the title at the end when drawing their conclusions.

In Task 1A many candidates chose to focus their work on mobile phones. They utilised questionnaires and surveys, although a number of candidates did not focus sufficiently on the impact of the purchase of mobile phones on people. A significant number of candidates wrote at some length about the resultant problems for gorillas in the Congo which, while accurate and interesting to read, did not address the investigation title. Some of the work was very factual but sometimes lacked geographical depth. The better candidates offered some effective in-depth analysis of the impacts of people related to mobile phone purchase, with others offered a very personal perspective about how their research may influence their own spending habits. Questionnaires were used extensively by candidates to illustrate their thoughts and allowed many candidates the opportunity to display their flair for research. However a number of the questions were rather vague and did little to support valid geographical conclusions. Additionally, much of the weaker work seen tended to rely heavily upon text resources, with little personalisation of the investigation evident. While the use of such a resource is useful, candidates should always be encouraged to go beyond what is written by developing or processing the information in some way. Essays, booklets containing some excellent overlays and a variety of targeted reports and newspaper stories proved popular for this assessment piece; they all gave candidates the opportunity to access the full mark range.

Task 1C saw candidates exploring how peoples' use of leisure time can lead to conflict. This allowed centres to develop fieldwork in a number of interesting locations such as Castleton and Ludlow, and gave candidates the opportunity to collect some meaningful data. One centre's candidates contextualised the investigation very effectively by posing questions such as '*Should we take coral home from a diving holiday?*' or '*Where should we go for a city break?*' This enabled the candidates to immerse themselves in the investigation, as it clearly had a real purpose. Other centres again offered candidates choice in the leisure activity selected – e.g.

surfing, horse riding – which again seemed to give these candidates additional motivation to produce some pleasing investigations. The moderation team commented that where candidates were given freedom to display their initiative, they tended to take more ownership over their work and achieve better as a result. Unfortunately, other candidates tended to lose focus a little on the conflicts created, tending to offer only a descriptive account of how people use their leisure time. However, much effective data collection was evident across this investigation and most candidates used it in some way to inform their conclusions.

Tasks 2A and 2C proved very popular and gave candidates many opportunities to plan and execute some solid primary data collection. Well-presented location maps were a feature of these investigations, together with carefully annotated shopping centre floor plans. Posters were common as were written reports; in both cases, the best work seen contained some carefully chosen photographs which were annotated with detailed, thoughtful and perceptive analytical comments. A number of candidates used their own photographs, which helped to personalise the investigation for them even more. Some imaginative data was collected, such as from interviews with shop owners and developers; this enabled candidates to reflect on the issue being investigated from a number of different perspectives. In the better work seen, candidates had been encouraged to research fully and develop a clear sequence to their enquiry. They clearly understood the reasons for undertaking the fieldwork; they became absorbed in their work and were able to use the data collected in a selective and informed manner. Westfield Shopping Centre and the potential impact of Stratford City proved a popular fieldwork focus, as did Birmingham's Bull Ring, Meadowhall in Sheffield, Liverpool and Cabot Circus in Bristol. These and other excellent locations gave candidates plenty to analyse and discuss in the high control phase of the controlled assessment process. It was commented in the 2011 report that 'candidates who chose to study a complete town instead of a retail area within a town found it more difficult to draw meaningful conclusions'. It is very pleasing to report that this was not seen as an issue this series.

In summary, centres that encouraged their candidates to prepare concise pieces of work and immediately addressed the investigation title, proved once again to signify best practice. Those candidates who had clearly researched and decided upon a clear, logical and sequenced line of investigation in the research phase were able to immediately focus their work when embarking on the final, high level of control phase. Those candidates who were asked to also quote the sources for their work also seemed to produce work that was concise and more focused on the investigation title. It must be noted that the work from a minority of centres tended to display little originality and proved very formulaic to read and moderate. This disadvantages the candidates as they are unable to easily display the knowledge, skills and understanding that allow sustained access to marks at the higher end of the mark scheme.

In relation to 2011, an increased number of centres offered candidates choice in which investigation they followed. This is entirely acceptable and gives them additional opportunities to display their imagination, originality and initiative (AO3). Centres that maximised their use of local circumstances, and fieldwork opportunities within them, seemed to really engage candidates and helped them to develop their understanding of local, topical geography.

