

**Geography**

Advanced GCE A2 H483

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H083

**Report on the Units**

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**January 2009**

**H083/H483/MS/R/09J**

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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 syllabus 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 Subsidiary GCE Geography (H083)**

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# Chief Examiner's Report

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

## Entry

This was higher than expected, with nearly two thousand candidates, so comments are made in the context of a sizeable sample. The physical unit (F761) accounted for 80% of the entry this January.

## Common problems

The expected problem over candidates selecting a question in Section B from the same module as they answered in Section A was very rare and no different in occurrence from normal rubric offences. Sufficient space was an issue with some candidates but many did use pages at the back of the answer book specifically for this and a few used additional sheets also. Equally, some seemed to panic over the sheer number of lines available for Section C answers and filled the space with irrelevant or repetitive material.

The quality of communication was worrying. Many struggled to express their ideas especially in Section A answers. Good material was often made ineffective by the way the candidate wrote the answer. All too often careless errors marred answers, such as *'the rural area I am going to talk about is the city of Oxford'*.

## Section A

Parts (a) & (b).

Common problems included:

- not referring specifically to the data shown in the figure in part (a)(i)
- ignoring particular terms in questions – specifically 'pattern'
- not keeping to the number of points requested. If it says 'two' then three or more are not required
- confusing technical terms – e.g. 'issues' does not only mean problems, 'weathering' is neither erosion nor weather
- wasting space with irrelevant 'chat' or introductions

Parts (c) or (d) – extended answers worth 9 marks

Common problems included:

- using inappropriate examples e.g. Isle of Wight as an urban area
- not understanding terms – e.g. ecotourism, ecology, land use patterns, sustainability
- lack of sketch maps or diagrams
- including long sections of irrelevant material e.g. an account of the melting of permafrost is not ecology
- 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, as the mark scheme rewards clear or effective conclusions
- be wary of chatty introductions e.g. *I am going to write about the different types of renewable energy sources that are found in a number of countries.*
- think if a sketch map or diagram helps the argument
- keep it all relevant to and focused on the question posed. Read the question fully and carefully.
- try to keep answers analytical rather than 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 legacy Specification A
- timing – this did not seem to be an issue

### 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 in the main answer. A simple 'cont.' would 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.

# F761 Managing Physical Environments

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Question 1

- (a)(i) A significant number of candidates picked up on "erosion" in the question but named erosional processes rather than features. Some misidentified the features, with the "notch" being the least well known.
- (a)(ii) Many candidates were limited to Level 1 because of the lack of clarity of processes. Quite often the sequence of events was identified (e.g. for a gorge) but the knowledge of processes was lacking and often did not go beyond generic references to "erosion".
- (b) Many reasonable answers were seen, with the majority trying to explain the relationship between velocity and load. Better answers referred to ideas relating to the Hjulstrom Curve. The idea of available energy was not always securely grasped.
- (c) Most answers were awarded marks in Level 2 because of the lack of explanation about the advantages presented by drainage basins. Many answers basically consisted of a list of activities, with little development of why the river presented an opportunity. Some of the better answers were able to explain, for example, why the monsoon season within the Mekong drainage basin was advantageous to local people. The opportunity for fishing was seldom explained fully, with little more offered beyond "it is a river, therefore there are fish". For the top level it was expected that the answer was securely located with specific references to the location. Answers about the Thames rarely provided enough explanation for Level 3. Many suggested that HEP was an opportunity on the Thames. Candidates that referred to the Tees, Ouse or Humber displayed stronger locational knowledge and were better able to explain the opportunities.

### Question 2

- (a)(i) This was generally well answered, although the question asked for landforms and some candidates responded by giving processes. Despite the question asking for features of coastal erosion, many offered "beach" for feature B.
- (a)(ii) The role of processes was often not made clear nor were the processes detailed. Often the candidates were good on the sequence of events (e.g. undercutting, collapse, retreat) but lacked detailed knowledge of process mechanisms.
- (b) Some good answers were seen, but often those that referred to LSD failed to link the process with deposition and so the emphasis was more on the transportation of material. Some spoke of the outcome of deposition being spits, but failed to mention why deposition had occurred to create the spit.
- (c) Most answers were awarded marks in Level 2, as they began to appreciate what it was about the coastal environment that provided opportunities, but with very little development beyond this. Southampton Water, Dubai and St Lucia were the most common examples used but few were able to explain why, for example, a chemical works is located at Fawley on Southampton Water.

