

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE O Level

O Level Geography (7209)

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O Level Geography 7209 Paper 1

General Comments

The paper generated a reasonable spread of marks across most of the available mark range. There was evidence that it both discriminated and differentiated effectively. The general standard of achievement was broadly in line with that seen on Paper 1 over the past three years. This is a very creditable standard for students of this age. No one question was singularly unpopular though questions 3 and 7 were the least popular and questions 6 and 8 the most popular.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1

This question was both reasonably popular and quite well answered with (a)(i) and (ii) providing a positive lead in for most candidates. Some confused rainfall with temperature in (a)(ii) but overall candidates scored well. Part (a)(iii), however, caused some difficulty with many candidates offering only a partial explanation of fog formation. Responses ranged from those who understood that the key process is condensation resulting from the mixing of hot and cold air to those who suggested that being by the sea was enough for a lot of fog to form. (a)(iv) was a very effective differentiator of knowledge and understanding with answers from all three levels of response being produced. Part (b) was quite well answered although (b)(ii) frequently prompted candidates to discuss the effects of irrigation rather than to rationalise the changing opinions indicated in Figure 1b.

Question 2

This question tended to be well answered. Very sound knowledge of tropical rainforests (TRFs) was displayed throughout. Many candidates rightly drew out the general pattern of changing forest cover in their answers to (a)(ii), and were very clear about the reasons for the deforestation in (a)(iii). Good and high-scoring responses typified (a)(iv) and (v); candidates clearly knew their TRF ecosystems. Part (b) was moderately well answered in the main with the basic AIC-LIC conflict being appreciated, especially with regard to the causes of deforestation. Disagreement as to the solutions to deforestation was generally less well done.

Question 3

This question was not popular although those who did attempt it generally answered it well. Most gained maximum marks in part (a). There was good understanding of weathering processes, both chemical and physical demonstrated in the responses to part (b), especially in terms of sequence. The physical features of desert environments were often very well described with some excellent diagrams evident on many scripts. Some candidates were unable to go beyond simplistic explanation of these landforms, and very few pointed out that water was integral to the processes of erosion in deserts.

Question 4

Most candidates scored very highly on the first three parts of the question. Most knew their meteorological instruments and used Figure 4a well with few mistakes being made. The sequence of changes as a depression moves over was less well answered ((b)(iii)) with only a few identifying the sequence correctly; many simply referred to pressure or indicated that there would be heavy rain. Part (c) proved to be an effective discriminator with some offering simplistic descriptions of the temperature distribution others detailed and accurate descriptions, and some referring thoroughly to the urban heat island effect others merely to pollution and/or the River Thames as important reasons.

Question 5

This was not one of the higher-scoring questions because a few of the parts tended to score badly. Part (a)(iv) was one of these; the best answers focussed on lateral erosion and erosion/deposition on river banks and never really got into why rivers meander. Some answers wrongly dealt with the formation of oxbow lakes. Part (b) was very poorly answered with candidates almost always pointing to changing discharge and velocity rather than describing changes in valley shape. A few mentioned waterfalls but did not develop this line. The term 'rejuvenation' was rarely offered. Part (c) generated mixed responses; the causes were frequently well described, often with the use of case studies such as the Ganges but the management aspect of the question was often either ignored or insufficiently addressed to warrant high marks. On a positive note, candidates invariably scored full marks on parts (a)(ii), (a)(iii) and (a)(v). The vast majority of candidates recognised the meander, had good knowledge of delta features and were familiar with the changing nature of river variables downstream. A few candidates confused the locations in (a)(v), and there were contrasting statements made as to how velocity changes downstream.

