GEOGRAPHY 7209, JANUARY 2006, EXAMINERS' REPORT

PAPER 1

General Comments

This paper all owed candidates to score well but relative to previous years there was a tendency for candidates to :
- produce a more uneven mark profile across the paper
- be less aware of the extra demands of final question parts
- produce more succinct and less well developed answers.

A majority of candidates were engaged by the paper and wrote valid answers with a high degree of fluency. As usual though, there were some disappointing scripts. These candidates would have been better served by the Foundation Tier of the new IGCSE examination, which gives access to grades C to G. The responses to the final parts of questions, despite the 9 mark allocation, were little longer than previous answers, and candidates only rarely gave examples and place-specific detail. Some of these scripts also failed to adhere to the rubric by answering more than the required four questions, usually scantily. On the other hand, the most able candidates again demonstrated their capacity to exercise wise question choice. These candidates possessed clear spatial knowledge, a grasp of geographical processes and an impressive ability to draw and annotate meaningful diagrams. Some questions were clearly more popular than others but all had a reasonable number of candidates opting for them.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

This tectonic plates question was the most popular on the paper with the vast majority of candidates producing a commendable answer. It was a higher scoring question. The first four marks in parts (a)(i)-(iii) were generally gained with most being familiar with the basic terminology and its meaning. Equally, most candidates were able to score at least one mark in part (iv) concerning the position of the UK in relation to plate margins. Part (b) differentiated well with some highly effective diagrams at the top end of performance range. Most candiates chose destructive margins. Part (c) tended to score well with almost all candidates being aware of volcanic cones on plate margins, their tourist potential and fertile volcanic soils. All candidates gained some credit in part (d), but relatively few answersreached Level 3 quality. Generally, there was a good range of factors offered as reasons but a general lack of place-specific knowledge.

Question 2

This weathering question in part (a) provided a positive start for almost all candidates making this choice. There was general evidence that the candidature comprehended Figure 2, with most scoring well on parts (b)(i)-(iii). (b)(iv) posed greater problems. Frost and freeze-thaw action were generally known but few knew of a second process. The final part was invariably done badly with few gaining more than 1 mark per group of workers.

Question 3

A popular and generally reasonably well answered question on river environments. Part (a) offered some differentiation by outcome, though most showed appreciation of the discharge process and

pattern and did by and large identify the key explanations from the sketch map. Part (b) proved a disappointment. Flood plains, their features and formation were not well known in any detailed sense. In part (c), (i) was usually full scoring but (ii) as with (b) proved to be generally challenging for the candidates. Waterfalls tended to be the better answered feature. Relatively few scored highly out of 9 marks. Superficial knowledge and understanding of landforms was typical.

Question 4

Again, a popular and reasonably well answered question on coastal environments. Part (a)(i) was invariably correct and part (ii) saw some pleasing diagrams drawn with the formation sequence generally known. Understanding of the actual formation processes was weaker. In (b)(i) it was usual for at least one difference to be identified but knowledge of other processes involved in cliff retreat such as sub-aerial in part (ii) was generally scant. There was decent knowledge of cliff defence techniques and their workings in (c). For most candidates part (d) turned out to be a poor finale. Short responses and limited case study knowledge were common.

Question 5

This meteorology and climatology question was not a popular choice but one that was satisfyingly answered by those who did opt for it. Apart from part (a)(ii), where warm sector was rarely offered, parts (a) and (b)(i) scored well for almost all candidates. All scored in (b)(ii), with the question proving to be a highly effective differentiator. Part (c) proved problematic to too many with some interpreting latitude as altitude and many not gaining the 1 example mark reserved for reference to Figure 5 as requested. Surprisingly, few were able to correctly name a type of climate. The best answers to (d) were valid but vague. There were hardly any responses developed along the right lines.

Question 6

This human-physical interactions question was a popular choice and a strong mark yielder for most candidates. They seemed to comprehend the sketch diagram and cope adequately with the data-stimulus questions that followed in part (a). The vast majority of candidates showed appreciation of the chain reaction inherent in a cycle of poverty and were able to show causal links in their poverty diagrams. Having done this there was a general awareness in (b)(ii) of the impact on the cycle of pest and disease eradication. Part (c) saw a few good answers reaching Level 3 in quality but many outline Level 1 responses. Many of these were along the right tracks of technology and mismanagement but lacked detail and development.

