

Geography

Advanced GCE A2 H483

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H083

Report on the Units

June 2009

H083/MS/R/09

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

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Advanced Subsidiary GCE Geography A (H083)

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Chief Examiner Report

As the report on the papers of only the second series of the new specification, an attempt has been made to produce a report that can also be used as an aid for revision better to prepare candidates for the examination.

Common Problems

The expected problem over candidates selecting a question in Section B from the same module as they had answered in Section A was very rare and no different in occurrence than normal rubric offences – roughly 1%. Sufficient space was an issue with many candidates but many did use additional sheets, although there are pages at the back of the answer book specifically for this, and others did not use the lineage effectively. The lineage will be increased for the 2010 series as using extra sheets did mean some candidates wrote an excessive amount with little credit as they had already gained full marks very early in their answers. Candidates should not waste time and effort this way. Conciseness is vital. Equally some seemed to panic over the sheer number of lines available for Section A part (c) answers and filled the space with irrelevant or repetitive material.

The legibility of handwriting was an issue and the quality of communication was worrying. Many struggled to express their ideas especially in Section A answers, whilst essay answers in Section B were noticeably of higher quality. Good material was often made ineffective by the way the candidate wrote the answer. All too often careless errors marred answers and there were an alarming number of geographical errors, for example:

Milton Keynes is a derelict area situated in south London

Equally, some demonstrated a failure to read the question. The requirement to relate the answer to one named area often produced two or three cities or answers such as this:

A named urban area I have studied is China

Section A

Parts (a) and (b).

Common problems included:

- Not referring specifically to the data or resource shown in the figure in part (a)(i)
- Not following the instruction to describe (what they could see) but rather suggesting what it was eg 1(a)(i) – eg ‘Shanty’, then listing things that simply could not be seen, such as ‘no sanitation’
- Ignoring particular terms in questions, specifically ‘pattern’. Listing the data is not the same.
- Not keeping to the number of points requested. If it says ‘two’ then candidates should not do three or more
- Confusing technical terms – eg ‘issues’ does not only mean problems, ‘weathering’ is not erosion nor weather
- Wasting space with irrelevant ‘chat’ or introductions.

Part (c) – extended answers, worth 9 marks

Common problems included:

- Using inappropriate examples eg Oxford as a rural area
- Not reading all of the question – eg.in F762 few noticed the management aspect in questions 1(c) and 2(c).
- Not understanding terms – eg ecotourism, ecology, land use patterns, sustainability
- Lack of sketch maps or diagrams
- Including long sections of irrelevant material eg an account of the farming in South Africa is not relevant to why it is so difficult to manage it.
- Including a lot of generic material rather than using material clearly and tightly based on example(s).

Section B

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

- Keep to a few detailed examples rather than a lot of repetitive superficial ones
- Show some attempt at a conclusion; the mark scheme rewards clear or effective conclusions
- Be wary of chatty introductions eg

I am going to write about the different types of sustainable energy sources that are found in a number of countries.

- Consider including a sketch map or diagram if it would help the argument, but remember to use black ink or pencil.
- Keep it all relevant to and focused on the question posed. Read the question fully and carefully.
- Try to keep answers analytical and explanatory rather than purely descriptive
- Make it locational with a clear sense of place
- Use more local examples
- Structure answers – use paragraphs each with a distinctive aspect. A plan does help organise an answer.

On a positive note:

Those aspects of the examination that were encouraging included

- Good knowledge and understanding of the topics, especially cause and effect
- Broadly effective essay writing which was a new challenge to AS candidates whose centre had a history of OCR specification A
- Timing – this did not seem to be an issue
- The papers did seem to differentiate the candidates more effectively

Notes of caution:

If candidates do use the end pages of the paper for extensions of their answer (and that is what they are there for) they should *note that they have done* so in the main answer. A simple 'cont' will suffice.

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

F761 Managing Physical Environments

General Comments

Overall, the paper was well received by candidates and centres. Virtually all candidates were able to complete the demands of the paper in the time allowed and there were very few rubric errors.

Wide-ranging geographical knowledge was evident and most candidates were able to write at considerable length, especially about their case studies.