### Question 3

- (a)(i) Generally a well answered question with many candidates giving at least one summary statement of the graph. The most common error to prevent candidates reaching Level 2 was by just quoting data without manipulating the figures e.g. giving the maximum and minimum temperatures but not going on to state the range. Weaker answers started in January and gave a description of change through the year, without recognising the seasonal nature of the pattern.
- (a)(ii) Candidates wrote at length about the adaptations to the tundra climate but often did not make the link back to climate very clear. Many adaptations were known and often explained quite well, although references to transpiration were limited. Many suggested that deep roots were a common feature, although the presence of permafrost often makes this unlikely.
- (b) This question was answered disappointingly by most candidates, who appeared not to understand the term 'ecologically vulnerable'. Often answers did not go beyond giving two human activities and how these 'damaged' the environment. References to oil spills were often in this category, with few mentioning that birds' feathers became stuck meaning they cannot fly or that they ingest oil when trying to clean themselves. The best answers referred to food chains, slow recovery rates and the limited diversity.
- (c) Most candidates wrote about erosion and the glacial landforms created. Those who did write about weathering often outlined the process (sometimes not showing much progression from GCSE) but the impact on the landscape was almost always lacking. Therefore, when teaching this topic, the impact needs to be made clearer. Most answers were located, although this was typically a fairly general location, which was then not used to support the answer. The best responses recognised the role of weathering in providing debris for abrasion or in sharpening the landforms produced by erosion. Arêtes and pyramidal peaks could have provided a good opportunity here.

### Question 4

- (a)(i) This was generally well answered, although with the same points as for 3(a)(i) also tended to apply.
- (a)(ii) Often the adaptations were very well known, with many candidates attributing the adaptations to the lack of moisture. Some very good answers were seen, a number referring to named species as examples.
- (b) This was answered much more convincingly than 3(b), with specific references to ecology much more widespread than in the alternative question. The role of overgrazing, the damage to the cryptobiotic crust, the role of tourists and their impact was much more evident.
- (c) There was significant confusion with erosion and so many candidates did not gain many marks here. However, the role of weathering and the impact on the landscape was much better done than in the equivalent question 3(c). The best answers often referred to exfoliation domes.

### **Question 5**

The most common mistake here was that candidates wrote all they knew about river management, without addressing the socio-economic and environmental needs. 'Socio-economic' was often interpreted as economic and so few mentions were made of people. There were answers that were reasonably well located and the essay was clearly about that drainage basin but application of the located knowledge to the question was lacking. A large number were sidetracked onto the methods of managing flooding, without discussing the social, economic or environmental impacts of such management. Many answers focused on "conflicts", which is an important, but slightly different, aspect of this topic.

### **Question 6**

Some very good case studies were seen and, especially where managed retreat was considered, some attempt was made to consider socio-economic and environmental needs. However, this was often very unbalanced. Many became sidetracked on to the reasons for the growth of tourism, rather than how its impacts need to be managed. Relatively few recognised that the underlying concept here was sustainability and that is trying to be achieved.

### **Question 7**

The opportunities were often explained quite clearly whereas the challenges were less well explained. Some became sidetracked on to how the challenges were overcome. A wide range of different case studies were used, although Alaska and Antarctica were both commonly seen. The presence of natural resources and the potential for tourism were the main focal points of the best answers, with the climatic constraints the major challenge. The application of knowledge and understanding to the question was stronger than in Questions 5 & 6.

### **Question 8**

Although this was the least popular option, some excellent answers were seen. As in Question 4, the freshness of the topic seemed to enable the candidates to be more discerning over the content they included, rather than writing all they knew about the topic, as was often the case in Questions 5 and 6. Good answers recognised the potential for tourism and agriculture, whilst appreciating the climatic constraints imposed. The Draa Valley and the Khushab region were frequently used examples that were often well linked to the demands of the question.