Question 7

This ecosystem question was not a popular choice and overall generated lower mark totals. Candidates did pick up marks in part (a) but many failed to use Figure 7a to full effect. The term *ecosystem* was generally well enough defined and some candidates had clearly been well prepared on conifer adaptation to the environment. These candidates produced some impressively technical answers to (b)(ii). The reasons behind deforestation were well known in (c)(i), but disappointingly, few got beyond Level 1 on the effects of deforestation on the ecosystem in (c)(ii).

Question 8

Again, this soil question was both unpopular and weakly answered. Many failed to gain the majority of the marks in part (a) where the knowledge test in (i) to (iii) and the process understanding in (iv) stumped most candidates. Few were able to draw an accurate, labelled and named profile in (b). The best of the profiles, however, were superb. Equally, only the most able candidates were able to

relate their answers to part (c) to mineral content and weathering rates. Erroneous explanations of tropical soil characteristics were common. Ironically, the final 9 mark part of this question was answered better than other parts of the question and other final parts of questions. There were many reasonable responses of Level 2 quality on soil erosion and the need to combat it.

PAPER 2

General comments

In general, most candidates approached the paper with at least a reasonable level of confidence and were able to complete four answers. The best papers were produced by those candidates who reflected carefully on the precise requirements of the questions chosen, were rigorous in tackling the early parts of questions and demonstrated some insight into issues raised in the latter parts. The quality of answers was particularly enhanced where reference was made to examples of appropriate scale; this was a significant shortcoming on many scripts.

Comment on individual questions

Question 1

Question 1 was popular with candidates; it was often well done. Most candidates coped readily with parts (a) and (b), though it was surprising that in instances the term 'GNP per capita' was not understood. Considerable satisfaction seemed to have been derived from ranking the countries listed in (b)(i). There was no one 'right' answer, but clearly to score full marks sound reasons were required. Occasionally, reasons were presented to justify the position of the top ranking country but not the bottom one. Part (c) proved more challenging. The reference to named examples was an imperative here if more than sweeping generalisations were to form the basis of the answer. Weak answers sometimes failed to mention even the name of a country where the agencies had assisted improvement. The very best answers explored the impact of assistance and development in named local communities, sometimes pointing out the shortcomings.

Question 2

Question 2 frequently saw marks lost in part (a) owing to both the misreading of questions and the inaccurate interpretation of the graphs. In some instances, little, if any attention was given to the clearly stated fact that the two graphs were of areas in an Advanced Industrial Country. The term 'conurbation' defeated most candidates who attempted this question, their having no notion of this being where cities have grown and merged together.

While the effects of rural depopulation on rural areas were well described in (b), some candidates deviated at length to consider the impact of such on urban areas. No marks were awarded for such in part (i). However, unfortunately, these same candidates often failed to appreciate that there was ample scope to dwell on the consequences on urban areas in part (ii). Some of the best answers here explained that AICs are normally better placed to cope with migration to the urban areas than LICs.

Question 3

Question 3 appealed to many candidates. On occasions there was confusion between renewable and non renewable energy. In some instances, candidates accurately defined renewable energy in part (a)(iii), but proceeded to quote coal or oil as an example in (iv). Only rarely did candidates

appreciate the difference between absolute and proportionate changes sought in part (v). To attain full marks in (vi) it was necessary for the answer to give some attention to the opposition to nuclear power and the widespread approval of solar energy. This aspect was often overlooked.

There were some spirited answers to part (b), where the best answers offered rather more than simply transposing information from Figure 3b, and demonstrated some insight into the issues involved. In part (ii) it was difficult to do justice to the question unless a view was taken on the merits, or otherwise, of the $1 billion dollar arms contract. Some candidates expressed strong views on this; rarely were they complimentary.

