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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in
Geography (4GE0/01)

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International GCSE in Geography (4GE0 01):

General introduction

This was the fifth and final examination of the 2014-18 specification with its 3-hour common paper and separate fieldwork section. The paper followed a template set in previous examinations and was felt to be of similar facility to that of the previous year. The questions again discriminated effectively with the vast majority of candidates offering either complete scripts or no suggestion of being constrained by time. The candidature increased from that of the previous though there was a drop in the mean mark. Assessing a few previously unassessed areas of the specification and some tightening of the wording and focus of the 9-mark "discuss" that close questions 1 to 6 and 11 to 13 may have played their part.

Question-specific comments

Section A – The Natural Environment and People

Questions 1 to 3 adopted an identical template with a 4-mark data-based part (a) and a 6-mark subject term-based part (b) followed by two extended writing items with an "explain" command in (c) and a "discuss" command for (d) collectively carrying 15 marks. As in previous years the three questions were of reasonably similar popularity with question 3 (Hazardous environments) being the most popular choice and question 2 (Coastal environments) being the least popular.

- The part (a) of all three questions tended as one might hope to score well with large numbers of creditable answers. The lowest scoring item was 3(a)(ii) where many candidates confused the impact of fast flowing and slow flowing lava on volcano shape.
- Part (b) items scored reasonably with the 3(b)(i)-(ii) items related to natural disaster being answered the best. Mass movement (1(b)(i)) was the least well defined term and frequently too linked in to river processes. Candidates were generally able to offer a creditable ecosystem definition (2(b)(i)) but the influences on coastal ecosystems offered in 2(b)(ii) were too often either not well developed or not physical geography as requested.
- The three explanatory items in this section of the paper generally showed a decent level of knowledge and understanding of the hydrological cycle (1(c)), coastal conflicts (2(c)) and weather monitoring methods (3(c)). Hydrological cycle responses tended to score slightly higher and the changing methodology in weather monitoring in more recent times was known by the majority of candidates even though this was not required for the achievement of Level 3 marks.
- The three finale "discuss" items generally met expected scoring targets and achieved respectable levels of differentiation. Reference or not to "effectiveness" or "extent" in responses as per the question wording aided differentiation. The coastal geology item (2(d)) scored less well than flood control methods (1(d)) and hazard management (3(d)). Case study material was frequently well used, especially with regard to hazard management. However, in the case of item 2(d) the request for a contrasting coastline context was not always met. The best answers offered process, reference to soft versus hard geology or concordance versus discordance, identified landforms and named actual stretches of coastline.

Section B – People and their Environments

The structure of questions 4 to 6 followed the template used in Section A. An opening part (a) of 4 marks from short-response data-based items, a 6-mark two item technical term-based part (b) followed by two extended writing items worth 15 marks in total. Part (c) having an "explain" command and part (d) a focused "discuss" item emphasizing either "the extent to which" or "whether." Named

examples or case study material was sought in all three cases. As in previous examinations, question 5 (Ecosystems and rural environments) was markedly less popular than questions 4 (Economic activity and energy) and 6 (Urban environments). The vast majority opted for questions 4 and 6.

- The part (a) items of all three questions generally scored quite well as expected with the exception of 4(a)(ii) where some suggested images B or C were available sources both on- and off-shore and 5(a)(i)-(iii). None of the three opening items in question 5 scored well even though temperate grasslands are a specification-named biome. 5(a)(iii) frequently resulted in candidates stating an ecosystem component rather than identifying a valid interaction.
- Part (b) items assessed the terms, de-industrialisation (4(b)(i)), biodiversity (5(b)(i)) and land values (6(b)(i)) and the factors behind them. De-industrialisation was the least well defined with few gaining maximum marks, however, its determinants (4(b)(ii)) were relatively well known and certainly more so than the factors influencing biodiversity (5(b)(ii)) despite the fact that biodiversity was generally quite well defined (5(b)(i)). Land value and the reasons for its variation in urban areas (6(b)(i)-(ii)) was overall the best answered part (b) item.
- The part (c) "explain" items performed remarkably similarly across questions 4-6. The energy gap concept was broadly known and understood by the candidature with most either explicitly or implicitly clarifying the term before offering various levels of reasoning for its existence (4(c)). The raising agricultural production case study required by the specification seemed to have been generally well taught with a number of valid initiatives being explained by large numbers of candidates (5(c)). Equally, quality of life improvements in shanty towns, often using named examples were generally familiar to the candidates resulting in many very sound responses to 6(c).
- There was some difference in the quality of the responses to the three (d) items. The greenfield-brownfield debate item (6(d)) clearly generated the best responses with a significant number at Level 3 using named examples, often local. Item 5(d) on HIC rural settlement change generally proved challenging with relatively few candidates referring directly to the depopulating and/or accessible village and getting into Level 3 by justifying a judgement(s) about the changes. Equally, disappointing was the general failure of candidates not to appreciate the significance of "within" in 4(d). Good answers required candidates to identify regional variations and their extent within a country say, in the present day or to apply the Clarke-Fisher model and the changes over time to one country. Too many received restricted scores by offering the classic international comparison answer to a "between countries" question.

Section C – Practical Geographical Enquiry

C1: Questions 7 and 8.

Questions 7 and 8 were identical apart from their fieldwork context as represented by the opening image (Figure 7/8a) with candidates choosing one of the pair. There was almost a 50:50 split between question 7 where the context was measuring beach profiles and sediment characteristics and question 8 which assessed measuring and recording weather data.

- The majority of candidates correctly identified the piece of equipment in both Figures 7a and 8a but the request for description of their use/role in measurement/data collection was rather disappointingly met. Few seemed to have actually used a clinometers (7(b)(ii)) or been familiar with a Stevenson screen (8(b)(ii)). Site selection considerations ((b)(iii)) was more comfortable ground for most candidates; the items differentiated as most could identify at least one appropriate factor and some were able to develop two valid considerations.