Question 6

This was a highly popular and well answered question. Effective use was made of Figure 6a when answering part (a). Full marks was quite common in (a)(i) and most candidates managed at least two valid features/marks in (a)(ii). Many candidates defined both terms in (b)(i) acceptably, and the reasons for Mt. St. Helens being an active volcano were generally well understood with most candidates identifying the important features such as the subduction zone in Figure 6b. There was an encouraging number of high quality responses whose understanding of the rising magma was technical and in-depth. Part (c) saw many candidates responding along the right lines and offering a range of relevant case studies, usually Japanese or Californian. The question reference to large cities was normally missed and the factors offered as explanation tended to be generic in nature.

Question 7

This was not a popular choice and those who did answer it tended to receive modest marks. The candidates were generally sufficiently proficient at map reading to score well in part (a). However, their use of the Ordnance Survey extract was limited in part (b) where Figure 7 drew their attention away from it. Feature B was rarely identified correctly in (b)(i) and the answers to (b)(ii) tended to lack hard Ordnance Survey map evidence. Most longshore drift diagrams did show the workings of the process well enough for the award of 2-3 marks.

Understanding of the terms, relief and drainage was very weak and relatively few candidates fully understood what was expected by the question. Part (d) was better answered than parts (b) and (c). Most opted for the conflicts of interest question and did so with reasonable success, pointing out the difficulties that the three facilities stated created for local residents and the natural environment. The field study option tended to produce less satisfactory work of a vague and impractical nature. However, it was pleasing to see a general understanding of the concept of sampling.

Question 8

This was a very popular question which also tended to mark well. In part (a) (a)(i) and (ii) proved to be very straightforward though (iii) and (iv) did generate more discrimination. There was a general appreciation of the link between economic development and pollution though some struggled to give two distinctive and developed reasons in (a)(iii). It was encouraging to note that about half of the candidates understood that per person data enabled fairer comparison. The science of global warming and the greenhouse effect was familiar in outline terms to most of the candidates who were able to score well in part (b). The consequences of global warming were very well known and the scripts revealed evidence of a wide variety of environmental, economic and social effects. It was also encouraging to read in part (d) of the large numbers who were aware of the conflicting arguments surrounding the issue of target-setting for carbon dioxide emissions.

O Level Geography 7209 Paper 2

General Comments

In general, candidates seemed to perform up to expectations on the early and middle parts of questions, which were comparable to previous years. The 9 mark sections of each question appeared to provide greater problems than in the past, with less evidence of good case study material and a problem in interpreting exactly what was required, particularly in the 'sustainable' questions. These parts are designed to be the most challenging but it is necessary for the candidates to use their case study material to answer the specific question rather than just to address the general topic involved.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1

The most popular question. Most candidates identified country B correctly and gave two sound reasons for their choice in (a)(ii). Natural population increase was well understood but many candidates did not use the figure in their response thus limiting their mark. There was a tendency not to address population change in (iv) but merely to talk about BR and DR, gaining partial credit. Part (b) was tackled well with evidence of sound understanding of the mechanisms involved. Most candidates did attempt to explain rather than just list ideas. Part (c) provided some thoughtful responses, although there was often a lack of detail to illustrate the points made. The effects of ageing on low income regions was at times poorly understood, with candidates assuming that it could not happen because of the higher DR there, in contradiction to the graph - the possible positive benefits here were only occasionally seen.

Question 2

Also a popular question. Most candidates were able to distinguish between cash and subsistence crops although explanations were often rather vague. They found part (iii) quite challenging. Unfortunately a substantial number of candidates did not refer back to the graph and answered in a purely theoretical fashion. There was a tendency also to focus on individual months rather than to see overall patterns and linkages. In part (b) most had sound grasp of the various techniques that AICs use with some excellent explanatory comments at times. Part (c) was disappointing, with only a few candidates able to address the 'sustainable' part of the question a majority of the suggestions offered were simply those of the Green Revolution and not even implicitly sustainable.