Question 4

Question 4 produced some very superficial answers which markedly faded beyond part (a) but also some high calibre responses. Most candidates took part (a) in their stride, though both E and F were in contention for the location of the Seychelles as II.

Sound answers in part (b) dwelt on both demand and supply factors which account for the relatively low per capita fossil energy use in Africa. In part (ii) they took into account the difficulties already encountered by many African countries when considering the impact of climate change. Frequent reference was made in such answers to the increasing desertification in the north.

There were many worthy attempts at part (c) and a wide range of valid recommendations were made as to the possible actions governments should take. However, too frequently, the important phrase 'in the light of these views' was overlooked in answers. The very best answers suggested that Figure 4c gave an exaggerated view while Figure 4b suggested a high level of indifference.

Question 5

Answers to question 5 were sometimes disappointing; some candidates could readily have scored more highly had they given more careful consideration to the wording of the question. In part (a), the accountant in the motor vehicle factory sometimes was inaccurately attributed to the secondary sector. However, marks were most frequently lost in (b)(i) when absolutely no explanation was given for the sequence of events offered in Figure 5a. A question on this paper would not normally request candidates to simply transpose information from the paper to their script, without exercising any thought at all. Many candidates did precisely that, whereas more productive answers, for example, explained why it was necessary for the infant industry to commence with the assembly of imported kits. This apart, even where candidates went astray on (i), there were some excellent answers to the remaining parts of (b), with a strong focus on skills, technology, and indeed status in (iii). There were some well founded answers to part (d), especially where candidates identified two distinct groups of countries.

Question 6

In question 6, where candidates closely studied the two maps and grasped the conceptual nature of Figure 6b, part (a) was generally well handled. Some candidates failed to notice the compass direction on Figure 6a. There were some very constructive responses to both of parts (iii) and (iv). Indeed, it could be argued that some local councils might do well to consider some of the proposals for the greater use of mass transit systems put forward by some of the candidates. Views differed on the advantages and disadvantages of maps such as Figure 6b, but candidates with conflicting opinions were awarded marks. Some candidates considered the map clear and useful, others thought it to be misleading and difficult for visitors to use.

There were few sound answers to part (b). There were two prime reasons for this. Firstly, some candidates drifted away from mass transit systems, and secondly few were able to base their answer on a named area. Answers tended to be superficial and bland.

Question 7

Question 7 was a popular choice with candidates; answers varied from weak to excellent, with some very high calibre responses to (b).

In a significant number of cases the graphs did not receive the detailed attention they required. Consequently, errors were made at both (a)(i) and (vi), though with the latter the very concept of 'natural change of population' sometimes was not understood. In the case of part (iv) quite a few candidates failed to appreciate that Country A was an LIC whereas Country B was an AIC; as a result, A had a far bigger scope to reduce its death rate between 1950 and 2000 than did B. It was also surprising that some candidates, while correctly stating that from 1975 the death rate in Country B was higher than the birth rate, did not realise the possible consequences of this. Some of the best answers here commented on the likely need for immigration. While this was not required for full marks, credit was given.

Part (b) saw some very mature answers where issues such as religious opposition were mentioned along with some passionate observations regarding basic human rights.

The question on agriculture illustrated how important it is that when candidates select which questions to do, they must ensure that they can do justice to all parts of the question if they are to get as many marks as possible. In this instance, the first two parts frequently were answered soundly only for there to be a particularly weak attempt at part (c), which carried nine marks.

Question 8

For question 8, most candidates handled Figure 8 well and the majority scored highly on parts (a) and (b). In a few instances it seemed that the term 'market gardening' was not a familiar one and no clear distinction was made between fertilisers and pesticides. Organic farming entirely appropriately featured prominently in the answers to (b)(ii) along with pleas for the more responsible management of farms.

Yet again, candidates unable to provide detailed case studies found (c) difficult, though they had so far performed very well on this question. In some cases reference was made to the 'Green Revolution', which certainly had its place in this answer, but even here observations tended to be vague and not based on named areas.

GEOGRAPHY 7209, JANUARY 2006, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	60	52	45	42	39

Note: Grade Boundaries may vary from subject to subject and from series to series, depending on the demands of the question paper.