

OCR Report to Centres

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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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Advanced GCE Geography (H483)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Geography (H083)

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Overview

General Comments

The quality of communication could be improved by many candidates who struggle to express their ideas, especially in Section A answers. The essay answers in Section B were noticeably of higher quality. Candidates need to understand that it is in the short answer questions that clarity and conciseness are vital. The quality of handwriting remains an issue – centres should consider using word processors for their candidates where needed.

Candidates need to carefully read the full question or key terms in a question; not doing this is the single biggest cause of under-achievement. Too many candidates offer pre-learnt answers that do not fit exactly the demands of the wording of the question.

AS Comments

Consistency is the key to doing well at AS level. A few weak answers in Section A, often the last part of a question, reduced the overall level of performance. A consistent performance did tend to achieve at a higher level than one that contained excellent answers but also careless slips.

Candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the topics especially cause and effect and showed broadly effective essay writing, which is often a new challenge to AS candidates.

Section A

Parts (a) and (b) – key points to remember:

- refer specifically to the data or the resource shown in the figure in part (a)(i).
- follow the instruction to describe (what you can see) rather than suggesting generic points.
- carefully read the particular terms used in questions eg F762 – “oil equivalent”.
- keep to the number of points requested – if in doubt number them.
- technical terms – eg “issues” does not only mean problems and “weathering” is neither erosion nor weather.
- don’t include irrelevant ‘chat’ or introductions that repeat the question.
- indicate when answers go onto overspill pages.

Part (c)/(d) – key points to remember:

- use appropriate examples.
- read all of the question eg F762 Q1 (c) focused on problems of water pollution not just pollution.
- use sketch maps or diagrams if appropriate.
- keep focused on the question and don’t include long sections of irrelevant material.
- include material clearly and tightly based on the example(s).
- ensure that when a second example is used it does not just repeat what the first exemplified eg lack of sewage systems in F762 Q1 (c).

Section B

Essays were usually well-argued and candidates scored well in this section but, to be even more effective, candidates should:

- keep to a few detailed examples.
- show some attempt at a conclusion.
- be wary of chatty introductions.
- think whether a sketch map or diagram helps the argument.
- keep it all relevant to and focused on the question.
- try to keep answers analytical and explanatory rather than purely descriptive.
- make the answer locational with a clear sense of place.
- use more local examples.
- structure their answers – using paragraphs with a distinctive aspect.
- produce a plan – which does help organise an answer.

A2 Comments

The key to success at A2 level is the ability to evaluate. Some candidates do not seem to appreciate what this means so gave broad descriptions. Typically in F764 candidates were asked to evaluate the success of an aspect of their investigation but often this resulted in a description of how they did their investigation.

Key points to remember:

- read the question carefully and then answer each aspect of it.
- keep material relevant to the question.
- exemplify with a clear sense of space or location.
- use diagrams to illustrate points – especially in F764.
- structure work with a worthwhile conclusion.

F761 Managing Physical Environments

General Comments

Most candidates responded well to the data-response questions, only dropping marks when they did not recognise the strength of the relationships or the anomalies on the graphs.

The 6 mark questions were generally well-answered, although it is clear that obtaining an appropriate balance between being concise and including the required detail was challenging for some. Candidates need to practise only including material that answers the question. Too much time was wasted on introductory comments or irrelevant additions often meaning that the actual question had not been answered.

To access Level 3 in 9 mark questions, two well-explained cause-effect links were typically required. Enough evidence is needed for the location to have been convincingly applied. Some answers provided too much locational data that was not effectively applied.

There were some excellent essays seen and these were well-structured and covered a range of human and physical processes. Marks for AO2 were sometimes not gained due to a lack of explicit focus on the demands of the question set.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

River Environments

- 1 (a) Candidates were mostly able to pick out a pattern in the changes. Good answers provided evidence of anomalies as well as the general pattern.
- (b) Despite the seemingly straightforward nature of the question, many candidates did not secure Level 2, mainly because their statements were a little superficial. Too often it was up to the assessor to determine “how” material was moved. Candidates sometimes struggled to expand on terms such as suspension and solution without repeating themselves. If diagrams are used, and they can be helpful in such questions, simple labels such as river bed would help with clarity.
- (c) This question was less well-answered, mainly because discussions about flood management techniques often did not deal with a land-use conflict. Many candidates received high Level 1 marks as a result. Strategies such as land-use zoning were often ignored. Good quality answers made it explicitly clear how the strategy resolves the conflict.
- (d) Many candidates responded very effectively to this question. They made good use of some hydrological terminology to explain the effects of urbanisation and deforestation. The best answers completed their explanation by referring to the reduced lag time and rapid rise in water level to exceed bankfull capacity. Discussions of the negative impacts of flood management schemes were less well used. Building on floodplains could be applied in terms of the increased potential losses this brings; the hazard risk equation being a useful teaching tool in this regard.