- Part (b) addressed presentation of in-context data, analysing and concluding from data and evaluating the enquiry process and results. The five items, (b)(i) to (b)(v) performed very comparably which ever question. Candidates scored well at data plotting ((b)(i)) with axis marking up and labeling being the main discriminator. Most candidates gained at least 1 mark in each of (b)(ii) and (b)(iii). The better answers to (b)(iii) developed their response beyond mere comparison to illustrate how trends and anomalies could be identified. Many candidates demonstrated the skill of analysing the Figures to draw valid conclusions ((b)(iv)), often supported by evidence; Level 2 and beyond marks were plentiful. Most candidates seemed to appreciate how conclusions, either specific to those just reached in (b)(iv) or generically could be evaluated. There were references to the whole fieldwork process e.g. accurate data; valid secondary sources; repetition ... and comments pertaining to the accuracy, validity and reliability of conclusions.

C2: Questions 9 and 10.

Questions 9 and 10 were identical apart from their fieldwork context as represented by the opening image (Figure 9/10a) with candidates choosing one of the pair. Question 9 focusing on enquiry into the location factors of factories or services was markedly more popular than question 10 in which the context was investigating how a farm works as a system. The former tended to score more highly.

- Almost all candidates were able to gain some credit in (a)(i). Full mark responses showed some specificity and clarity.
- Item (a)(ii) discriminated with many candidates merely identifying types of secondary information e.g. factory products; farm finances ... and the better responses specifying the source e.g. Ordnance Survey; Met Office ... and the information they hold.
- Candidates were again very familiar with risk assessments and scored positively in (a)(iii).
- (a)(iv) was a fruitful item for candidates, especially in 9(a)(iv). The use of field equipment in particular, was generally quite well done with many candidates offering a good range of pieces of equipment. The responses on field techniques were more restricted and often focused on interviewing and sampling techniques.
- The use of ICT for research; fieldwork sheet preparation; data storage, collation, representation ... was well understood as one might have expected and (a)(v) tended to be well answered accordingly.
- Item (a)(vi), on the other hand, was frequently not well answered. A few candidates named the mean or the mode, and even fewer Spearman's Rank. Full mark responses among these candidates was fairly rare though many did manage some development of their answer to allow for a second mark. The expression, quantitative technique was clearly not known to the bulk of the candidature.

Section D – Global Issues

This section contained three slightly longer questions (Questions 11-13) than earlier sections, each question carrying 30 marks. They followed a common template which differed from that of sections A and B in that a second piece of stimulus-material precedes item (c) and the 5 extra marks available saw a 5 rather than 4 mark part (a) and a third 4 mark item in part b ((b)(iii)). Otherwise, the questions had the same structure as questions 1-6: a data-based part (a); a term-based part (b) and two extended writing parts, (c) and (d).

The question order, 11 to 13 was also the order of popularity with Question 11 (Fragile environments) clearly the most popular choice and Question 13 (Development and human welfare) the least popular.

- The opening part (a) items were reasonably well answered in two of the three questions, questions 11 and 12. Although the responses to 11(a)(iii) clearly showed that candidates generally failed to see the distinction between the Central England Temperature Record and global warming. 13(a)(i)-(iii) were generally answered disappointingly, especially 13(a)(iii) where many failed to appreciate what constituted "evidence."
- The quality of term-defining varied remarkably across 11(b)(i), 12(b)(i) and 13(b)(i). Candidates generally handled sustainability (11(b)(i)) well, production chain (12(b)(i)) satisfactorily but development gap (13(b)(i)) poorly. A similar pattern emerged with regard to the (b)(ii) items with fragile environments (11(b)(ii)) and production chain growth (12(b)(ii)) performing respectably but global development pattern change (13(b)(iii)) disappointing. This pattern of question 13 scoring lower than its rival questions applied again in item 13(b)(iii) where measuring development was less well answered than achieving environmental sustainability (11(b)(iii)) and the global shift (12(b)(iii)). There were many good responses on the roles of legislation, international cooperation and education in achieving a more sustainable future.
- Again 11(c) was answered better than 12(c) and 12(c) better than 13(c). The causes of desertification (11(c)) were generally well known and the item discriminated well with the best responses genuinely explaining and addressing both natural, human and any linkage between them. The case for the importance of sustainable tourism (12(b)) was often better made than that for the importance that aid be appropriate (13(c)).
- Question 13 again underperformed in relation to questions 11 and 12 when we look at the finale "discuss" (d) items though the performance gap is smaller than with previous items. Items 11(d) and 13(d) assessed specified case studies, climate change/global warming threats and population change management respectively. Many candidates used their studies of Bangladesh, the Maldives, Tuvalu or the Sahel to good effect in 11(d). Equally, the Chinese one-child policy dominated the responses to 13(d) but the answers tended to descriptive rather than evaluative and did not generally convey the same sense of "extent" that the responses to 11(d) generally did. Item 12(d) looking at migration control performed adequately and frequently addressed the case for and the management difficulties and "effectiveness" rather than specific attempts and measures.

Conclusion/Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- always try to get to the crux of the question set by paying special attention to its precise wording
- answer the short-response items briefly e.g. identifying a specific factor and then give some development e.g. say how it works
- explain items need why answering i.e. process/reasoning not description
- ensure you have actual practical working experience with primary field skills e.g. using a clinometers

- acquire close familiarity with both pre- and post-fieldwork tasks so that all stages of the enquiry sequence have been covered
- finale case study-based items call for information to be used, applied and assessed/evaluated if Level 3 marks are to be reached

JS Milner
Chief Examiner
22 July 2018