

Geography B

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J385**

Reports on the Units

June 2010

J385/R/10

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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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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education Geography B (J385)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

Unit/Content	Page
Chief Examiner's Report	1
B561/01 Foundation Tier	2
B561/02 Higher Tier	4
B562 Geographical Enquiry	6

Chief Examiner's Report

General Comments

There are opportunities for centres to enter candidates for assessment in January and June. However, very few centres took the opportunity to enter candidates for B562 (Controlled Assessment) in January 2010, so the SDME (B561) taken in June and the May submission of work for B562 was the first opportunity for many candidates to gain marks towards their award.

For all centres this new assessment was a step into the unknown. There was the requirement to apply new controlled assessment regulations on levels of control. Centres had to produce work on tasks for the Fieldwork Focus provided by the examination board rather than their own fieldwork titles. Centres are reminded that these tasks, along with those of the Geographical Investigation, will change each year and centres need to be aware that the titles correspond to the year of submission, which may not be the same as when the task was undertaken. Centres also had to decide upon their individual approach to Geographical Investigation.

The SDME was also a new challenge in preparing centres for an examination based on pre-release material. It is worth reminding centres that the unit being assessed by the SDME will change annually and the future areas of focus in this assessment are already published by the examination board. Centres may enter candidates at either the foundation or higher tier of entry. This may be different from the tier of entry of the Key Geographical Themes examination taken at the end of the course.

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

With all the changes, centres need to study the reports of the various assessment components carefully as they give many pointers to how candidates, in general, may improve their chances of success. The reports are based on the comments of examiners and moderators who were responsible for judging the work of candidates.

B561/01 Foundation Tier

General Comments

A wide range of marks was achieved on this paper (0-37) showing the full range of ability of candidates from those who did little but ineffectually copy sections of the resource book, to those who probably should have been entered for the higher paper.

As all questions were to be answered, there were few rubric errors and those candidates who failed to answer some sections probably did so as they were unable to rather than due to a lack of understanding of the expectations of the paper.

Evidence of preparation for this paper was varied; some centres having clearly drilled their students on the principle of sustainability but others showed very little understanding of the resources they had been given.

Candidates generally did better on the earlier structured questions than on questions 4 and 5 where they were expected to write more detailed answers. Even here, candidates did better on Q4 reaching Level 2 by linking one or two appropriate ideas directly from the resources than in Q5 where Level 2 answers needed to show an understanding of the effects of the options in the question.

A number of candidates were unclear of the difference between MNCs and NICs and of the different costs and benefits of both to each other. Very few candidates were able to develop their answers to Level 3, showing their own understanding of the resources.

The standard of handwriting and English was extremely varied with some papers being very difficult to read.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1: 78% of candidates gained an overall score of 3/3 on this question.

- (a) 94% of candidates were able to accurately identify the 5 US owned MNCs. Some did this by listing the five companies rather than giving a number.
- (b) 83% of candidates were able to give 2 NICs. These were generally taken from the resources, but some candidates were able to give other examples.

Question 2: 51% of candidates were able to score over half marks on this question.

- (a) Only 47% of candidates were able to explain the benefits of locating in a NIC to an MNC. Candidates tended to lift statements directly from the resource without showing the actual benefits e.g. 'Trade union activity' - which did not score, whereas 'strikes banned' achieved the mark.
- (b) 69% of candidates scored 2 or more on this question mostly from correctly identifying one or two comments in the resources which allowed them to achieve a development mark.

Question 3: Only 41% of candidates achieved over half marks on this question.

- (a) This question was poorly answered with only 55% of the candidates correctly identifying a NIC where Unilever and Mars are located. This was partly due to having to compare the two maps, but mostly it was down to only identifying any country where the two companies are based, with the UK and the Netherlands being common answers.
- (b) Only 10% of the candidates were able to reach Level 3 on this question. Level 2 was accessible by using the information in the resource. Few candidates were able to add their own interpretation to the answers they lifted from the resource.

Question 4: This question was common to both the higher and foundation papers. 63% of candidates were able to achieve Level 2 by correctly linking statements from the resource, however, only a further 12% were able to interpret the resource to show they understood how Coca-Cola would affect the local people. This showed that most candidates were able to access the resource.