Coastal Environments

- 2 (a) Candidates were usually able to describe the direction of the relationship, although the term 'correlation' was rarely used. Most provided data as evidence, but relatively few referred to the strength of the relationship.
- (b) Candidates were able to refer to longshore drift here, in addition to suspension, solution and traction. However, those that did were seldom clear enough about the movement of material, tending to limit themselves only to the movement of water.
- (c) Some good answers were seen with the best responses dealing explicitly with conflicts. However, many simply described methods of coastal protection with no indication about who the conflict was between or how the method led to its resolution.
- (d) Low level answers tended to just describe the protection methods. The quality of the explanation of the cause-effect links was the key to accessing the higher levels, and many did this effectively. References to energy were often helpful, although there was much uncertainty about absorption, and much confusion between reflection and refraction. It would have assisted many answers to have specified whether a sea wall was bull-nosed/recurved or not. The question asked about natural processes, and so references to weathering and mass movement were acceptable as well as the more obvious marine processes.

Cold Environments

- 3 (a) (i) The majority of candidates used the resource to score 4 marks. Some tried to suggest opportunities that were not evident in the figure, such as raw materials, and which are not necessarily typical of such environments.
- (ii) A common theme in this unit, the concept of economic development was not very well understood. Many were restricted to Level 1 by making statements such as "tourists bring money" or "tourism creates jobs". Candidates need to show understanding of terms like multiplier effect, not just state them.
- (b) A few candidates are still confusing erosion and weathering. It is important for answers to explain links, in this case between the factor and the process. References to particular process mechanisms, such as freeze-thaw, often enabled Level 2 marks to be accessed.
- (c) Many candidates did not develop their response beyond the use of words such as destroy, damage and kill. Relatively few were explicit about ingestion of toxins and contamination of food chains, for example. As the requirement for case study detail is not vast, candidates need to concentrate on practising their explanations of cause and effect. Very few candidates mentioned damage by physical processes, such as climate change or extreme weather events; damage by human activities were much more commonly seen.

Hot Arid and Semi-Arid Environments

- 4 (a) (i) Many candidates made good use of the resource to gain full marks. Credit was given for opportunities not labelled on the figure, but which are typical of such environments eg long hours of sunshine for solar energy.
- (ii) Similar issues arose here as in Q3 (a)(ii). Answers referring to agriculture tended to focus their explanation on the social benefits of increased food supply without making clear links to economic development. This could have been done by discussing the export of cash crops, for instance.

- (b) As in Q3 (b), there was confusion between weathering and erosion. Some good answers made explicit links between high diurnal range and exfoliation, or high temperatures/evaporation rates and salt crystallisation.
- (c) As with Q3 (c) many candidates did not develop their response beyond the use of words such as destroy, damage and kill. Relatively few were explicit about ingestion of toxins and contamination of food chains, for example. As the requirement for case study detail is not vast, candidates need to concentrate on practising their explanations of cause and effect. Very few candidates mentioned damage by physical processes, such as climate change or extreme weather events such as drought; damage by human activities was much more commonly seen. Some candidates made good use of cryptobiotic crust damage.

Section B

Candidates should be aware that in these essays there is more than one element of the question that needs to be addressed. They need to practise analysing questions in order to work out exactly what is required. Many answers did not start with an introduction. This cannot only help them in focusing their thoughts, but it can also assist in setting the topic in an appropriate context. Conclusions are now usually provided, although they should be meaningful and appropriate for the question, rather than just a means of ending the essay.

River Environments

- 5 Key words included: examine, river basins, multi-use and resource. Too often, one or more of these facets were missing. Good answers, and there were many, realised that the question referred not only to the river itself, but to the whole basin. Effective references were often made to the potential benefits of flood plains for both agriculture and construction. Few made it clear why a river might be suitable for HEP; references to discharge, valley cross-section and rock type were rarely mentioned. A similar issue arose over fishing; why do some rivers possess such a significant resource? Not many candidates recognised the value of the natural environment as a resource for conservation or tourism. The very best answers made summative comments about why some basins provide such a wide range of resource opportunities.

Coastal Environments

- 6 Although very similar in wording to Q5, there was a significant difference here. There was no reference to multi-use – rather to valuable. Nonetheless, similar strengths and weaknesses were seen in the responses. Candidates often did not provide explanation as to why a location provided a resource, for example, for tourism. Candidates needed to explain what attracts tourists to a particular coastline. References to scenery and weather needed to be exemplified and supported with evidence provided. Similarly, comments about ports needed to be explained. Why is the location suitable as a port? Does it have deep water, shelter, short distance access to other countries? Many answers seemed to imply that merely being a coastal location necessarily provided valuable resources.

