

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE O Level

O Level Geography (7209)

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# O Level Geography 7209 Paper 1

## General Comments

In this penultimate O Level paper and with a declining entry, it was particularly pleasing to note a significant increase in the mean mark. This is strong evidence of improved candidate performance.

Many scripts were of very good quality showing impressive geographical knowledge and understanding. Candidates seemed much more willing to develop their answers and explain themselves, and particularly processes.

## Question Specific Comments

### Question 1: Earthquakes

This was a very popular choice of a well-liked and obviously well-taught topic. Almost all candidates had no difficulty with the (a)(i) and (ii) data-response tasks and coped well with the definitions of tectonic plate and epicentre although not all offered maximum mark definitions. Item (a)(iv) about processes at a destructive plate boundary, whilst enabling candidates to differentiate their ability did produce many strong answers. Various reasons behind the heavier impact of earthquakes in urban areas and in low-income countries were offered by the candidates in (b) with the better candidates producing very convincing explanations. Weaker responses often lacked distinctiveness and with vague reasons given for low-income countries. Part (c) was generally well answered but some candidates failed to score highly because they did not concentrate on the command word in the question and focus on how damage can be mitigated.

### Question 2: Rivers

This was another popular question though it tended not to score as well as question 1. Item (a)(ii) was invariably answered correctly though the significance of "naturally" was sometimes missed in (a)(ii) with those going on to refer to generic causes of flooding. River management seemed to be well known; most candidates knew of its multi-purposes and the workings of a dam though its basic function in holding back discharge was not always made. Item (b) was not particularly well done. There were many lower level answers that did little more than list how rivers are polluted. Equally, item (c) failed to generate many answers that possessed the depth and scope called for in a high level response. Irrigations' advantages were better offered than either its problems or examples of schemes into which advantages and problems could be set.

### Question 3: Coasts

This was another popular question but again did not overall reach the high mark totals of question 1. Part (a) tended to be done well throughout with the majority of candidates knowing their coastal landforms ((a)(i)), appreciating how rock resistance affected coastlines ((a)(ii) & (iii)), and having at least a rudimentary idea for (a)(iv) how spits are formed. Item (b) was also generally well answered with pleasing levels of detail evident on many scripts. Diagrams were drawn by the majority of candidates, and the question proved to be an effective differentiator with the

stronger candidates fully annotating well-drawn diagrams for Level 3 marks. Most candidates tended to attain at least Level 2 marks. Item (c) was the least productive part of this question. Many candidates did not address both elements of the question nor was there much evidence of real fieldwork. An increased emphasis on fieldwork techniques, either actual or virtual may be called for, especially in centres looking to adopt the new iGCSE specification for first examination in 2011.

#### Question 4: Soils

There were relatively few responses to this question but those doing so tended to do it reasonably well. Part (a) items seemed to pose few problems for the majority of candidates who tended to know the term, horizon ((a)(i)), that chernozems are black and why ((a)(iii)-(iv)), and that the soil is found on temperate grasslands ((a)(v)). Detail was often missing in the last two responses but as such the questions did enable differentiation by outcome. A significant number of candidates did not name a specific soil type in (b) though there was a generally decent understanding of soil formation processes whether generic or specific to say, chernozems or podsoles. The final item generated a mediocre set of responses, many candidates going beyond Level 1 but few reaching into Level 3 quality. Few seemed to appreciate that agriculture has forever deliberately and naturally modified soils without particularly polluting the environment.

#### Question 5: Global Warming and Climate Change

This proved to be a very popular choice and produced some excellent quality of response. Maximum marks were typical in (a)(i) and most were able to offer two distinctive and full reasons for high emissions in AICs ((a)(ii)). Responses to (a)(iii) were generally pleasing as most were aware of rising future LIC/NIC emissions yet future reductions in AICs. Part (b) certainly differentiated very well with only the ablest seeing climate change as more than global warming. Almost all candidates appreciated that a strengthening greenhouse effect is about pollution and that global warming is a result of the strengthening of a natural process. Item (c) with each of three identified ways carrying 3 marks offered a good opportunity for strong candidates to score highly. Many did come up with three distinctive ways and gain high scores. For others simple but creditable statements for one or more ways was all they offered.

#### Question 6: Anticyclones

This was not one of the paper's popular questions but those choosing it often did it well. The evidence was that Figure 6 was sufficiently well understood but that not all candidates offered three distinctive lines of evidence or failed to support their assertions with statistical data for the award of maximum marks. Item (a)(ii) provided an early differentiator. Item (b)(iii) rarely scored maximum marks because the blocking aspect was generally not known. There were, however, many respectable sketches of a high pressure cell. Item (c) tended to be well answered. It was clear that most candidates had been taught this traditional contrast; there were some strong technical answers gaining good marks. The final 9-mark item tended to score fairly well but too few candidates picked up on all three aspects of the question. Comments about the natural environment, especially around drought and about people's health, particularly sun-burn were more common than was reference to the impacts on the economy.

