Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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International GCSE
Geography (4GE0_01)

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General Comments:

This first examination of the International GCSE Geography specification saw a doubling in the entry and a significantly raised mean mark in relation to examination of the previous specification. This higher mean applied to both the traditional overseas centres and the new UK-based centres. As an untiered paper it was designed to be well structured with a high degree of question comparability, at least within sections. It proved to be a reasonably effective differentiator of candidate ability. A decent spread of marks was achieved with strong evidence of both access by most candidates to most items and of stretch and challenge among abler candidates by later items in questions.

A significant number of candidates wrote beyond the allotted answering space which is an issue that both Edexcel and centres need to address. Teachers should stress to their students that clear, concise responses to the question set can and do achieve maximum marks.

There was also evidence that in some centres there remains scope for improving candidate's preparation for the assessment of their fieldwork skills and knowledge and of their knowledge, understanding and application of relevant and appropriate case study examples. Typically, these two areas of geographical assessment account for around half of the 30 marks per question. Approximately, half of the 9-mark finale items asked directly for a named case study; others were of a broader nature but examples were a feature of many level 3 responses.

Question-specific Comments:

Section A – The Natural Environment And People

All three options in this first section of the paper were popular, although **Q2** (Coastal environments) was slightly less popular than the other two questions, especially in overseas centres. For most candidates, it provided a solid start with their higher marks coming in this section.

Question 1 : River environments

A surprising number of candidates missed item (a)(i); those not doing so tended to score the 1 mark available. Item (a)(ii) was generally completed successfully and on the whole the concepts of peak discharge and lag time were well known and used for the purpose of contrasting the hydrographs (Figure 1). Some candidates unfortunately either confused the A and B labelling with negative consequences for their responses or failed to express themselves in a way that identified difference. Many candidates coped well with the item scoring 2 marks. Most candidates gave an adequate definition of discharge for (a)(iv) with cumecs frequently mentioned. The river fieldwork item (a)(v) was responded to with varying success. There were some very strong, detailed responses covering sampling, site selection and description and explanation of procedures. Equally, there were a disappointing number of imprecise responses about velocity and channel measurement with little reference to the techniques used to obtain these

measurements. A lack of detail, clarity and progression characterised many of the river fieldwork responses. Some candidates struggled to gain a mark in (b)(i) as they misinterpreted the question and wrote about channel rather than valley changes. Others did answer successfully by referring to soil fertility and alluvium deposition. (b)(ii) was generally well answered with accurate use of geographical process and terminology to explain interception and run-off differences being quite frequent. Some did confuse rural with urban, failed to use Figure 1, were limited in their reference to process and did not always make their contrasts/comparison obvious. The item was a good differentiator. The 9-mark finale tended to score relatively well on the whole but there was a tendency for candidates not to respond precisely to the question set. Too many answers were generic and insufficiently focussed on flood prevention and control measures and how they work. Most named a river but focussed too little on it and gave limited place detail. Full mark case study-type answers offering explanation were seen for the Mississippi, Severn and Tees.

Question 2 : Coastal environments

Few candidates had difficulty in part (a) with the majority collecting maximum marks. The term, spit did distract some; it was offered by some as the box 3 label in (a)(i) and/or as a depositional landform in (a)(ii)2. Most candidates achieved full marks in (b)(i) by giving full and accurate definitions of longshore drift that included sediment movement and movement along the coast. Movement up and down the beach is not longshore drift. (b)(ii) was also generally well answered with frequent reference to the prevailing wind although a significant minority failed to offer a compass direction or appreciate how wind direction is described. Left to right is not a geographical direction. The request to identify coastal protection measures on Figure 2b posed no problems and its linked item in (c)(ii) was similarly well answered in the main. Explanations of the work of a groyne proved stronger than those for sea walls. The fieldwork item, (c)(iii) was a strong discriminator. The strongest answers discussed in detail survey implementation, question design and sampling issues in a coast-specific context. Generic answers with little development beyond using a questionnaire were regrettably common. Item (d) produced another wide range of answer quality. Most correctly described the sequence of landforms that result from retreat. The higher level responses offered detailed diagrams, referred to the impact and location of sub-aerial processes and marine erosion, explained in detail the mechanics of these processes and identified correct locations where the various landforms could be found. Equally, simplistic and generic answers with little specific detailed process knowledge were to be found.