Cold Environments

- 7 Candidates could prepare for the geomorphology part of the specification by classifying landforms as erosional and depositional. Many candidates wasted time discussing depositional features. It was also clear that many candidates had a good working knowledge of many different landforms but little detailed understanding. Very high scoring essays often covered just two or three landforms in great depth, whereas those that covered many landforms were often Level 2 responses because of the lack of any detailed

understanding. Effective use was made of landforms such as cirques, with explanations providing clear links between different process mechanisms and features of the landform. For example, plucking leading to a steep back wall and abrasion producing a deepened hollow. Weathering processes could also be applied, as long as they were related to an erosional landform.

Hot Arid and Semi-Arid Environments

- 8 As in Q7, a number of responses contained irrelevant landforms of deposition. The best answers made good use of specific process mechanisms, such as aeolian abrasion, to explain the shape of landforms, for example the narrow base of pedestal rocks. Weathering processes including salt crystallisation could be applied to such landforms as contributors to their formation. Those making use of fluvial landforms were also able to produce good answers. Some excellent accounts of canyon formation were seen, with good use of terminology such as ephemeral and exogenic rivers. Those using the Grand Canyon as an example were also able to discuss the impact of tectonic uplift and vertical erosion. Much confusion was evident over the formation of mesas and buttes. The role of fluvial processes in past, wetter climates was often not considered. Some good use was made of diagrams, although these could have been better annotated. An indication of scale would help provide an appropriate context. It was pleasing to see some candidates explicitly addressing the issue of distinctiveness of the landforms.

F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

General Comments

The use of the resources was not always consistent; costing a significant number of candidates what might be considered fairly easy marks. The follow-on question part (ii) was often answered effectively. Responses to the six-mark questions generally showed a good level of basic understanding and in many cases some sound development. However, some candidates did not respond to the command which asked for ‘two’ factors and went on to mention three or four, which often resulted in rather superficial answers. A significant number of candidates used appropriate and well-developed examples in the nine-mark questions, at times to great effect. There was some evidence to suggest that a number of candidates saw the nine-mark questions as “short answer” rather than “short essay” questions, which tended to limit the depth of discussion.

Responses to the essay questions were generally sound. They showed a good level of understanding and in many cases considerable locational detail. It was evident that the majority of candidates had been well-prepared for the essay and a significant proportion of candidates drew up a clear plan which was then used to produce a well-structured essay, often with a sound conclusion.

Two general concerns were identified from a number of scripts. Firstly, it was evident that a number of candidates did not understand some of the basic specification terminology. Terms such as; economic development, conflict, indigenous population, exploitation, social opportunities and environmental protection were not always understood. A second concern was the use of examples which were somewhat generic or not entirely appropriate, at times because of their historical nature. While general examples (which give ideas about the topic rather than the specific aspect of the topic under discussion) can give some insight into the question, they often lead to answers which are rather vague or superficial and can be rather descriptive. This can be a significant factor in showing depth of understanding. The choice of example(s) often dictates the overall quality of the response, which is very noticeable at the higher mark levels.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Managing Urban Change

- 1 (a) (i) In most cases there was a clear reference to the link between the highest income and the commercial centres. After that a variety of ideas was expressed, including points about areas of low income near the city centre, high incomes towards the edge of the city and the general increase in income as you move from the commercial centre. A number of candidates identified Staten Island as the only Borough with a uniform average income. Use of the specific data was generally good, although a number of candidates simply used comparative descriptive words (higher, lower etc). A small number of candidates listed a range of points with very little real reference to Fig.1 or moved into offering reasons for the pattern of income.
- (ii) In most cases two appropriate reasons were identified, the mark for the question often dictated by the level of development of the ideas. Points about expensive areas close to the central business areas populated by high wage earners, run-down inner-city areas populated by low wage earners/poor

unemployed were quite common. A number of candidates picked up ideas about reasonably wealthy suburban areas towards the edge of the city linked to commuting. A number of candidates did not always develop their ideas or tended to focus on one main point; in both cases this restricted answers to Level 1. It was evident that, in a small number of cases, candidates either did not identify, or perhaps fully understand the word “economic”.

- (b) The idea of “environmental factors” was interpreted in two main ways, either in relation to protected environments or to physical factors. A number of candidates focused on the idea of protected environments such as urban parks, protected urban woodlands or the Green Belt. Some candidates combined this with links to the physical environment such as river parks and river walkways. This type of response often brought thoughtful answers which showed a sound appreciation of the question, often linking the idea of environment, planning and land use very effectively. A number of candidates simply focused on aspects of physical geography (mainly rivers and slopes), generally making observations about how these factors might encourage or discourage development and therefore affect land use. In general terms the quality of responses was dictated by the choice of the original idea and the level of explanation. A significant number of candidates tended to offer descriptive points such as “being near a river would affect land use” without offering any real explanation. While this showed some awareness of the idea, it did not fully address the question. A number of candidates drifted into discussion about National Parks with little or no reference to “urban areas”.
- (c) Answers to this question were generally sound, with a significant proportion of candidates using ideas about rapid urban/industrial growth in developing countries. The most common focus was that of the growth of urban slums and the general lack of services, with the resulting discharge of sewage into rivers. Where well-documented examples were used, this approach often produced thoughtful and effective responses. A number of candidates developed this theme further by also considering how rapid industrial growth is creating water pollution problems. Reference to urban/industrial areas in China, Brazil and Mexico were often used effectively to express points about water pollution linked to industrial and infrastructural development. A number of candidates used examples from the developed world to express their ideas, in some cases very effectively. However, in some cases candidates drifted into historical discussion (the development of Victorian London). While this offered some understanding of the idea expressed in the question, it generally resulted in a very descriptive and generic answer.