Question 5: Overall, over 86% of candidates failed to achieve half marks on this question. Answers were vague and showed a lack of understanding of economic sustainability. Throughout the question, candidates tended to show the benefits and costs to Fiat/MNC or Brazilian business rather than to the government and people of Brazil. Few candidates understood the concepts behind the options and just tried to use the resource booklet as a comprehension test. Answers tended to show little understanding beyond vague 'make/lose money' and/or 'make/lose jobs' ideas.

B561/02 Higher Tier

General Comments

A wide range of marks was seen from 8 to 40/40. The rubric was followed with few errors. Few candidates achieved Level 4 credit in Q5. There was evidence of good preparation for the examination. Weaker candidates 'lifted' material from the resources and accessed Level 1. If ideas were relevant, clearly and logically linked, they were able to access Level 2. Level 3 was credited when candidates were able to extend these ideas relating them back to the question, for example in Q3. Responses from lower ability candidates were characterised by a lack of clarity and illogical use of ideas either from the resources, use of their own ideas or both. There was clear evidence that the majority of candidates were able to access the resources. Some of the more able candidates did explain the resources in their own words. Higher ability candidates were able to apply their own knowledge to the questions. Candidates do need to be aware that developing one or two strong arguments will gain more credit than multiple reasons on level response questions such as Q3.

Many candidates referred to the word 'sustainability' or the term 'multiplier effect' without fully understanding their meanings or relevance to questions, so gained little or no credit. Almost all candidates followed the question format to answer Q5 so ensuring they had answered all sections. Some candidates failed to supply the required number of reasons in Q5 sections (a) and (b) and in some cases this meant they were unable to access the higher marks as their answer did not fully meet the requirements of the mark scheme. Some candidates did finish with a conclusion but as ideas were just repeated they gained no extra credit.

A few candidates muddled NICs and MNCs especially in Q1 and Q2. No credit was given for the use of extremes such as 'no water left for locals' or 'Coca-Cola used all the water'. The word pollution does need to be qualified e.g. air, noise or water to gain credit. Some of the obviously weaker candidates could well have performed better on the Foundation Paper. The standard of written work was generally good.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1: This was generally well-answered by most candidates. They made good use of the resource material to gain 4/5 marks. Many went on to develop one of their ideas for 5 marks. The weaker candidates just 'lifted' material word-for-word from the resource and could only be credited at Level 1. Some candidates used their own knowledge such as ideas about cheap labour/low wages but failed to develop them and relate them back to the question so many were credited at Level 1 only. Those developing ideas referred to cost savings/profits.

Question 2: This was well-answered by the majority of candidates gaining 4/5 or 5/5 marks. Those referring to advantages and disadvantages for workers or MNCs did not gain full marks as the question referred to these in relation to NICs. Gaining full marks was also partly dependent on the choice of advantage or disadvantage for example using "environmental damage" as a disadvantage rarely scored above Level 1 as candidates did not develop this idea by giving examples let alone relate it back to effect on NIC. On the other hand choosing "jobs" as the advantage often led to idea of workers paying tax to government which led to improvement in services gaining full marks. Some candidates failed to use their own words and copied two strands from same box on the resource so this was a Level 1 credit only. Others tried to rephrase the wording of the resource material for their "simple statements" and this sometimes made it difficult to distinguish between 'lifted' material for Level 1 and genuine explanations in their own words for Level 2.

Question 3: Candidate answers generally consisted of a list of Level 1 statements copied from the resource with little attempt to develop ideas and more especially to link them specifically to popularity with workers. The stronger candidates were able to develop the idea that the provision of housing, health care and education enhanced the quality of life for the workers and their families as they would otherwise not have had access to them. The other Level 1 statement that was better developed was "practical farming knowledge" when candidates linked this to better crop yields, increased income and better quality of life. Some candidates related answers to popularity with MNCs, NICs and not workers. Candidates need to be made aware of the need to develop ideas further for statements taken from the resource material.

Question 4: Some candidates made a good effort to link ideas from the resource material with many interpreting it to explain the detrimental effects on rural life such as domestic water supply, farming and health issues. There was too much reliance on the resource material and many candidates made little attempt to explain ideas in their own words. Instead they moved from one point to another, mixing their reasons together, without making links. Those that showed a good understanding of the material and made the links accessed Level 3. A few candidates wrote about how biased the resource was rather than answering the question. Candidates that followed the format - point, example and explanation (PEE) - were often the most successful. However, not all of them referred to the "people" aspect of the question.