Question 3 : Hazardous environments

Surprisingly few candidates gave 28 millibars or other acceptable unit of pressure in (a)(i). The rest of part (a) gave no general problems with mostly correct answers to items (a)(ii) and (a)(iii). Nearly all candidates commented on heavy rainfall and high wind speeds in (b)(i) with a large majority assuming that the eye of the storm passed over Haiti and offering a valid description of the likely weather sequence. The better responses

included prior data knowledge and a detailed recognition of the weather experiences before, during and after the eye passed over. Again, the fieldwork item proved to be a good differentiator with the weaker candidates listing weather elements and instruments and the stronger offering comprehensive and detailed answers covering explanation of site selection, description of the instruments and description of the procedures and techniques in using the equipment including modern electronic technology to measure and record data. Some candidates failed to fully define the term "natural hazard" in (c)(i) by concentrating entirely on damage and destruction or by naming types without any reference to non-human causation. Many candidates achieved high marks in item (c)(ii) with case study-based details of storm impacts being pleasingly offered. The final 9-mark item generally scored well but there was a tendency for candidates not to address the question set and to not restrict their answers to prediction, preparation and HICs. Candidates opting for tropical storms tended to focus on prediction whereas preparation was often better answered for tectonic hazards, especially earthquakes. Unbalanced answers were typical. Some of the stronger candidates did achieve a reasonable balance of attention to prediction and preparation. There were some strong answers based on Japanese and Californian earthquakes.

Section B : People and their Environments

Most candidates opted for questions 4 (Economic activity and energy) and 6 (Urban environments). Question 5 (Ecosystems and rural environments) was less popular. The level of marks per question was broadly similar to that in Section A.

Question 4 : Economic activity and energy

Usually candidates gained all or nearly all of the first 6 marks in (a)(i) to (iv), including for the definition of raw materials in (a)(ii). The idea of extractive primary activity and of processing in secondary industry was known by most. In (a)(iv) most candidates were able to either name an industry type or product or brand name. Few candidates, however, achieved maximum marks in (a)(v). Many identified the importance of universities providing a skilled labour supply and R & D facilities but very few developed the key idea that the skilled labour often amounts to academics who might have founded the nearby high tech industry. Disappointingly, considerable numbers incorrectly ranked the factors in (b)(i) having misread the importance of the factor scores according to the key. This fairly common error had implications for their conclusions in (b)(ii). Using the factor scores alone rather than also referring to the values per factory type was another source of weakness in answers. There was also a tendency for some candidates to offer too much explanation whilst weaker candidates merely wrote out what the rankings stated whether right or wrong. Nevertheless, this item was well done by able candidates and did discriminate between abilities. Item (c) proved rather challenging with many seeming uncertain as to the nature of quaternary activities. Most recognised the changing demand for different products and services and changes in disposable income, and many were able to add global shift and deindustrialisation. Only the very able went beyond this. Efficiency is all to do with making the

best possible use of scarce resources and this concept when applied to energy was not generally well understood (item (d)). Far too many responses focussed on increasing energy demand and reducing its use. Many identified the energy gap, the increasing use of renewables, concerns over global warming and measures to reduce carbon emissions. Reference to why wasteful use of energy was important rather than information about energy efficiency schemes was limited so were the number of level 3 responses.

Question 5 : Ecosystems and rural environments

Items (a)(i)-(iv) were well answered with good use being made of Figure 5a. There were many comprehensive and accurate definitions of irrigation in (a)(iii) and valid nutrient flows, including from their own knowledge, identified in (a)(iv). A wide range of components was offered in (b)(i) and candidates taking this less popular question showed good understanding of ecosystems in general. However, there was a general lack of knowledge of the temperate grassland biome with specific links in this biome being poorly appreciated. Part (c) tended to score well with most candidates able to offer well-plotted graphs resulting in sound conclusions albeit descriptive. Conclusions often lacked development and data support. There was a limited range of types of completed graph though a few did attempt very time-consuming graphs which showed each individual yield-influencing factor for each farm. The conclusions of abler candidates did recognise that farm C was most productive as it produced most rice relative to the area of the farm. The 9-mark closing item was generally well answered with candidates having ideas from HYVs to GM crops for increasing yields and production. These ideas were often not well related to case study knowledge and frequently not linked to the way in which they result in increased production. The best answers dealt with a few mini-case studies so showing different ways, different farms and different countries.