Managing Rural Change

- 2 (a) (i) In most cases the two ideas identified were peripheral regions having higher levels of settlement decline and areas where there were major cities having lower rates of rural decline. A number of candidates identified Hokkaido as a slight anomaly. Use of specific information in Fig.2 was generally good, although a number of candidates simply used descriptive words (middle, edge etc). A small number of candidates moved beyond describing the pattern shown on the map and began to offer reasons for rural decline.
- (ii) In most cases two appropriate reasons were identified, the mark for the question often dictated by the level of development of the ideas. Points about agricultural decline, lack of economic opportunities and high transport costs were quite common. In some cases this idea was developed by including observations about the difficulty of attracting industry to more remote or peripheral areas. A number of candidates did not always develop their ideas or tended to focus on one main point; in both cases this restricted answers to

Level 1. It was evident that, in a small number of cases, candidates either did not identify, or perhaps fully understand the word “economic”. In this case candidates often drifted into more social or cultural reasons for decline.

- (b) It was evident that a number of candidates did not fully understand the idea of “social”, often drifting into purely economic factors. Those candidates that did address the idea of “social” often considered “influence” in both positive and negative terms. Positive points about community and environmental strengths attracting people were quite a common theme and, when linked to the idea of development, often provided thoughtful answers. Negative observations about changing demographics and rising house prices in rural areas resulting in a decline in local resident population and social services were common. Again, when developed effectively, these ideas provided a useful avenue for the question.
- (c) Answers to this question were generally good, often including appropriate case studies and considerable detail. The most common focus was agricultural change, with particular emphasis on the increasing use of chemicals in farming areas, resulting in the pollution of local rivers. A number of candidates used ideas about industrial pollution in rural areas resulting from primary extraction, often quite effectively. In some cases candidates almost ignored the idea of “rural areas”, simply considering broad generic points with no real locational focus or in some cases actually quoting urban areas. A small number of candidates used very large-scale examples (Three Gorges Dam). While this clearly included appropriate ideas related to the question, it often led to very general responses which lacked specific detail.

The Energy Issue

- 3
- (a) (i) In most cases candidates picked out the general “rich world-poor world” differences and many then went on to consider anomalies to this general pattern. A number of candidates made very specific observations, in some cases showing an impressive level of knowledge by naming countries in different parts of the world. A small number of candidates failed to appreciate that the map showed energy production rather than oil production or talked about oil or energy consumption.
 - (ii) A significant proportion of candidates answered this question effectively, generally considering points about the location of resources and the availability of infrastructure and technology. In most cases answers focused on differences between more and less developed parts of the world, often bringing in named examples. Many candidates had a slightly simplistic view which did not consider the idea that TNCs from more developed parts of the world are often involved in energy exploitation in poorer parts of the world, and a number of candidates were not clear about what is actually meant by “energy production”. In some cases candidates were side-tracked by considering only oil production or translating the question into “energy consumption”.
 - (b) The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the question and were able to identify a number of appropriate conflicts. The more common ideas focused on the degradation of land in farming communities resulting from energy developments and the enforced movement of people from their homelands. These ideas were often accompanied by appropriately chosen examples which were useful in helping to emphasise the points being made. A number of candidates did not appear to understand the idea of “conflict” or “indigenous population”, instead simply describing environmental or political issues with no real reference to the way that they might affect people.

- (c) There were some excellent responses to this question. It was evident that the majority of candidates had a good understanding of the key idea expressed in the question and were able to use detailed examples to develop a discussion. The more commonly used examples focused on Norway, Sweden, California, Germany and the Shetlands, all of which provided an excellent vehicle with which to address the question. A number of candidates drifted into a broader discussion about both costs and benefits of energy exploitation. While this often produced an interesting debate, it did not always allow for a focused consideration of the question. It was evident that a number of candidates did not really understand the idea of “social opportunities”, responses tending to consider only a narrow range of economic factors. Where these factors were clearly linked to the question, observations were creditworthy. However, general observations simply expressing points about “jobs and money” did not always take the discussion very far.