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. Unfortunately there was, again, 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. Also, the questions posed in some candidate questionnaires proved a little vague. Candidates should be encouraged to pilot their questionnaires to establish the extent to which the questions posed are both relevant and helpful to their investigations.

All centres should remind candidates of the need to include a wide range of data presentation techniques; the use of bar or pie charts alone are, at GCSE level, skills that all candidates should be moving away from. Whilst there are pockets of good practice, it is hoped that, despite the regulatory constraints, candidates are still encouraged to develop their skills in this area. It is very pleasing to report that significantly more candidates integrated their analysis with their maps, images and graphs in this series. Analysis in this way undoubtedly ensures that all data is analysed and seems to also help candidates when drawing overall conclusions from their data.

The moderating team was again heartened by the quality of the geography seen from many of the candidates. As centres acknowledge the reduced possibilities for ICT in the presentation of candidate work, it is clear that those candidates, who plan effectively, research diligently and utilise all at their disposal in an ordered and concise manner, are then able to illustrate some excellent geographical understanding and skills.

A673/01 Similarities and Differences (Foundation Tier)

General Comments:

The level of challenge was deemed appropriate for a Foundation paper. Very few questions were unanswered by candidates and the timing of the exam allowed candidates the opportunity to attempt all questions on the paper. Many candidates were successful at interpreting some of the statistical data sources and were able to use the evidence given to their advantage however this was not the case for all candidates. The ability of candidates to interpret photographic evidence varied and this should be an ongoing 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.

Most candidates were able to name their place and their non-UK place and an increasing number of candidates could state place-specific knowledge particularly in relation to their non-UK location. Other candidates wrote generic statements which could relate to anywhere in the world.

Many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do and there was a reasonable understanding of generic exam command words. A significant number of candidates misinterpreted the command words relating to the specification – specifically '*similarities*', '*geographical issue*' and '*differences in development*'. Centres need to remind candidates that descriptions between '*nations*' as opposed to UK and non-UK places will not be credited.

It was pleasing to read candidates' responses where they had a clear understanding of '*their place*' and their '*non-UK place*', however the use of place-specific references was fairly limited. This limited candidates in achieving Level 3. Many candidates provided generic descriptions about changes in their UK place and a significant number of candidates could not offer any reasoning as to why these changes might take place.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1(a)** Most candidates achieved full marks by describing the location of '*your place*' using compass directions or proximity to other locations, transport links and physical features. There was limited use of precise distances. Some candidates simply described '*your place*' and this did not gain credit.
- 1(b)(i)** Most candidates correctly interpreted the graph.
- 1(b)(ii)** Most candidates correctly interpreted the graph.
- 1(c)** Many candidates used the source well to give responses about '*jobs*', '*unemployment*' and '*work UK citizens did not apply for*'. Some candidates were able to bring their own knowledge to this response and developed their reasoning appropriately. The question asked candidates to '*describe two reasons*', a significant number of candidates stated four reasons without development, which was credited at two marks.
- 1(d)(i),(ii) and (iii)**
Candidates responded well to these questions providing interesting perceptions of how migrants affect various people and their professions. Credit was given to candidates for

developing more than one reason regarding the impact of migrants without mentioning how that profession might 'feel'. There was no double credit for the same reasoning given in (i) and (iii).

