

GCSE

Geography B

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J085**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates, which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)

Geography (J085)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
A771 Geographical Enquiry	4
A772/01 (Foundation Tier)	6

A771 Geographical Enquiry

General Comments:

In this eighth session for entry for this specification for controlled assessment for B562 and A771 there has been a combined entry of nearly 550 centres and 30,000 candidates. This is the second session where the Geographical Enquiry is composed of one component, that of the Fieldwork Focus.

Administration

Administration by centres continues to improve with many centres submitting their marks well in advance of the 15th of May deadline. Once again only a few centres made errors on the MS1 forms and nearly all sent the CCS160 form promptly. Only half the centres submitted the GCW347 form from candidates detailing their group work. The majority of centres completed assessment grids fully and included appropriate annotation of the form and candidates work indicating where credit was given. An increasing number of centres included their instruction sheet for candidates and data recording sheets. This is to be recommended along with candidates indicating their word counts.

Moderation

Significantly fewer centres were adjusted this year. This was due to centres listening to the advice given to them by moderators last year. They collected more primary data, had three or four key questions, expected outcomes and followed the route to enquiry.

Centres chose all four titles, but rivers and coasts were the most popular. Successful investigations broke down the title into three or four key questions. The Bradshaw and urban models allowed this to be done relatively easily. The coastal geology title needed more reference to geology than processes and human intervention. Many candidates included background to the theories, topic and the study area. However, some did not include maps showing the sites where measurements were undertaken. Some centres unnecessarily included risk assessments, definition of terms and processes. These should have been applied to their study sites.

Methodology tables were used successfully by most centres. They suggested a wide range of appropriate techniques, predominantly primary. However, some centres did not carry out all these techniques, present or analyse them. Some centres used satellite images and maps very effectively and integrated them with graphs. Some graphs selected by candidates were inappropriate. A few centres chose to use statistical techniques such as Spearman rank very effectively.

Most centres analysed comprehensively with reasoning and often did this next to the maps and graphs. It was encouraging to see candidates return to their key questions in their conclusions. This allowed them to use their analysis to give substantiated conclusions. Evaluations were also well structured, with some centres mentioning limitations and solutions on their methodology tables. Good centres suggested realistic ways to improve and extend their studies. A few centres still use text boxes and tables too often. It is only appropriate in annotating photographs or graphs and for the methodology table. In a few centres this led to candidates exceeding the word limit. Exceeding the word count needs to be considered in the future and where candidates have done so centres need to acknowledge this in their mark sheet annotation.

OCR Report to Centres - June 2015

Overall, this year has been successful with centres in the main responding to advice given by moderators last year. There were some very high quality enquiries, which reflect well upon the quality of teaching and hard work of candidates.

It is important that centres read their moderators' reports and act upon the advice given. It is also advisable to look at the OCR web site, which will soon have examples of good practice from this year.

A772/01 (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

Overall the 2015 examination drew positive comments from both the Principal Examiner and the Assistant Examiner. Both agreed that the examination was set at an appropriate level of difficulty for Foundation candidates. They also felt that the examination was a positive experience for candidates given the numbers who attempted all parts of the Examination. It was also noted that there were few 'no response' answers from candidates, although there are still those who fail to attempt the case study sub-questions. The case study sub-questions, along with the mark for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG), carry 24 marks out of the total of 66 marks available for the examination. It is a source of disappointment that these candidates are either unwilling or unable to tackle the case study element of the examination.

The total number of candidates was approximately 95; this was lower than previous entries of around 150 candidates. The majority of these candidates appear to be less able to manage the challenge of the examination when compared with the performance of candidates entered for the full course examination B563 01. Question 1 for Rivers and Coasts is exactly the same on each examination paper. Candidates for A772 01 scored lower marks than their B563 01 counterparts both overall and on all sub-questions for Question 1. Whilst the sample sizes are significantly different, centres should be aware that the standards applied to the marking and grading of both papers are exactly the same.

June 2015 saw the second examination for specification B with two compulsory questions. Each question can encompass the full range of key ideas and content of the specification theme being assessed. In general most candidates were able to manage the shift in focus from one part of a theme to another. From rivers to coasts in Question 1, and from multi-national companies to global climate change to an aid project in Question 2. With Question 1 the shift from rivers to coasts was supported by the resource Fig. 3. However in Question 2 candidates had to apply their own knowledge and understanding to the questions on global climate change without any supporting resources. In preparing candidates for future examinations centres should focus on these transitions and also consider whether some candidates may be better suited to start with Question 2 first.