The Growth of Tourism

- 4 (a) (i) In most cases candidates picked out the general “rich world-poor world” differences and many then went on to consider anomalies to this general pattern. A number of candidates made very specific observations, in some cases showing an impressive level of knowledge by naming countries in different parts of the world.
- (ii) The majority of candidates answered this question effectively, usually considering ideas about relative differences between more- and less-developed countries. The major focus for most candidates was the idea that more-developed parts of the world might have better facilities, services and infrastructure, consequently attracting a larger number of tourists. This argument was, at times reversed to consider that less-developed parts of the world might have limited infrastructure. Observations about personal safety and crime were also a common theme, often accompanied by useful and appropriate examples which expressed why these problems might deter visitors. A number of candidates brought in ideas about climate and environment, suggesting that less-developed parts of the world did not appeal to many visitors because the climate and environment was not attractive. This was not a very compelling argument.
- (b) The idea of “social issues” was generally well-understood and candidates offered a wide range of acceptable and realistic ways that the growth of tourism may create tension within communities. Points about loss of culture and general disrespect towards different cultures by visitors were a common theme, often expressed very effectively, at times with the use of specific examples. Other factors raised included points about general labour exploitation, loss of land or resources and tensions created within local communities as a result of “westernisation”. Where the focus was more localised, candidates raised issues about second home ownership, general loss of local facilities and environmental issues. A number of candidates drifted into discussions about problems of footpath erosion, traffic congestion and litter without really considering how this might create social tensions. This approach did not generally address the question very effectively.
- (c) It was clear that the majority of candidates had a sound awareness about environmental issues and how tourism can put pressure on fragile environments. In most cases candidates responses focused on describing elements of environmental management or measures of protection. This type of response offered some insight into the question. However, it tended to focus on the need for protection created by the growth of tourism and did not fully address the key point about how tourism has provided opportunities for environmental protection, perhaps by using income from tourism or by helping to raise awareness with visitors about fragile environments.

Section B

Managing Urban Change

- 5 The majority of candidates showed some general understanding of the idea of “sustainability” and, in many cases, applied their understanding effectively through the use of appropriate case studies. At the higher mark levels candidates developed their answers around a specific example(s), with clear reference to a range of socio-economic factors which might allow urban area(s) to become increasingly sustainable. Observations about the use of renewable energy, managing waste, energy efficient transport systems and the development of green space were commonly used. A significant number of candidates brought in observations about the development of the Olympic site, at times with detailed reference to how elements of the development might be considered to be sustainable, both in terms of socio-economic and environmental considerations. It was evident that a small number of candidates did not fully understand what is meant by “sustainable”. These candidates generally considered simple ideas about environmental management or used examples based on urban redevelopment strategies. While these ideas offered some appreciation of economic and environmental management they did not always fully address the question.

Managing Rural Change

- 6 The majority of candidates showed some general understanding of the idea of “sustainability” and, in many cases applied their understanding effectively through the use of appropriate case studies. At the higher mark levels candidates developed their answers around a specific example(s), with clear reference to a range of socio-economic factors which might allow rural area(s) to become increasingly sustainable. Ideas about countryside stewardship, the development of rural businesses and services and community projects were commonly used. When considered in relation to the sustainability of rural areas these ideas provided the basis for thoughtful and perceptive responses. It was evident that a small number of candidates did not fully understand what is meant by “sustainable”. These candidates generally considered simple ideas about environmental management or used examples based on rural economic development strategies. While these ideas offered some appreciation of economic and environmental management, they did not always fully address the question.

The Energy Issue

- 7 There were some excellent responses to this question. It was evident that the majority of candidates had a good understanding of how energy exploitation can create economic opportunities. In many cases detailed examples were used to examine the influence of energy exploitation. The more commonly used examples focused on Norway, California, Germany, China and Mali, all of which provided an excellent vehicle with which to address the question. A number of candidates drifted into a broader discussion which considered both benefits and costs of energy exploitation, with Nigeria being a commonly used example. While this often produced an interesting essay, it did not always focus effectively on the question. It was evident that a number of candidates did not really understand the idea of “economic development” beyond considerations about jobs and money. Where these factors were clearly linked to the question, observations were creditworthy. However, this more simplistic approach did not consider broader infrastructural and multiplier factors and did not always take the discussion very far.

The Growth of Tourism

- 8** There were some excellent responses to this question. It was evident that the majority of candidates had a good understanding of how tourism can create economic opportunities. In many cases detailed examples were used to examine the influence of tourism. The more commonly used examples focused on Jamaica, China and parts of the Mediterranean coast, although reference to California and parts of the less-developed world were not uncommon. When used effectively any of these examples provided an excellent vehicle with which to address the question. A number of candidates drifted into a broader discussion which considered both benefits and costs of tourism development, which frequently included observations about social and environmental exploitation. While this often produced some interesting geographical understanding, it did not always focus effectively on the question. It was evident that a number of candidates did not really understand the idea of “economic development” beyond considerations about jobs and money. Where these factors were clearly linked to the question, observations were creditworthy. However, this more simplistic approach did not consider broader infrastructural and multiplier factors and did not always take the discussion very far.