- 1(e)** Many candidates selected a word from the source without developing what the geographical issue might be. Those candidates who developed the idea of a geographical issue focused on describing the issue or the causes of the issue rather than responding to the command words in the question '*describe the effects*'. Some candidates wrote about effects of the issue on a local scale detailing many generic, non place-specific effects. A limited number of candidates were able to develop their responses to include the effects at a UK scale.
- 2(a)** Candidates stated a good, varied range of ways in which '*your place*' might change. Many candidates wrote about named, planned developments or changes which are ongoing e.g. the Olympic Games in Stratford or Birmingham's Big City Plan. Centres will need to be mindful of the relevance of some of these changes in future years. Some candidates were credited at Level 1 for generic changes such as '*building more houses*', '*shops in the centre will close down*'. Many candidates did not develop their answer to include why the change might happen. A limited number of candidates wrote about migration.
- 2(b)(i)** Those candidates who had clearly identified a named change in 2(a) were able to develop the effects on people in their communities and many named different groups of people in developing their answers. Candidates who had written a non-specific change in 2(a) often stated a number of effects many of which were not related to the change they had stated.
- 2(b)(ii)** Some candidates who had clearly identified a named change in 2(a) were able to develop the effects on the environment in '*your place*' naming place-specific references. Many candidates wrote generic effects on the environment e.g. '*destroy land*', '*increased emissions*' or '*habitats lost*'.
- 3(a)** Most candidates correctly interpreted the map.
- 3(b)** Most candidates focused on '*airports*'. Many candidates quoted data from the source or used terms such as '*most*'/'*many*'. Candidates were able to explain why 'this made a good choice to host the football World Cup'. Some candidates lifted a phrase from source Fig. 5.
- 3(c)** Most candidates were able to identify that the photographs reflected different levels of development in South Africa. Some candidates were able to make a comparative judgement using evidence from the photographs; this usually referred to the quality and density of buildings. Many candidates described features in each photograph without explaining how those features reflected levels of development. Some candidates referred to Cape Town being an LEDC and an MEDC. Centres must ensure candidates use these terms correctly.
- 3(d)** Candidates who achieved Level 3 wrote their responses from the perspective of someone actually living in their 'non-UK location'. Well-written answers gave a commentary to the examiner of a resident's experience of day-to-day life in their 'non-UK location'. Most candidates wrote a factual description of their non-UK place including some place-specific detail. Candidates writing about Mumbai described the differences in wealth in the city, the climate and the prospects for future developments; they did not really address 'what is it like to live there?' Few candidates incorrectly wrote about 'your place'.

- 3(e)** Candidates who achieved Level 3 wrote about named, place-specific similarities including valid statistics. Factors candidates chose to focus on were '*employment*', '*new developments taking place*' and '*location factors e.g. coastal location contributing to developments in trade, fishing etc.*' Many candidates wrote about 'links' rather than 'similarities'. Some candidates made generic statements regarding similarities in terms of '*food*', '*schools*', '*transport*' etc. which were credited at Level 1.

A673/02 Similarities and Differences (Higher Tier)

General Comments:

The level of challenge was deemed appropriate for a Higher paper. Few questions were unanswered by candidates and the timing of the exam allowed candidates the opportunity to attempt all questions on the paper. There was no evidence of candidates running out of time. The paper provided challenge for the most able candidates hoping to achieve high level marks. Many candidates were successful at interpreting the statistical data sources and were able to use the evidence given to their advantage however this was not the case for all candidates. The ability of candidates to interpret photographic evidence varied and it should be an ongoing focus for centres to develop candidate skills. Literacy skills regarding grammar and spelling were sound in many cases; many could accurately use subject-specific language. Centres must continue to develop candidates' abilities to explain features of both locations using subject-specific language.

Most candidates could state place-specific knowledge of their locations particularly in relation to their non-UK location. Some candidates wrote generic statements about locations which could relate to anywhere in the world. Centres need to be vigilant when deciding tiers of entry.

Many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do and there was a reasonable understanding of generic exam command words. There was a significant number of candidates who chose to '*describe*' rather than '*explain*'. Some candidates misinterpreted the command words relating to the specification – specifically '*geographical issue*' and '*development levels*'. Centres need to remind candidates that descriptions between 'nations' as opposed to 'your place' and 'your non-UK place' will not be credited.

It was pleasing to read candidates' responses where they had a clear understanding of '*their place*' and their '*non-UK place*' and the use of place-specific references and data from some candidates was excellent. This affected candidates achieving Level 3. Some candidates provided generic descriptions about changes in '*their UK place*' and a significant number of candidates could not offer any reasoning as to why these changes might take place.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1(a) Many candidates identified a generic source; most commonly '*the internet*'. Most candidates could describe the information that their source provided or list a number of pieces of information that they had referred to. Fewer candidates could explain how that information helped their understanding of 'your place'.
- 1(b) Most candidates were able to describe the trend of the graph effectively and use data; some candidates did not use '*thousands*' in quoting data. Some candidates used the phrase '*positive correlation*'; this was not credited.
- 1(c) Most candidates were able to use the source material effectively to explain why the UK attracts migrants. Many candidates supplemented their development of reasoning with their own knowledge.
- 1(d) This question differentiated well. Some candidates drew a good sketch of '*your place*' with limited or no annotation whilst others drew a limited sketch with detailed annotations about '*different types of features*'. There was a large difference in the accuracy/quality of sketch maps; with the best being drawn at a regional scale. A significant number of candidates drew their sketches at the UK scale; this was not credited. Candidates were over-reliant on annotations that described three transport

features of *'your place'*. Centres need to further develop candidate skills of accurate sketching and annotation.