As with all previous examinations, there were aspects which candidates found challenging.

Candidates should have a sound knowledge of the meaning of specification-specific vocabulary or key words in order to unlock the specific knowledge required to gain marks. Areas that caused difficulty for some candidates with the 2015 Examination were:

Question 1:

Stores and transfers for river flooding, correct technical terms for flood reduction methods, coastal erosion processes and coastal management methods.

Question 2:

Economic activity, global climate change, aid project and quality of life.

It was encouraging to note that a few candidates had underlined key words and/or command words. This practice can slow candidates down and get them to consider the question requirements and the exact knowledge, understanding and type of response needed.

Candidates should be familiar with common examination command words through their normal learning repertoire. In particular learning could focus on the difference between 'describe' and 'explain' so that candidates focus their thinking on the relevant elements of knowledge and understanding required. This is most relevant for the case study questions where the final section usually requires a more sophisticated, evaluation or commentary as opposed to lower level description.

The annotation 'DEV' should be a key part of examination practice and the marking and review of practice or mock examinations. Examiners use this annotation to indicate the development of a basic, valid idea. This could involve further descriptive detail or additional ideas for example for coastal management methods in Question 1g). 'DEV' is also needed when the question requires an explanation such as in Question 2f), where candidates needed to describe and explain two possible effects of global climate change.

Awareness of 'DEV' should be linked to the two types of four-mark question. Those that require two parts to the answer are more challenging in that the response needs development in terms of detail or further explanation. On other questions, four marks can be secured with four basic, valid ideas, almost in list form, Questions 1e) and 2c) are good examples of the latter.

As with all previous examinations the case study question is the key to success. Each question is split into three parts to support candidates in constructing their answers. The entire response is levels marked holistically and candidates who write valid content in the wrong section are fully credited. A valid named example is needed to progress beyond Level 1, and with on-line marking examiners make frequent use of the internet to check the validity of familiar and unfamiliar examples. This was done to ensure that coastal management methods matched given place examples for Question 1g) and for any data or place specific information associated with a named aid project for Question 2g).

Question 1:

Question 1 assessed the Rivers and Coasts Theme of the Specification. This was the highest scoring question overall but not the most successfully answered case study sub-question. The resources were a flood hydrograph linked to two river valley landscape block diagrams, and two photographs showing evidence of coastal erosion at Skipsea at two different times.

The skills question in part (a) required candidates to read the flood hydrograph and extract number data for three marks. Nearly three quarters of candidates were able to do this for full marks.

Candidates were then required to apply their knowledge of the causes of flooding to the two block diagrams for part (b). Three-quarters of the candidates were able to do this. However, only one-third were able to explain their ideas or provide detailed understanding of stores and transfers. The most common, basic responses were that the river channel had been straightened or that trees had been removed. Weak explanations referred to the speed of the river's flow or that the trees could no longer 'soak up' or 'absorb' the water. Better answers used correct terms like interception storage or referred to the impermeability of the urban landscape. Higher-scoring explanations also made reference to the reduction in lag time and increased surface run-off into the river channel. Some candidates made incorrect inferences about changes to the angle of the valley slopes or the layer of soil. One-quarter of candidates failed to score any marks for part (b). This was similar for part (c). This was partly due to a misreading of the question, which states 'other' causes of flooding. These candidates repeated their answers given for part (b) thereby failing to gain any marks. Some candidates gave definitions of flooding whilst the most common, basic response was heavy rainfall. Only a minority of candidates were able to explain relevant ideas with any detail or confidence.

Basic ideas involving barriers and wider/deeper channels were given for part (d). There was a lack of technical vocabulary such as levees or dredging in the lower scoring answers. Few candidates showed an understanding of wider drainage basin management ideas and those who mentioned afforestation spoke again in vague terms about trees soaking up water. Some candidates made explicit reference to coastal management methods such as concrete sea walls and groynes.

Part (e) signalled a shift to coasts and was well-answered. Most responses focused on the potential loss of housing due to erosion and linked this to stress, insurance costs, inability to sell property and having to relocate.