Section A answers tended to reveal sound knowledge and understanding of processes, although this was not always successfully applied to specific landforms. Essays in Section B were typically well structured, but they tended to lack a clear focus on the specific demands of the questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- 1(a)(i) Most candidates were able to identify management methods, but many found problems making descriptive comments; the descriptive use of the map was generally weak. Some candidates wrongly described the weir as being a method of flood management.
- 1(a)(ii) A minority of candidates explained the increase in risk from, not of, flooding, and talked about the location of the town on the floodplain rather than the causes of flooding. It was surprising just how many candidates could not give a full explanation of the effects of deforestation or impermeable surfaces. Where processes were clearly stated and explained, candidates scored highly, but many missed key process related issues such as the lack of infiltration, saturated soil or reduced evapotranspiration.
- 1(b) Weak candidates simply described erosional processes, or gave vague factors such as 'meander.' The more successful responses explained rock type, rock structure, gradient, velocity, sediment load and rainfall. They reached Level 2 when their explanation was convincing. This depth was sadly lacking too often, with simplistic comments like 'soft rock erodes more quickly than hard rock' all too common. Disappointingly few referred to structural weaknesses or chemical composition.
- 1(c) This question produced a wide range of answers. Good answers described the various human activities, stated the conflicts that occur between them and then explained what it was that led them to conflict with each other. For example, on the River Mekong, a common example, the effects of reduced flow on downstream fishing were explained in detail. Too often, however, these textbook examples were not developed enough for Level 3; the reasons for the conflicts were not explored, meaning that many responses were awarded marks in Level 2. Less successful responses were those that merely concentrated on increased risks of river flooding resulting from development without explaining why this created conflict or which groups the conflicts were between.
- 2(a)(i) Candidates scored highly here, but a significant number explained how each method worked rather than describing the methods as demanded. Some provided effective description by referring to the materials used, the position or alignment of the method or by describing them as being either hard or soft engineering.

- 2(a)(ii) Where references to wave energy were made, the responses were successful. Candidates generally knew how sea walls work, but could have developed the idea of 'hard' engineering a bit more, perhaps by suggesting that the material used in constructing the walls is more resistant than the material of the land behind. There was often confusion between the terms "reflection" and "absorption" when explaining what happened to wave energy. The most disappointing aspect was the lack of understanding of the purpose of a groyne. Candidates knew they prevented longshore drift, but did not show why this provided protection from wave erosion.
- 2(b) The comments made in 1(b) are relevant here too. There were some ideas about angle of wave approach which were confused. Many candidates successfully explained the role of fetch, wind speed and geology, but not always to Level 2 standard as the depth of explanation, especially in relation to processes, was often limited. For example, the transfer of energy between wind and waves by friction was seldom mentioned.
- 2(c) The comments made in 1(c) are entirely relevant here too. Bangladesh was a successful case study, as was Poole Harbour. Weaker responses concentrated on coastal erosion without showing how it causes conflicts between different human activities. Where this was well done, candidates explained how activities on the coastline could affect other activities further along the coast. The best answers often addressed the conflicts between different recreational activities as well as the conflicts arising from the economic activities in areas of environmental quality.
- 3(a)(i) A surprising number of candidates failed to identify the correct landforms. Some appeared to miss the guidance in the question that these were landforms "produced by ice". U-shaped valleys and corries were better known than aretes and hanging valleys.
- 3(a)(ii) A minority of candidates were able to explain the formation of the landforms to Level 2 standard. This was because knowledge of relevant processes was superficial and particularly the link between the processes and the characteristics of the landform. The explanations of U-shaped valleys and cirques were more successful, while hanging valleys/waterfalls were not well explained; the role of ice was not fully appreciated. When candidates utilised small diagrams, this often helped raise the quality of the response. This was particularly true with corries where rotational movement of ice was often linked effectively to the bowl shape of the landform.
- 3(b) Candidates often identified tourism and oil as opportunities but, apart from brief comments about jobs, there was often little to put a response into Level 2. Many provided lengthy description of the scenic attractions of a mountainous area. The more successful responses developed ideas relating to export earnings, multiplier effect, investment and infrastructure.
- 3(c) Most candidates could show how human activities damage cold environments, but few got to grips with the idea of fragility - easily damaged environments. As such, the top of Level 1 was commonly awarded. Where the fragile nature of ecosystems and climate were explained, candidates quickly reached the top of Level 2 or even Level 3. In the latter case, candidates often employed specific place details to aid the answer. Alaska, the Alps and Antarctica were the most common case studies. The best answers referred to issues such as the short growing season, short food chains and slow recovery rates.
- 4(a)(i) Few candidates successfully recognised spires, mesas and buttes. A large number picked up on less obvious landforms such as wadis and alluvial fans. Disappointingly, therefore, not many candidates reached 4 marks.