- 1(e)** Higher level candidates clearly identified a *'geographical issue'* affecting the UK. Popular themes were migration, employment and climate change. Some candidates gave a good account relating to flooding using topical recent events. A significant number of candidates did not identify a geographical issue. These candidates wrote a generic answer about how *'people'* (not named groups), would respond differently to any event/issue. Some candidates stated stereotypical responses to generic issues, particularly in relation to migration. Some candidates focused on different groups' opinions about *'your place'* for no credit. Centres need to continue to encourage students to move their knowledge of identified groups beyond *'the old'* v *'the young'*.
- 2(a)** Most candidates could name and describe a future change in *'your place'*. Many candidates wrote about named, planned developments or changes which are ongoing e.g. the Olympic Games in Stratford or Birmingham's Big City Plan. Centres will need to be mindful of the relevance of some of these changes in future years. Some candidates could not develop the reason for the change, frequently listing the effects of the change instead.
- 2(b)** Few candidates showed a thorough understanding of the effects of the change on both people and the environment. The choice of change written in 2(a) sometimes limited candidate responses to this question. Place-specific detail was weak in many responses; there was limited awarding at Level 3. Some candidates were able to develop their explanation and reasoning for their point of view; this was credited at Level 3.
- 3(a)** Most candidates answered well with many gaining full marks. Many candidates used compass directions accurately to describe South Africa's location in relation to other countries, features, oceans. Centres should remind students of the need to use geographical terms and avoid phrases such as *'below'*, *'near'* and *'surrounded by'*.
- 3(b)** Most candidates focused on *'airports'*. Many candidates quoted data from the source or used terms such as *'most'/'many'*. Candidates were able to explain why *'this made a good choice to host the football World Cup'*. Some candidates quoted the GDP data but did not develop their answer to explain South Africa's preparedness for the World Cup.
- 3(c)** Most candidates could identify the different levels of development between the photographs as a key message. Some candidates did not use the photographs effectively to provide evidence of the diversity. Some candidates wrote descriptions of both photographs but did not link their observations to *'levels of development'*. Higher achieving candidates often included extra messages e.g. *'the World Cup distracting the government from investing in poverty stricken areas of their country'*.
- 3(d)** Most candidates described the *'level of development'* effectively. There were comprehensive descriptions of the disparity in development in Mumbai. Most candidates offered limited explanation regarding the *'level of development'* and so limited the marks they could be awarded. Some candidates misinterpreted the economic judgement of *'level of development'* to be developments taking place – this was not credited. Mumbai was the most popular non-UK location; centres that used locations in MEDCs did so very effectively.
- 3(e)** Candidates who accessed Level 3 wrote comprehensively about similarities and differences between *'your place'* and *'your non-UK place'*. These responses involved place-specific detail and accurate statistics supported by an explanation of why the differences or similarities exist. Candidates who achieved Level 3 wrote developed

explanations about '*climate*', '*economic development*', '*employment*', '*historical development*' etc. supported with place-specific detail. Many candidates responded at Level 2 as they offered comparative named descriptions of similarities and differences without developing each point or explaining why the similarities or differences exist. Some candidates listed generic points of comparison; these candidates made statements such as '*Mumbai has lots of billionaires, my place hasn't*'. Some candidates are still confusing the idea of 'similarities' to the 'links' that they have studied.

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

General Comments:

The level of challenge was deemed appropriate for Foundation Tier candidates and very few questions received *No Response*. Very few candidates seemed to be entered for the wrong tier and the exam provided a wide variety of marks differentiating the candidates. The time seemed to be adequate as there did not seem to be too many partially finished answers in the paper.

Many candidates were successful at interpreting the resource booklet provided and this should remain the key focus in preparation for the 2013 exam. Literacy skills, including grammar and spelling, provided a barrier for candidates to do well and the use of subject-specific language was patchy. A number of candidates misinterpreted exam command words specifically '*describe*' and '*explain*'. This limited the candidates' ability to reach the top level of the longer questions. The maps, graphs and data were well-understood by most candidates and the information interpreted where appropriate.

The higher achieving candidates also showed good exam technique and the following points may help to clarify expectations:

- Ensure that students know their command words especially '*explain*'
- Qualify the term pollution – which type of pollution?
- Fully developed paragraphs score more highly than lists of key ideas
- Copying chunks from the resource booklet will not score highly.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) This was generally well-answered. The main issue was some candidates not putting three responses.