Question 6 : Urban environments

Items (a)(i)-(iii) were well answered by the vast majority choosing this question. Responses to (a)(ii) varied from generic rural-urban fringe changes stimulated by the sight of Figure 6a to specific changes based on direct reading of this map. (a)(iii) proved uncontentious to mark with 1. more houses and 2. loss of green spaces being very common responses. (a)(iv) also generated some good answers showing clear understanding of the suburbanisation process and the concept of access and space around the periphery. Some linked these changes to those in the crowded, inaccessible and run-down inner city in (a)(iv) and among those that did not, some began to see the link in (b). They were able to distinguish between the different likely locations of greenfield and brownfield sites and recognise the latter as previously built on so ripe for recycling. Again, this was a quite well answered item. Part (c), the fieldwork follow-up items was well answered. The data was well plotted by the vast majority who merely took the total scores per site. A few were more creative and produced time-consuming complex graphs showing each of the environmental quality scores per site. Item (c)(iii) discriminated with weaker candidates merely rewriting the data or describing the trend of the graph. Better candidates

identified the overall pattern and linked it to the three environmental quality indicators used. There were many candidates achieving this higher level of response. (d) was generally the best answered 9-mark closing item on the paper. Shanty town (squatter community) management was well understood by many candidates. There were some detailed case study answers set in cities such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro dealing with overarching management strategies such as self-help and micro-lending schemes. The majority of candidates were able to identify shanty town problems and outline strategies being employed; the better answers went on to explain how strategies minimise the problems.

Section C: Global Issues

Question 7 (Fragile environments) was clearly the most popular question in this section with question 9 (Development and human welfare) being the least popular. There was a good take-on for all three questions. Many candidates achieved their best question score in this section.

Question 7 : Fragile environments

Practically all candidates recognised Figure 7 as depicting a desertification scenario and most were able to make at least one valid settlement change observation such as fewer villages for (a)(ii). (a)(iii) also tended to be well answered; the Sahel being a common response although there too many who merely stated, Africa. There were many who rightly identified the offending activities of overgrazing and overcultivation in (a)(v) but fewer who went on to explain in sequence how these led to soil erosion and desertification. Part (b) on deforestation was very well answered with the wide scale clearance idea often made in (i) and two of its valid consequences being well developed by many candidates in item (b)(ii). Most candidates showed a sound understanding of global warming and climate change although many responses lacked depth and attention to the actual mechanics of global warming. Reference to the sources of greenhouse gas emissions and to the enhanced greenhouse effect was found in the best answers. Ozone depletion and the effects of global warming were not relevant to the question. There were some good overviews of the ways in which emissions are being reduced in (d). Most could either identify and perhaps give good account of some of the international agreements – Rio, Kyoto and Copenhagen – and often pointed out their ineffectiveness or suggest local scale initiatives to reduce emissions. Few indicated how the efforts being made might slow down global warming.

Question 8: Globalisation and migration

Candidates were able to answer part (a) very well with many giving clarification to net migration in (a)(ii) and successfully deducing its role in population change from Figure 8. There was good awareness of push and pull factors and significant numbers were able to apply them to HIC immigration to give strong answers to item (b). There were those whose answers showed confusion and referred to HICs for both push and pull factors. These candidates considered a push factor as one which dissuades immigrants from entering an HIC. Some candidates mistakenly wrote about

rural-urban push-pull migration. Item (c)(i) proved challenging though some of the better answers were very impressive and showed excellent understanding. Knowledge of TNCs was often good but many did not directly answer the question wording of (c)(ii). Few commented upon or evaluated their role in a focussed fashion. Descriptions of their characteristics often addressed their role indirectly and as such achieved more modest marks. Item (d) was one of the strongest 9-mark finales on the paper with many candidates reaching at least the top of Level 2. A wide range of relevant factors was raised but exemplification was rarer. Some responses did stray beyond the question set, for instance, into the impact of tourism.
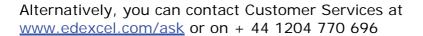
Question 9 : Development and human welfare

Candidates tended to have good knowledge of HDI and its components hence, the generally positive start made in part (a) by most candidates. Many achieved high marks in (a)(iv) with comparisons and data being frequently given. Item (b) was often interpreted as a request for HDI differences between countries. Many answers concentrated on only HDI components rather than a range of non-economic factors contributing to quality of life. Responses tended to be rather vague and few achieved the highest mark band. (c) proved to be a challenging item with again, few reaching the highest mark band. The concept of a global pattern of development was not always well understood with few candidates showing a real sense of pattern. Some identified a single change such as the global shift others outlined a range of changes (e.g. BRICS; NICs; Brandt Line …) without referencing pattern. The closing 9-mark item ((d)) tended to generate rather generic answers lacking detail. Disparity seemed to be a difficult term for some candidates. Outline descriptions of schemes and initiatives, often types of development aid were common. Strategies and policies to reduce development gaps were generally absent. The best candidates set about explaining the effect of policies and initiatives in such as Italy or the UK on reducing regional differences. Genuine attempts to explain how or if measures reduce disparities were too rare.