- 4(a)(ii) Answers to this question were quite weak overall. The role of water was often not recognised, with many focusing on weathering and wind erosion. As such, the process-landform link was seldom fully addressed with many providing generic explanations of the processes involved.
- 4(b) The comments from 3(b) are entirely relevant here. Again tourism was the main opportunity focused upon although some answers did recognise the potential for agriculture.
- 4(c) The comments from 3(c) are relevant here. The significance of lack of water, high temperatures, nutrient poor soils and high rates of evaporation were rarely explained. The best answers included references to cryptobiotic crusts and noted the highly specialised adaptations of the species present, meaning that they were not easily replaced.

Section B

- 5 This was a very popular question, although it was not always answered very effectively. The best answers focused on why management was needed. Also, the ways in which development created the need was important. Unfortunately, weak and even some more able candidates failed to spot the subtlety in the question. As a result, marks were suppressed as many responses did not achieve much more than a mid Level 2 score in AO1. These weaker answers focused on the management methods rather than the need. Common case studies included the Tees, Mekong, Colorado, Thames and Yangtze. The best responses recognised that the need included social, economic and environmental aspects, which, arguably, should be managed in a balanced way.
- 6 The comments from Question 5 are relevant here. Weaker responses gave a description of various coastal defence methods or described issues and conflicts that did not result from development. Common case studies were Bangladesh, Spain, Florida, Christchurch Bay and St Lucia.
- 7 Answers with a lack of focus on 'needs' restricted the marks of many candidates. It was also clear that the social part of the question was seldom dealt with. Successful answers really focused on the balance. In other words, the idea that development can bring social and economic benefits without producing negative environmental impacts. Sustainable development was a successful route to a good answer. Common case studies included the Alps, Himalayas and Alaska. Antarctica was also frequently used, although it is harder for candidates to address the social aspects here due to the lack of indigenous population.
- 8 The comments from Question 7 are relevant here too. This was a much less popular choice. Common case studies focused on the USA, Khushab and Morocco. Examples from LEDCs typically gave greater potential for addressing the social needs.

F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

General Comments

There were very few rubric errors and virtually all candidates completed the paper, suggesting that time management was not an issue. It was clear that the majority of candidates had been effectively prepared and had a sound awareness of the specification. The level of basic geographical knowledge was good, with a significant proportion of candidates using geographical terminology correctly. While the level of understanding was generally sound, it was often the knowledge base (appropriate and detailed case studies) that tended to differentiate.

In Section A most candidates used the resources well and were able to show a good awareness of the ideas expressed in the short answer questions. The part (c) responses were at times slightly vague and in some cases lacked a real focus on the question.

In Section B many candidates produced well structured and clearly focused essays, often with impressive levels of detail. The distinction between basic description and clear analytical observations tended to differentiate responses in this section. A significant number of candidates failed to identify which question they were answering and, sadly, it was not always immediately obvious to Examiners which one was being attempted. A clear indication of question number chosen should always be made.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1 Managing Urban Change

(a) (i) Use of the resource was variable and was a major factor in determining the quality of responses. Those candidates who identified the characteristics of both the general area and the individual structures often produced an excellent descriptive analysis. Many candidates, however, only made passing reference to Figure 1, while a small number showed no real evidence of having looked at the photograph at all.

(ii) Poor use of the photograph in (a) (i) tended to limit the development of responses to this question to generic and often simple points which focused on poverty or on a general "lack of money". More developed responses considered a wider range of factors including the link to rapid urban growth, lack of available space, issues about squatter settlements and problems of planning in many developing cities.