1(b) This was well-answered if candidates stuck to health although there was a proportion who wrote about climate change.

1(c)(i) A wide range of answers seen with a lot of 44 and 46 million showing they were uncertain on how to read the graph accurately.

1(c)(ii) A wide variety of answers although most were correct.

1(c)(iii) A range of responses given. The best answers took one or two ideas and extended them fully giving details of how they caused problems. The use of the resource booklet as a stimulus for a candidate's own ideas was common and was a route to scoring well in the question. A few candidates did not write enough to get all four marks.

1(d)(i), (ii) and (iii)

The questions all used the same resource and structure and candidates who did well in one tended to do well in all of them. Candidates that were able to scan through the resource booklet and pull out a key idea and then link it to the idea of sustainability scored two marks. Too many students felt content to copy from the booklet and then stop, limiting the marks they could be awarded. If there are two marks available then they need to have enough detail to be awarded the second mark.

- 2(a)** Candidates were asked to sort the information into the correct box. The candidates that stuck to the most obvious answers generally were awarded high marks but a minority misunderstood the term '*economic*' and this confusion then caused problems in what they wrote in other sections.
- 2(b)** Well-answered unless the candidate wrote '*pollution*' which scores no marks without qualification. What type of pollution?
- 2(c)** The best answers used the resource booklet to find out the names of the group and what the problem was. They then recognised the command word '*explain*' and were able to give reasons why that group would be unhappy. Too many students copied large chunks from the resource booklet with no further development and were limited in the marks they could achieve.
- 2(d)** This question was designed to allow candidates to consider the benefits that the Olympics have brought both now and in the future. The scaffold was used to help guide answers and it was important that candidates filled it in correctly to show that they understood the concepts that were being considered. Basic answers tended to be copied from the resource booklet or be descriptions of what had been done with no development. Where a candidate was able to explain the benefit they could reach the higher levels but it was a lack of understanding of the key command word that limited a number of candidates. It was also better for a candidate to develop one idea in each section rather than provide a list of basic developments.
- 3(a)** This question was generally quite well-answered. Where candidates were able to stick to transport issues they were able to identify some of the problems and start to give ways that overcame the problems. Some candidates wrote one way of overcoming the difficulty whereas some candidates wrote about a variety of techniques. Either was appropriate as long as the candidate was able to develop their answer and not limit themselves by merely re-stating their problem as a development of their chosen strategy.
- 3(b)** Most candidates were able to give two ways to reduce energy use but a lack of explanation, or just rewriting the question, proved an issue for the weaker candidates.
- 3(c)** The final question on the paper was also the hardest and was answered poorly. The question asked for the use of examples and the use of an explanation. The weaker candidates were not able to do this and either copied sections of the resource booklet or went on to a discussion of why it is important to work together but without referring to an example. Level 2 answers tended to give examples of sustainability from either Newcastle or Stratford but very few candidates reached Level 3. Those that did used the examples of Newcastle to show the different groups working together and usually identified one idea, such as recycling, and why everyone needed to be involved in the process for it have the maximum benefit.

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

General Comments:

The Higher Tier paper contained an appropriate level of challenge and very few questions were left blank. Higher achieving candidates were able to apply their knowledge on sustainability to the examples provided in the resource booklet, tailoring their responses to the demands of the questions, especially the command words '*describe*' and '*explain*'. Weaker candidates tended to only achieve Level 1 on the levelled questions, providing generic information that was either copied information from the resource booklet or provided answers that described what rather than explaining why. The resource booklet was generally used well although credit was given to answers that were not from it. 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.

Most candidates had time to finish the paper although some of the more basic answers towards the end of the paper may indicate some time pressure. A large number of candidates wrote long paragraphs to short answer questions, often achieving full marks in the first couple of sentences and wasting time they might have been able to use later in the paper.

The higher achieving candidates also showed good exam technique and the following points may help to clarify expectations.