F763 Global Issues

General Comments

The small entry for this Unit means that observations on the performance of candidates can only be cautionary as regards their wider applicability. Although responses were read in all Options, some questions received only a handful of answers and consequentially feedback is limited.

Section A

All six Options were answered amongst the entry with Earth Hazards receiving the single largest set of responses. The standard of response ran right across the whole range of marks available although generally candidates adopted an appropriate structure that focused on one geographical issue and then offered two or three (and occasionally more) appropriate strategies. There is, however, the continuing trend of too many candidates simply describing the resource.

Earth hazards

- 1 Nearly every script contained an answer to this question. The more convincing responses identified the impacts flooding can have on a location, such as inundation and destruction of buildings and loss of economic activity across floodplains. Appropriate strategies were commonplace in their identification. Differences emerged in the way candidates related them to the issue they had identified. For example, the point of raising river banks is to allow the channel to contain more water and reduce the occasions when surplus water spills onto the floodplain. Simply planting trees along a river is unlikely to have much effect on the flood risk. It is the afforestation of the upper parts of a catchment that has the greatest impact on water flows through a drainage basin.

Ecosystems and environments under threat

- 2 The more successful responses identified issues such as the threat to bio-diversity, dislocation of ecosystems and potential loss of valuable natural resources to human activities. Some of these were, however, simplistic descriptions and did not lead to a direct link with the issue.

Appropriate strategies tended to focus of a variety of protective measures, conservation and the use of seed banks.

Climatic hazards

- 3 Most candidates were aware of the potential hazards arising from tropical storms and typhoons, identifying their energy and the concentration of high intensity storms in a clear 'season'. There were, however, too many candidates who then simply offered a narrative of a particular event they had studied, such as Katrina or Nargis.

Population and resources

- 4 The few who offered a response dealing with variations in age structure amongst a small group of countries were not that successful. They tended to be too descriptive of their chosen issue rather than offer an implication of, for example, the ageing structure of Italy or the youthful structure of Botswana. Candidates were unsure of the details of pro-natalist policies and were content to leave their consideration of anti-natalist to statements such as 'They should make contraception available.' This is an A2 level paper and so a more sophisticated discussion is required for Level 3 that moves into matters such as role and status of women in contraceptive behaviour.

Globalisation

- 5 Those who looked at the global distribution of employees in a TNC did not always hone in on issues such as the disproportionate advantages and disadvantages of firms operating at the global scale. The more convincing responses did include more detailed use of the data, quoting employee figures from the resource. Strategies were not necessarily realistic, 'Companies should be made to invest in LEDCs so that more people can be employed and make a living.' was not uncommon. Few seemed to have considered the role of protectionist measures, the way trade is operated and the role of bodies such as WTO.

Development and inequalities

- 6 A good number of interesting comparisons were offered by those looking at the pair of photographs highlighting the contrasts in development and inequalities. Some candidates took up general themes represented by the images, while others offered responses focused on the particulars of the photographs. Both the issues and strategies were generally appropriate and soundly explained.

Section B

Earth hazards

- 7 Most offered effective evaluations with individual events being analysed in detail and an assessment formed as to the balance between human and physical factors. For some candidates, the temptation to reveal all the detail they can remember about a particular mass movement event is too much but this tends to obscure the more general assessment a top of Level 2 and Level 3 response requires. That said, there were some very effective presentations of the Venezuelan mud slides, the Aberfan and Vaiont dam disasters. It would be good to read of local-scale mass movements which occur with less dramatic impact but nevertheless are significant to the place where they occur.
- 8 There were some very effective responses to this question. The most convincing discussions ranged across several factors other than level of economic development such as population density. There was, amongst even some well written essays, the consideration of a disappointingly narrow range of earth hazards. For example, a good number of answers only considered earthquakes with their real world content based solely on a comparison of Haiti and Los Angeles. This contrast offers a good deal of potential, but a yet more substantial and authoritative discussion emerges through the deployment of a variety of earth hazards.

Ecosystems and environments under threat

- 9 Only a few answers were read for this question. They tended to be sound, although in a few cases, convincing discussions drew upon detailed case studies, such as various sand dune ecosystems, to highlight and exemplify their evaluation.
- 10 Too often, candidates did not really pick up on '... as areas develop.' They tended to offer a detailed narrative of their chosen case study. Thus examiners read about the Great Barrier Reef and the various management strategies which have been instigated without referring these to the growth in recreational pressure the Reef is facing as more and more people are able to visit it as a consequence of increasing disposable incomes. The synoptic links here with, for example, the Coasts and Tourism units at AS level should help candidates towards very effective discussions.