### **Question 7: Mountains, weathering and mass movement.**

There were relatively few takers for this question and it did not score particularly highly. Maximum marks in (a)(i) was rare though all identified process A as volcanic and most named a volcanic cone for credit in (a)(ii). Rift valley answers in (a)(iii) were rare but most seemed to appreciate the significance of the dotted lines in the process C diagram of Figure 7. Plate margins as was sought was often not the response given in item (a)(v); folding had rarely been identified as process C earlier on. Item (b) tended to be reasonably well done though answers were often vague and limited. Weathering was well known but mass movement less so and without the latter landscape impacts were more difficult to describe. Level 3 responses were rare though some reached Level 2 marks on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of weathering processes and its impact on landform formation.

### **Question 8: Desert landforms**

This was a more unpopular and lower scoring question. Most answers gained credit in both (a)(i) and (a)(ii) but few gained respectable marks in (a)(iii)-(b). The majority of candidates did not know the names or understand particularly well the formation of many of the features in Figure 8. Wind and water erosional and depositional activities were comprehended only tentatively by the bulk of the candidates. Ironically, item (c) was the highest scoring part of the question with many candidates writing about relevant low- and high-tech adaptation strategies enabling human survival in, especially the Sahara and Arabian deserts.





## 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, although Q1(a)(iv) was a notable exception here. The final '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 interpreting exactly what was required. 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 correctly identified the UK's population in part (a)(i). In part (ii) some did not appreciate that the estimates only started from 2006 and commented on the 1976-2006 period. Students had a little difficulty in identifying the other cause of population growth in part (ii) and this limited their possible credit from part (iv). In the latter part the role of natural increase was generally very clear, but the role of migration, when identified correctly, was seen as being very simple in terms of just the number entering the country rather than as a balance between those entering and leaving. The consequences of fast growth were often put in rather general terms 'overpopulation' too many people for the resources' which tended to be a little repetitive, although many candidates managed a good list of the 'not enough housing' type. Age structure was generally understood, although there was still a tendency by a significant minority of candidates to talk in terms of the birth rate and death rate. The consequences of change were generally well expressed with good reference to increased dependency ratios, government expenditure and the subsequent need to increase taxes. Part(c) generally scored well, with good knowledge of the China 'one child' policy that was usually delivered in the context of change. However, the question did require candidates to refer to more than one example and many did not, limiting them to the top of level 2 or the bottom of level 3. Candidates should ensure that they do check the wording of questions carefully in order to allow them access to the full range of marks.

#### Question 2

Also a popular question. Most candidates were able to identify towns B and C correctly, although in their justification in part (a)(ii) they often identified the type of fuel source used without stating why this made it non-renewable. In part (iii) there was some confusion over the term site, many stating only that it was 'near town A'. Many others did appreciate the benefits of being in a mountainous area and related this to the potential increase in rainfall and the existence of steep valleys and impermeable rocks.

Explanations for the locations of power stations were good, with many appreciating the difficulties of transporting coal and therefore the necessity to be near the coal mine. Many also explained the advantages of a coastal location for the oil plant, with reference to the need for imports. Most candidates could name two other renewable sources in part (a)(iv). In part (b) the question was seen by most merely as being a justification of the use of nuclear power rather than of the scheme as a whole. Whilst this had considerable relevance it limited the credit that could be gained and

benefits to the island such as not needing to import oil, and the savings that might make in the long run, or in having a wider energy mix, were not explored. Part (c) tended to be answered with reference to one of two types of area - low cost locations such as LICs or modern 'high-tech' locations. The latter in particular showed evidence of good case study knowledge and understanding, whilst some good responses linked the former well to the location of TNCs. Unfortunately less able candidates did not pick up on the 'modern' part of the question and tended to do a generic list of locational factors or examine the location of steelworks or similar.

### Question 3

For part (ii) many candidates tended to say what tradition was rather than give some idea of how it affected farming, although some good responses linked it in particular to local religion/customs. The difference between intensive and extensive farming was well known, although sometimes it was only expressed weakly in 'small farm, large farms' terms. Many candidates did not refer to their characteristics in terms of animal farming and did not get the 3rd mark as a result. The two factors were often correctly identified but explanations were often on a rather simple level. Good responses for relief gave specific examples 'sheep on hills, cows on flatter land' rather than just saying that the type of relief affects the type of animals, for example.