- Ensure that students know their command words especially '*explain*'
- Qualify the term '*pollution*' – which type of pollution?
- Fully developed paragraphs score more highly than lists of key ideas
- Copying paragraphs from the resource booklet will not score highly
- If a structure for the answer is provided in the question, such as individuals, communities and governments, then the answers that are awarded the highest marks will follow this.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1(a)** Most candidates were able to use the resource booklet to gain a mark. Some were able to extend their answer to gain a second mark. Weaker answers made a list from the resource booklet.
- 1(b)** Most candidates were able to score well on this question. Common errors included not giving the effect on people or not limiting answers to cities.
- 1(c)(i)** When the candidate followed the wording of the question they scored full marks. Problems included reading the wrong line on the graph or not using data in their answer.
- 1(c)(ii)** Stronger candidates tended to base their answer on housing and the increased need for resources. There were frequent examples of good development such as increasing housing density or building on greenfield sites.
- 1(d)** This question asked candidates to look at the ideas in the resource booklet and consider whether they will have an effect in the future. There was a wide variety of marks awarded for this question, most of them in Level 1 and 2. Candidates who achieved Level 1 wrote descriptively and/or copied large chunks from the resource booklet. There was no attempt to develop any statements providing evidence of why

Newcastle was sustainable. In Level 2 there was often a concentration on the present and what was happening either now or what Newcastle had already done. The question asked about what will happen in the future and the best answers were able to use existing schemes and predict what effect they will have, considering whether the idea would work in the long term. The '*To what extent...*' idea was not well dealt with meaning there were few achieving full marks.

- 2(a)** This question asked candidates to consider each of the points in the resource booklet and why they might be sustainable. Level 1 answers tended to describe what was happening, copying large sections from the resource booklet, or sorting the information under the headings economy, environment and local community. Where candidates were able to develop their idea linking it to sustainability then they were awarded a minimum of Level 2. Often candidates decided to try and develop every point from the resource booklet which led to many lengthy answers that read like a list. It also led to a lot of repetition which could have been avoided. There was also an imbalance between the three sections. Whichever section was attempted first was written about in a lot more detail than that which was written about later and this imbalance led to candidates missing out on being awarded a Level 3. A fairly wide interpretation of the phrase '*sustainability*' was used but, despite that, some candidates wrote about the benefits in general.
- 2(b)** Generally well-answered but the candidates needed to consider what the environmental problem is, for example more cars aren't necessarily a problem; it is the exhaust gases which are the problem. Too many candidates still write '*pollution*' without being more specific about the type of pollution.
- 2(c)** Higher achieving candidates were able to look at the resource booklet and explain how the issue affected the group on a daily basis. Lower achieving candidates copied from the resource booklet with no further development of their answer. A greater than expected proportion of candidates only gave one group.
- 2(d)** This question was looking for the candidates to use the resource booklet to explain how different groups benefit during and after the Olympic Games. Level 1 answers tended to copy from the booklet without developing their answer further. There were some candidates who sorted the information into now and in the future which also limited them to Level 1. The best answers considered the benefits of the Olympic Games now and in the future in different paragraphs focusing in detail on specific groups of local people such as hotel owners. To achieve the very highest mark candidates needed to name a group so that candidates had to go beyond '*some people benefit because...*' and '*other people think...*' This did not cause any problems as to reach Level 3 most candidates had focused on specific groups anyway.
- 3(a)(i)** Quite well-answered with answers based on distance from the school and levels of danger.
- 3(a)(ii)** This was generally well-answered with some innovative ideas although often the development of the idea was merely a restatement of their previous idea and they were not awarded marks.
- 3(b)(i)** This question was well-answered.
- 3(b)(ii)** This question was not answered well. Many candidates seemed uncomfortable with evaluation and either restated their answer from (b)(i) in more detail, provided more ideas or provided a basic statement such as '*saves money*.' The better answers considered the practicality of introducing the idea such as cost, time or seasonality. A

number of candidates did not limit their answer to the school but included global issues such as global warming.

- 3(c)** As this was the most difficult question on the paper, it required a clear structure to ensure that candidates reached the higher levels. Candidates needed to consider all three groups and the role that they can play in a sustainable future and often Level 1 answers focused on people or everyone without linking their ideas to specific groups. Level 1 answers also tended to wander away from the question focusing on why sustainability is important or the dangers of not acting sustainably. The answers that dealt with each group tended to be unbalanced with the answer focusing on the role of the government or individual to the exclusion of other groups limiting a lot of answers to Level 2. There were also a number of answers that listed everything a particular group could do turning the answer into a barely developed list. The answer that achieved balance often focused on one idea, such as recycling, and linked it to the role that all three groups could play in being sustainable. To reach the higher marks a conclusion was needed to address the '*To what extent...*' idea.

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