The loss of transport routes and inconvenience for journeys to work was also a common answer. Less frequent were ideas about the impact on tourism and other economic activities. Some candidates made comments about death and injury believing that residents would remain at home until their property succumbed to cliff erosion.

For part (f) candidates had to match three key words to definitions of coastal erosion processes. Just under 40% secured full marks, whilst one quarter did not gain any marks at all.

A wide range of English coastal places was given for the case study part (g). The Holderness coast was the most common area selected, followed by Dorset and the South West. Some candidates gave clear place-specific examples such as Hunstanton and Swanage. Weaker answers gave a valid coastal place with general, list like, ideas about coastal management methods. As mentioned earlier, examiners checked that these methods were valid for the given place example. Sea walls and groynes were the most common methods given, with fewer accounts of soft engineering examples or managed retreat. Better responses offered detail about materials, locations or how these methods operated to reduce or prevent coastal erosion. Detailed comments about the sustainability of valid methods were rare. Most candidates were able to offer vague ideas about success, costs or durability of given methods. Other candidates made general comments about sustainability without any valid evidence to support them. A few candidates described river flood management schemes, most notably for Boscastle whilst others focused on landforms with Old Harry making an occasional appearance.

Question 2:

This question assessed the Economic Development Theme of the specification. The resources focused on two multi-national companies (MNCs) and included a located bar map showing people employed by Toyota and a data table for countries where factories make products for Nike. The data table also included the GDP per person for the selected countries. The shifts of focus to global climate change and the aid project case study were not supported by any resources.

For part (a) i) just under three-quarters of candidates were able to read the located bar map to give the correct number of 10,000 workers employed by Toyota in India. Nearly 90% of candidates used the located bar map to correctly rank China, Canada and Australia according to their number of Toyota workers for two marks for part a) ii).

Over half the candidates scored one mark for part (b) by stating that Toyota had workers employed worldwide or in many different countries as a valid MNC feature. Fewer candidates gained a second mark for a further feature such as a mixture of LEDCs and MEDCs or that the headquarters was in Japan, an MEDC.

The wording of part (c) may have been too complex for less able candidates as just under one fifth failed to score a mark. However the others were able to cite low wages as a basic MNC location factor. Developed answers linked this to increased profits for MNCs. Just under a quarter of candidates were able to give another reason such as cheaper raw materials, tax breaks or less stringent pollution laws for additional factors.

Just under 60% of candidates misread part (d) and failed to gain any marks. They often repeated their answer to part (c) and ignored the key word 'benefits' of MNC investment for lower income countries. Job creation was a basic valid point given by those who did score one mark. A few candidates developed this idea by referring to improved standards of living for workers due to their wages. Less than 10% of candidates were able to give a second valid reason such as improvements to the country's infrastructure or a multiplier effect due to investment by MNCs.

Foundation candidates' confusion regarding possible human causes of global climate change was evident in responses to part (e). Just over 60% of candidates failed to attempt the question or scored zero marks. Basic ideas such as the use of fossil fuels for industry and transport were typical of low scoring responses. Fewer candidates were able to name a greenhouse gas or explain how its build up caused global climate change.

Candidates fared better with part (f) where about two-thirds were able to describe possible effects of global climate change. The most common responses linked an increase in temperature to the melting of polar ice caps. Some candidates developed this further with reference to increase sea levels and flooding or the threat to polar bear habitats in the Arctic. Fewer candidates gave other valid responses such as an increase in extreme weather events linked to possible crop failure leading to potential hunger.

The case study requirement for part (g) was an aid project in an LEDC. Candidates needed to name the LEDC and describe the main features of the aid project. They were also required to explain how the aid project had affected the local people's quality of life. This was the better-answered of the two case study sub questions. An encouraging one fifth of candidates reached Level 3 with their responses. These answers had a valid named aid project, the most common being Water Aid. They gave clear descriptions of the installation of water pumps and the training giving to locals regarding the maintenance and repair of these pumps. References to improved health, time saved by not having to walk to collect water and increased crop yields were given as positive impacts on people's quality of life. The most common countries were Mali and Ghana. Other successful answers focused on specific examples of relief aid such as flood relief in Bangladesh or in response to the recent earthquakes in Nepal. Weaker responses involved a list of imagined types of aid with no clear focus or ideas about quality of life. Candidates also gave Africa as their LEDC whilst some wrote about the impact of MNCs such as Nike or Coca Cola in a named LEDC.

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