Question 3

Part (i) produced mainly some rather vague interpretations of the terms but candidates were able to explain three factors for part (ii) with some good exemplification given at times. Part (b)(i) showed evidence of good detailed knowledge, with excellent examples included, and (b)(ii) showed evidence of sound understanding of the effects - although these were mostly negative, there were good examples of positive effects such as increased income. Part (c) produced some good case study material, although the reasons for them tended to be merely

an extended list of the type of factors that had been used for the previous question, i.e. 'they do it because tourists litter, pollute etc'.

Question 4

Locational and production characteristics of high-tech industries were well understood for part (ii). Candidates seemed aware of the transport savings for port locations in part (iv), with some good use of examples. In (b)(ii) the advantages of cheap land, space, environment and good transport links were well-known. There were some good developed points at times, especially for the ability to expand (space) and attract quality workers (environment). Somewhat surprisingly part (c) threw up some problems. Although many candidates could suggest reasons - especially for South Wales - they were less sure on the 'how'. For other regions such as the London Docklands, the 'how' was much better than the 'why'. A number of candidates misunderstood the question and explained how industries locate in different areas now - i.e. tended to repeat what the earlier parts of the question had been asking.

Question 5

In (a)(ii) map evidence tended to lack use of the data at times, resulting in descriptions that were rather vague. Surprisingly part (iii) was often not tackled well. More able candidates pointed out that the main reason for this was that urbanisation had already taken place in the North, but the key area of rural-urban migration was often omitted from explanations. Part (b)(i) produced the expected list of pollution, unemployment, crime etc although there was a tendency to list rather than describe. The best descriptions linked unemployment and crime together. Descriptions of conditions in shanties tended to be somewhat vaguer than expected. In part (c) there were sound case studies of how squatter settlements were being tackled. Improvements in transport produced a few very good responses for schemes that were obviously well known to the candidates, but otherwise they tended to be somewhat generalised 'more public transport' type responses.

Question 6

Most candidates described the change in (a)(ii) soundly and could give the basic reason of affordability in part (iii) - lack of access in many parts of country was also well appreciated. Responses to part (iv) tended to be a little too generalised, often merely really repeating the 'more industry needs more energy' line implicit in the question. Understanding of what the processes of industrialisation and development involve were often lacking. The difference between renewable and non-renewable was well known with sound use of examples. Part (c) was probably the best attempted of all the longer sections. Sound knowledge of the effects of the burning of fossil fuels was evident, with good links to acid rain and global warming. A good range of energy types was explored by many candidates, appreciating that even renewables such as HEP are not without negative environmental impact in their production. Both production and use were well tackled - use through fossil fuels and production through renewables, although there was some consideration of mining problems also.

Question 7

Although not popular, this question produced some thoughtful responses. Interpretation of the map was sound in the early parts, with good understanding of the problems associated with the old route and the problems of the alternative route suggested in part (a)(iii). Reports showed a good appreciation of the possible variety of interests affected by the road. In addition to the expected environmental impacts - negative for the countryside and positive for the town - many candidates understood that it could also be negative economically for the town. Most candidates appreciated that increasing wealth and industry would necessitate more road traffic and hence lead to greater pollution, in particular, but also time loss. Part (c) tended to see a concentration on the interests of the environment through more public transport and cleaner technologies and found it more difficult to address the needs of the community.

Question 8

The least popular of all the questions. Candidates who attempted it tended to pick up marks in the early part, with sound suggestions for (a)(i)-(iii). Suggestions for part (a)(iv) tended to be simplistic and undeveloped, concentrating mainly on 'more industry' and 'more vehicles'. Comments on part (b) tended to centre around the idea that countries in column A were using many resources and therefore having to import, although the concept of sustainability was often only barely implicit. Explanations for column B tended to centre around the physical features/small population of Australia rather than any generic reasoning for the group as a whole. Responses to part (c) were often very weak, with many candidates not understanding what the term 'ecological footprint' meant. Most responses tended to produce arguments involving renewable sources of energy and some conservation of energy - other resources were barely mentioned in most cases.

O Level Geography 7209 Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award for grade	62	54	46	41	35

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