Question 5: Rubric was followed by the majority of candidates and this provided a checklist to ensure they attempted all parts of the question. Many candidates only reached Level 2 for this question. Level 4 was rarely awarded. Level 3 was reached by some candidates in parts of their answer but if they did not meet the requirements of the mark scheme i.e. have Level 2 statements in both sections (a) and (b) it was not credited. Many candidates did not understand the nature of the options, for example Option 4 was often assumed to mean the break-up of the Fiat factory. Most candidates had a relatively good understanding of the effects on the Brazilian economy but a number did focus their answers on the effects on Fiat and other MNCs. The weaker answers were in the rejection/disadvantage sections where many candidates used simple statements and repetition of ideas so many stayed within Level 1. Many candidates did use the term sustainability but without much understanding. They also referred to social and environmental sustainability although the focus of the question was economic. Few candidates fully understood the term "economic sustainability" or were able to apply it to the depth needed for Level 4. Many used the term 'multiplier effect' within their answers but did not show they understood what it meant. Candidates who did explain the term were able to access Level 3.

Many candidates felt obliged to quote from the resources but doing so did not always gain credit as they were not able to apply the selected material to the demands of the question. This was especially so for references to ethanol and flexi-fuel cars. The majority of candidates taking this route were focused on environmental sustainability rather than economic.

B562 Geographical Enquiry

In this second session for entry for this new specification for controlled assessment for B562 and A771, there has been a combined entry of nearly 50 centres and 2000 candidates. These are centres which have either completed their assessment early in Year 10 or have completed the short course in Year 9. We anticipate much larger numbers to submit in Year 11 next January and June sessions.

Administration by centres has been mixed, which, with a new specification, could be expected. There were some late entries and difficulties with email addresses. Some centres did not use the official assessment grids or did not complete them fully with candidate numbers and titles of the investigation. This made moderation unnecessarily difficult. Some centres did annotate the grids allowing moderators to see why credit was given for the various objectives and this was appreciated.

The Enquiry involves centres selecting one Fieldwork Focus title and having a choice of 18 titles for the Geographical Investigation. The Fieldwork Focus titles were evenly selected and most centres correctly split the title into appropriate key questions. Those who did not experienced problems in providing a focus for data collection, analysis, evaluation and making substantiated conclusions. Most centres selected one title for their candidates to research in the Geographical Investigation. The favourites were the 2012 Olympics, Fair Trade and Malaria. There were some centres who allowed their candidates a free choice. The vast majority of candidates chose to write a research report, while others did a PowerPoint presentation. Some centres provided some sources for their candidates; the vast majority allowed candidates access to the internet for their research which was recorded in a diary.

The standard of marking was mixed as one might expect for a new specification with some centres having attended INSET and others not fully understanding the requirements of Controlled Assessment. There were some adjustments in a downward direction the majority being in the short course where centres needed to remember the assessment expectation is what can be expected from a sixteen year old and have they met the criteria specified?

The Fieldwork Focus on the whole was marked to match the assessment criteria. Centres that did not do this were those who did not split the title into key questions, provide a methodology table, collect sufficient primary data or present data in a variety of graphs. They also had students analysing their findings in a superficial manner and not giving any reasoning. However there were some good examples of candidates doing this well and providing substantiated conclusions and realistic evaluations.

The Geographical Investigation was not always marked closely to the assessment criteria. Only a few centres had candidates write a "thought shower" to help them plan their investigation in a logical manner with key questions. The majority of centres did insist on a research diary and the best had candidates acknowledging sources and evaluating their validity. They acknowledged images directly and linked them to a bibliography. Some, however, had very few images, maps, quotes and often did not identify their source. The amount of research varied but the best had eight or more sources focusing on "stakeholders". The analysis, conclusions and evaluation was often hand-written and obviously under exam conditions. High level candidates analysed their sources directly and did not spend too much time on giving their own views. Conclusions at a high level were substantiated and evaluations looked at the validity of their sources.

In both assessments one common problem was the word count which was often exceeded. This is one issue which will have to be addressed by centres and at INSET in the future. Overall there were several issues highlighted in this first large submission for controlled assessment. However, there were some excellent examples of centres who had understood the controlled

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

assessment requirements and where candidates enthusiastically took the opportunities offered in the fieldwork and secondary research in the investigation. They showed initiative, imagination and independence at a high level. It was also encouraging to moderate complete pieces of work, even from weaker candidates, where they had attempted all elements of the assessments. Centres and candidates deserve great credit for their work in the new world of controlled assessment.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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