Climatic hazards

- 11 Candidates were guided in this towards a consideration of economic as opposed to environmental, but this was where most came unstuck. Very few responses authoritatively distinguished between economic and environmental impacts and tended to offer a 'write all I can remember' approach to a case study.
- 12 Most respondents drifted into pollution in general which, given the prominence of global warming in GCSE and A level specifications – geography and others – was especially disappointing.

Population and resources

- 13 The fundamental concepts of under- and over-population were imprecisely known and understood by the majority with frequent confusion between, for example, 'dense' and 'sparse' populations. The key element of population resource balance was not the focus and ideas ripe for discussion in this context, such as ecological footprints, were noticeable by their absence. It was also a concern that hardly any candidate took the discussion into urban and developed comments.
- 14 There was some effective evaluation concerning the role of technology in increasing the supply of certain resources, oil for example: comments about directional drilling and deepwater technologies were welcome. However, the basic point about the fundamental physical nature of resource supply, for example depth of mineral seams, climatic limits on different plant types, was mostly absent. Comments about demand were relevant as long as they were explicitly linked with effects on supply. For example the rising disposable incomes in many parts of the world can be linked to the increased demand for meat as part of a diet. The increasing attention being given to bio-fuels is another area rich with possibilities in a discussion about resource supply.

Globalisation

- 15 Candidates had a sharp focus on the command 'To what extent...' and so produced a good number of analyses at Level 3. The different types of aid were securely known and their relative contrasts in terms of effectiveness sensibly considered. Most responses offered secure exemplification in support of their argument and there was an encouraging number who successfully made the link with their studies of environmental issues such as earth and climatic hazards.
- 16 Again, most essays took a clearly evaluative approach as indeed all the questions on the paper demand. There were the expected examples of TNCs based in MEDCs exploiting environments in less developed regions of the world. It was also pleasing to read the more sophisticated point made concerning the environmental advantages to MEDCs of their mining and manufacturing industries migrating to NICs and LEDCs. Here, though, a little more factual detail would increase the conviction of this point. One area largely ignored by candidates, yet of growing significance, is the impact on environments of agriculture in the form of GM crops, bio-fuels and intensification of agriculture.

Development and inequalities

- 17 Place knowledge was insecure with a handful of scripts read offering sound exemplification, from, for example, Italy. Aspects such as unemployment and land contamination were not picked up by most of those who did attempt this question.
- 18 Very few candidates attempted a discussion of the assertion that global inequalities can never be eliminated. It is therefore difficult to draw any meaningful comments from these.

F764 Geographical Skills

General Comments

Candidates produced a wide range of performance. The group that achieved the top marks did so by directly answering the question, using detailed examples taken from their own investigations and keeping tightly focused on the requirements of the question. Essay questions will be set from different stages of the investigation and candidates are expected to know what constitutes each of the six stages. Generally there was evidence of quality fieldwork which candidates clearly understood and were able to evaluate effectively. It was the strength or weakness of Section A responses that tended to have the greatest influence on the overall result.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1 (a) All candidates picked up on the nebulous nature of the location and identified its vagueness or its sheer size as limitations. Some used elements of the SMART acronym to identify measurement or timing issues. Others examined the lack of a clear geographical focus. It must be stressed that geographical models or concepts should clearly underpin any proposed title but it is not a requirement that they be included in the title. The main weakness was a tendency to produce more than two limitations or to spend time producing an improved title that was frequently no better than the original.

(b) Most candidates adopted a SMART approach where:

S = Specific

M= Measureable

A = Achievable

R = Realistic

T = Timed – in a range of senses such as the time available or the time of year.

Others looked at the need to find a sensible location, avoid undue risks, and link to a geographical concept or nearness of the location to their centre. This question was generally answered well with few weak answers. Some chose to do a few factors in depth whilst others offered a very extensive range of valid factors. Either approach could have been successful. Those that performed more effectively demonstrated that they understood the role of the aspect, often illustrating it with an example: 'Time is an important factor. It would be no good choosing an investigation based in a location more than two hours travel time from the school as this would leave us little time in which to carry out the investigation before we had to return to school.'

(c) This is one of those questions where candidates missed some crucial wording in the question so limiting their responses to Level 1. The crucial wording was the reference to "in data collection", so those that looked at data presentation or analysis were limited.

This was an evaluation and some candidates did recognise the limitations of GIS: 'GIS is expensive to buy and using it out in the field is risky in case the laptop is damaged.'

There seems much confusion over the exact nature of GIS with widely differing interpretations. The key element is its ability to link data to a specific geographical location. Hence it is invaluable in collecting data via data loggers as data is stored which is located to that site. More could have been made of GIS producing or accessing (ie collecting) secondary data.