A small number of candidates failed to recognise the fact that the focus was on developing cities and made points (often about "regeneration schemes") which were clearly inappropriate.

(b) Candidates generally showed a good understanding of the question and were able to identify two clear factors that influence atmospheric pollution in urban areas. The two most popular ideas focused on industrial growth and vehicle use. When fully developed these ideas provided a sound avenue to achieving full marks. Those candidates that fully explored these themes by using examples of rapid vehicle and industrial growth (China and India were popular examples) often scored highly. A small number of candidates considered the increasing use of coal as a source of energy in urban/industrial areas and also general points about urbanisation in developing countries. Links to physical conditions such as relief and high pressure systems were explored by a small number of candidates.

- (c) Candidates tended to drift into a description of the growing need for services rather than answering the question, which focused on the difficulty of managing growing demand. This approach tended to be rather self-limiting and did not allow candidates to address the question fully. Those candidates that did address the question often made simplistic and general points which were largely focused on a lack of resources or the problems of a lack of physical space for development.

Question 2 Managing Rural Change

- (a) (i) Most candidates used the resource effectively to identify the factors that might attract buyers for the homes shown in Figure 2. The majority were then able to suggest why these factors might be significant in appealing to a range of different people, often using evidence from both the text and the photograph to produce effective responses.
(ii) The idea of habitat damage or loss was seen as a major environmental impact and it was often expressed in some detail. A number of candidates developed this theme further by making observations about how building development might change watercourses and how increasing the area of hard surfaces might increase the threat of flooding, which, in turn, might affect the environment.

At the lower end candidates made vague, unqualified points about “increasing pollution” or “increasing deforestation”

- (b) There were some excellent responses to this question with candidates identifying a range of possible reasons for the variation in economic opportunities in rural areas. The most popular ideas expressed were points about levels of access and relative differences in the resource base of contrasting rural areas. A number of candidates considered the quality of the environment (farming or recreation/tourism) as a critical factor in encouraging economic opportunities and some made thoughtful observations suggesting that environmental legislation might actually reduce economic possibilities.
- (c) Candidates tended to give a description about the environmental impacts of farming (often in some detail) rather than addressing the question where the focus was clearly about the difficulties of managing the impacts. A limited number of candidates did respond to the idea of management, often making thoughtful observations about the difficulties that farmers face in balancing economic and environmental needs.

Question 3 The Energy Issue

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to use the resource effectively to identify the general pattern of energy consumption. A significant number went on to identify specific regions/continents in order to express a more complete pattern.

A small number of candidates simply identified one or two places (usually the USA as a high energy user or Africa as a low energy user). This approach failed fully to address the idea of “pattern” and was consequently rather self-limiting. Also, expressing energy consumption as either “high” or “low” without reference to specific data generally limited the depth of the response.

(ii) Responses focused largely on the links between economic development and energy use. When expressed in some detail this provided a useful approach to the question. Candidates who developed this theme by bringing in examples (China/India) or broader demand-led aspects (industry, transportation, domestic use) generally did well.

A number of candidates brought in other factors, such as links to climate, availability of energy resources and political decisions, often making thoughtful and appropriate observations.

- (b) The idea of “problems for people” was frequently interpreted in a very general way, leading to vague observations about global warming which were often rather self-limiting. Candidates who focused on specific examples such as population displacement as a result of hydro-electricity schemes or pollution issues affecting local farming/fishing communities (for instance in Nigeria) generally produced excellent responses.
- (c) The key to this question was understanding the terminology. Those candidates who clearly understood the idea of “energy mix” were often able to produce effective responses. Those that did not frequently drifted into discussion about renewable which did not fully address the question. A significant number of candidates ignored the question command and looked at more than one country. In many cases this resulted in a lack of necessary specific detail about one particular country.

Question 4 The Growth of Tourism

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to use the resource effectively to describe the relationship expressed in Figure 4. A significant proportion went on to identify specific countries in order to develop their ideas. At the highest level candidates picked out anomalies in the data or began to group countries together in order to describe the pattern in more detail.