In part (b) most candidates were able to identify at least two factors that affected farming - usually lack of machinery and fertilisers/pesticides. Good candidates then went on to link this with productivity 'pesticides ensure that more of the crop survives' whilst weaker candidates merely tended to repeat the question 'lack of fertilisers means that productivity is poor'. In part (c) there was good knowledge of developments such as glasshouses, GM crops and the EU farming policies, although the latter tended to be described and evaluated often without much reference to the changes in farming that they had produced. Diversification of farms was also well dealt with.

### Question 4

Not a popular question. The purposes of a national park were well known, most identifying the conservation and recreation purposes. Candidates were mainly successful in part (a)(iii), particularly in recognising the role of farming, in hedgerow removal or pollution through pesticides etc, and in recognising the damage that tourism can bring. Urban growth tended to wander into deforestation, not relevant here for most of the park. In (b) the role of groups in favour was explained well, linking the government and local people to multipliers from tourism and environmental groups to habitat protection.

The role of the NUF was not so well understood, with many candidates tending to imply that farmers would actually lose their farms as a result of the change. In (c) there were a few very good case studies of conflicts in national parks, but many tended to be rather generic ideas of how people could be controlled 'park and ride, good signage' with the conflicts being very much implicit at best.

### Question 5

There seemed to be a considerable divide here. Candidates who were careful in using the source material had little difficulty in picking out enough relevant data, others tended to assume that 'upside' and 'downside' represented the 2 areas and simply

picked accordingly. Whereas this worked for some - sanitation, life expectancy - it did not give a clear rural-urban or intra-urban difference for others. In part (a)(iii) most candidates were aware of the basic primary to secondary/tertiary change that occurred but rarely gave the full picture indicating that the last two were sequential as well rather than happening at the same time.

In (b) there were some good explanatory responses. Stable government was explained in terms of attracting overseas investment and in allowing home investment in industry rather than spending on arms. The young population was seen as a healthy, efficient workforce although it was often assumed, without indication as to how, that it would be more educated. Transport tended to be a little weak, merely saying that it allowed goods to be delivered without indicating that this reduced industry costs and thus was able to attract industry. Part (c) produced some rather vague responses, indicating how development occurred rather than the effects that it had on the people. Many responses simply saw the answer as being providing jobs for the population and rarely even developed that to show how this could give them wider benefits.

### Question 6

A less popular question. Most candidates cored well on part (i) and could identify recycling in part (ii), although other ways were often rather vague. Sustainable development was often seen purely in terms of 'not harming the environment' but the development/future aspect of it was left to only a minority of candidates to outline. In (iv) the immediate benefit to the local community and country was often seen, especially in terms of making them less dependent. Surprisingly, the role of decreased 'air miles' was only seldom used as a reason. In part (b)(i) ecological footprint was often seen in the rather narrow sense of it being negative, similar to someone's carbon footprint. However, most candidates who had a reasonable idea even on these lines then managed to explain the basic link with sustainable development, often with use of a good example - these were most commonly comparing renewable and non-renewable fuels. Part (c) produced some good general arguments both in terms of AICs using resources at a rapid rate and in their effects upon LICs through trade policies or TNCs. Detail and exemplification were rather thin in supporting the basic outline, however.

### Question 7

Most candidates managed to identify one main shape characteristic. In (a)(ii) both were used well, usually with regard to increasing trade and, in the case of the river, for water supply. Part (iv) was less successful as candidates seemed to assume that the UK was still in the same state as in the early development. Hence proximity to the river was incorrectly seen as a benefit for the water supply.

Although it might be a benefit in terms of scenic beauty, its greatest asset was the flat land of the floodplain compared to the hills around Jiggins Field. The term 'counter-urbanisation' was understood well, although the effects were often rather vague. Some candidates did describe the possible social conflict and problems of house price increases well, but often, merely the increase in traffic/pollution was addressed. Part (c) was often disappointing. Candidates seemed to carry over the same ideas from the previous section and try to incorporate them into a different context and hence the 'obvious' changes caused by out migration, as opposed to the reverse movement in AICs was missed. Many of the explanations did not refer to villages at all and described major town/city developments. There were some sound

case studies based on small villages developing, but often explanation here was weak.

### Question 8

The least popular of all the questions. In part (iii) decline of the docks was seen correctly in terms of increasing ship size and the inadequacy of the Mersey to cope with this. Most candidates could give at least two basic reasons for the location of the airport, usually noticing the flat land and the distance from the built-up area. This was often explained well in terms of pollution/disturbance to the residents. The importance of leisure facilities was not well-known, although a number of candidates did interpret them as facilities that might attract tourists and therefore made some sound points as to how that might encourage regeneration. This produced some rather weak responses in general. The aim/purpose of the study needs to be more clearly identified and the methods of data collection and presentation more precisely outlined. There was not much evidence that students had actually carried out a fieldwork investigation as the general principles were missing.

## O Level Geography 7209 Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Boundary Mark	64	56	48	43	37

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