- 2 (a) (i) Commenting on effectiveness is another way of asking for an evaluation so both negative and positive points should have been considered. Many chose to be rather negative suggesting issues of arbitrary divisions, changes at the boundary, confusing shading etc. Many gave generic points on choropleth maps in general rather than focus on that shown in Fig. 2. Such answers were unlikely to get into the higher level. Candidates should appreciate that if the Fig. is referred to in the question then some reference to it is expected in the answer.
- (ii) This question proved to be a very effective discriminator. The stress was on such data – ie percentage data which many ignored so suggesting quite tricky ways such as: 'You could use isopleths to join up places of percentage equal value.' More sensible suggestions were located symbols, pie charts and located bar charts. Few offered diagrams which would have greatly aided descriptions and many ignored the evaluation aspect of the question. This is a challenging question and candidates needed to get the balance right for both techniques. Hence the use of annotated diagrams would have saved time. Some selected GIS and seemed to think it is a technique in itself but then went on to describe GIS creating choropleth overlays. Given there was only one layer of data in Fig. 2 (this was a part (ii) question so was still linked to Fig. 2) how would this differ greatly from the original? Some chose colour: 'GIS would enable the percentage of conifers to be shown using shades of green so the densest areas were the darker green.'
- (b) Few candidates attempted this question and many missed the reference to "spatial patterns". This resulted in irrelevant answers which looked at the use of standard deviation or range. The key was the ability to analyse something that covered an area or distance. Some used Spearman's Rank quite effectively in this context: 'As Spearman's Rank can rank values in distance along a base line then it can be used to test if there is any correlation between a variable and distance.' In this case distance was taken as sufficient link to spatial. Others were not so sensible: 'I would use the mean as this gives an average value for the area.'

A single measure such as a mean cannot generate any analysis of spatial patterns. If a series of means were used to compare different areas then this could suggest spatial patterns. The most effective answers came from those that referred to the use of Chi Square but these were relatively few compared to the many examples of Spearman's Rank.

- 3 (a) This was generally done well but few candidates really referred to the characteristics of the area shown or the figure. Again this reference is a characteristic of a higher level response. Some candidates referred to a sketch map suggesting they had not fully read the question. Some candidates do not understand the instruction to compare and offered separate paragraphs on the two ways.
- (b) The stress was on the advantages of using primary data and not the disadvantages or relative advantages of secondary data. Many candidates saw this as a comparison question. Most candidates were able to identify the main advantages of primary data.

- (c) This was another question where candidates seemed to not read a key section of the question “to show the location of”, which implies the site or situation of the investigation. This meant that some candidates described the use of maps to show data or do risk assessments but ignored the element of showing location. Few candidates really justified or explained why maps could show locations effectively. The notion of scale, direction and use of grid references was rarely developed yet these are key factors in locating an investigation.

Section B

Both questions are compulsory and must show evidence of candidates carrying out real investigations. Generally this was very effective with some good reference to their real experiences but, at times, weaker candidates made it all too obvious that they were quoting all of their own practical experiences rather than selecting the appropriate sections needed by the question. Answers had to be relevant to the title of the investigation and there is no need to use the same title for both questions. Titles were much more effective and clearly geographical in this series but candidates should be encouraged to state a place in the title.

Those candidates that achieved the highest marks:

- demonstrated consistently good evaluation – not just the problems.
- showed detailed locational knowledge – there was a clear sense of place.
- gave good evidence of their investigation.
- used appropriate and accurate geographical vocabulary.
- showed they understood cause-effect relationships – they knew why they were doing a particular activity.
- wrote in a coherent style.
- used diagrams to illustrate their points/methods.

It is not expected that answers will be of equal length in Section B. In this case it was quite possible to evaluate the relative role of resource availability in Q5 in a fairly concise way, whereas Q4 might require a greater length – being essentially a two part answer (data collection methods and data recording). It is the depth of evaluation that is critical.

- 4 It was not expected or required for candidates to treat the two aspects equally but it was expected that both would be evaluated. Many candidates ignored data recording or saw it as data presentation. The word “recording” carries many meanings but candidates should be clear that these essays link tightly to the stages of an investigation in which recording has a very clear and precise meaning – writing down the results in the field. A typical answer was: ‘I used a bar chart to record the results of the pebble size count.’

Few candidates seemed willing to draw diagrams which would have clarified both data collection methods and how the data was recorded. Many candidates approach questions like this by giving large sections on what they would have done if only they had the correct equipment etc. This is not a good approach and gains no credit – as it is speculation. These questions, unless worded to invite improvements, focus on what was done in the investigation not would or could have been done.

- 5 Many candidates seemed puzzled by the term resources and often only looked at the types of equipment available. Others were excellent at identifying a vast range of resources including time, personnel, maps and other secondary data types, ICT, transport and some even included the location. The most effective considered the impact of resources used at different stages of their investigations. What was missing was the level of evaluation.

Most looked at individual resources and commented on their effectiveness in the investigation. A few, often high scoring candidates, looked at other factors that had a greater impact on the success such as weather, the nature of their hypotheses, skill and even: 'Our investigation was interrupted by a cliff fall that then distorted our pebble measurements by adding large quantities of unsorted material to the beach.'

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