(ii)-Responses focused largely on the links between economic development and the number of tourist arrivals. Ideas about developed countries having more developed infrastructure and tourist facilities were common, and often provided the basis for a sound response. A number of candidates made interesting observations about their being stronger business links between developed countries and the fact that wealthier countries may well have larger advertising budgets, as suggested by advertising campaigns on television. A small number of candidates brought in ideas about political security and basic safety and health issues as being important factors discouraging people from visiting particular countries.
- (b) It was clear that candidates had a good understanding of the question and there were a large number of well documented and thoughtful responses to this question. Environmental issues were considered at two scales. At the broader level candidates considered that increasing travel was a major factor influencing climate change. At a more local level there were a range of issues identified, including habitat destruction linked to building development, the issue of water use/misuse and points about increasing numbers of visitors putting particular habitats under pressure. Savanna areas linked to safaris, areas of coral reef and rainforest areas were the more popular options used to express environmental pressures.
- (c) Candidates used a range of appropriate examples to develop responses to this question. At the lowest level the basic ideas about “jobs” and “money” were expressed, not always being fully developed. Candidates who developed this theme by considering infrastructural and multiplier ideas often produced very effective responses, especially when supported by well documented examples. A small number of candidates successfully developed this theme further by expressing links to social development and considering how this can be an important factor in overall economic development.

Section B

Question 5

Candidates generally approached this question in one of two ways. They either considered two different areas within the same city or compared two (or more) areas from different cities, often the examples being drawn from a developed and a developing country. Both approaches were very effective when supported by detailed locational knowledge, and there were a number of very impressive responses. In a small number of cases candidates did not fully pick up the command “examine” and simply described conditions without offering any real explanation. This approach allowed candidates to show some understanding of the question but did not always offer an opportunity to consider in detail the differences between areas.

Question 6

Those candidates who selected appropriate examples often produced well supported and thoughtful responses to this question. Environmental problems were very frequently expressed and when well developed provided a useful basis for a sound answer. At the highest levels candidates also brought in a range of social and economic issues. This often provided an excellent opportunity to produce a very detailed and well balanced response. A small number of candidates addressed the question very superficially by simply expressing ideas like “pollution” and “erosion” etc, with very limited development or explanation. This approach failed to address fully the key command of the question which demanded a clear “examination” of the idea of “problems”. A limited number of candidates used inappropriate examples (often urban areas) or based their response on historical ideas (the development of the Spanish coast). This was generally self-limiting.

Question 7

It was clear that most candidates had a good understanding of the key idea and were able to call upon a range of well-documented examples to address the question. Responses varied from a detailed analysis of one country or region (Germany and California were popular options), to a broader approach where candidates used a wide range of examples from different parts of the world to show how renewable energy is playing an increasing role. Either approach provided an excellent vehicle with which to address the question, and in most cases it was evident that candidates had done some impressive background work on this topic. It was encouraging to see examples drawn from countries at different stages of economic development and also renewable projects which operate at different scales. A small number of candidates drifted into ideas about reducing demand rather than managing supply, as expressed in the question. In some cases this approach tended to move the response away from the question.

Question 8

A number of candidates considered “sustainability” simply in terms of environmental management and consequently based their response on narrow elements of environmental management, often linked to National Parks (footpath management and traffic related issues were common themes). While this approach had some merit, it failed to show a complete understanding of the concept of “sustainability” in relation to managing the whole community, including socio/cultural and economic factors. Those candidates who clearly appreciated the holistic nature of sustainable management were usually able to express the relationship between the different factors involved (social/economic/environmental) effectively and show how management needs to take all of them into consideration. The use of carefully selected case studies often allowed candidates to demonstrate a high degree of understanding and address the question in considerable detail. A number of candidates brought in examples of ecotourism. In some cases there was interesting and thoughtful discussion about the extent to which some places which are sold as “eco” destinations are really sustainable.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Geography A (H483)
 Advanced Subsidiary GCE Geography A (H083)
 June 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F761	Raw	75	54	49	44	39	34	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30
F762	Raw	75	54	49	44	39	35	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H083	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H083	21.9	40.6	60.4	75.5	87.7	100.0	2618

2618 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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