# F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Question 1

- (a)(i) Most candidates used the resource effectively to identify the area close to the city centre as the area with the highest level of deprivation. A number then went on to offer a detailed description of the pattern of deprivation expressed on the map. Relatively few candidates used basic skills such as distance and direction to help them express a pattern.
- (ii) There were a number of excellent points made in response to this question. The majority of candidates focused on economic factors to explain the pattern of deprivation. A number of candidates simply focused on reasons for high levels of deprivation near the city centre, ignoring the idea of 'pattern' expressed in the question.
- (b) The major reason expressed was a lack of money or the idea that managing deprivation is very expensive. More sophisticated responses identified challenges such as having to move people away from an area in order to redevelop it, or the difficulty of identifying and managing the complex problems of multi-deprivation.
- (c) The majority of candidates offered an example, although it was often quite general or vague. The use of large scale areas (London) tended to be self-limiting and led to general points which lacked real focus. A number of candidates did not really address the question, often simply focusing on the word 'environment' and then writing about environmental issues such as pollution. Those candidates that did address the question made some excellent points, either considering the influence of rivers or slopes etc, on land use patterns, or seeing the question in a broader context and considering how environmental protection/restriction affects land use patterns.

### Question 2

- (a)(i) Most candidates used the resource effectively to describe the movement of population from N.E. Brazil. At the highest level candidates used the scale bar to identify proportionate variations and also clearly identified direction of movement.
- (ii) There were a number of interesting ideas expressed, many of which focused on the basic concept of 'push' and 'pull' migration. Those candidates who developed this theme and expressed clear socio-economic or environmental reasons for population movement generally scored highly.
- (b) This question was generally either completed very effectively or responses were vague and lacked any real understanding. At the higher mark levels candidates identified factors such as infrastructure or tourism development as key ideas or considered specific examples e.g. growth linked to rural management policy. These avenues often provided excellent responses.

- (c) Candidates showed a good level of general understanding and were mostly able to bring in well developed case studies. The most successful responses were those that used an example where a range of strategies were being used to manage traffic problems. At the lowest level simple, generic ideas were expressed, often with only vague reference to place.

### **Question 3**

- (a)(i) Most candidates used the resource very effectively and described the changes in some detail. Specific data was frequently quoted and many candidates mentioned proportionate changes.
- (ii) Most candidates tended to focus on the change of individual sources of energy and were usually able to identify two reasons, although at times they were not always fully developed. A small number of candidates considered the overall increase in energy supply and linked this to economic growth or population increase.
- (b) 'Problems for the environment' was largely interpreted at two scales. At the larger scale candidates identified global warming as a major problem. When well documented this provided a useful approach to the question. However, responses using this avenue of approach were frequently very general and lacked detail and depth. At the smaller scale candidates considered issues of pollution (oil spill etc) or land degradation (opencast mining). This approach often led to quite detailed appreciation of the environmental issues linked to the exploitation of energy resources.
- (c) Candidates generally showed a clear understanding of the question and were able to use examples to illustrate the growing importance of renewable energy sources. The question was largely approached in one of two ways, either by looking at national energy policy (often Germany), or by focusing on specific examples of renewable energy projects. When well supported by factual detail either approach proved effective.

### **Question 4**

- (a)(i) Candidates did not always pick up the idea of 'pattern' when describing the distribution of tourist numbers in the Mediterranean area. A number of candidates simply identified the situation of each country and restated the given information. This approach did not address the question command and was consequently somewhat limiting. Those candidates who did refer to the 'pattern' and brought in basic locational and directional skills generally scored highly.
- (ii) There were a number of excellent points made in response to this question, with many candidates picking up the idea about distance and ease of transport. Further observations included points about levels of development, political points about ease of movement (E.U.) and also observations about relative safety and security.
- (b) Candidates showed a good understanding of the question and were able to identify a number of social issues created by the growth of tourism. Observations about cultural conflicts and pressures on culture were common and often very effectively made. A number of other points were also made, including changes to traditional employment patterns and pressures on resources (land and water).
- (c) The interpretation of 'ecotourism' was variable. A small number of candidates used clearly identified ecotourism examples to express the relationship with the natural environment. When well documented this approach provided some excellent responses. However, many candidates simply saw 'ecotourism' as environmental management and often described pressures and management in environmentally sensitive areas (often

National Parks). While this approach allowed candidates to show some understanding it was often self limiting.

### **Question 5**

Understanding of 'sustainable' was variable and this was often reflected in the quality of the response. Those candidates who had a good understanding of the concept of sustainability generally produced well documented responses, which showed clearly how management and planning can be used to ensure the long term positive survival of urban environments. This was generally shown in one of two ways: either by considering holistic planning of new settlements or by looking at elements of management (transport, housing etc), in existing settlements. Those candidates who did not really understand the concept of sustainability often simply described an element of urban management with limited reference to the key theme of the question. This approach allowed candidates to show some awareness of the question but did not fully address the key idea of sustainability.

### **Question 6**

There were some excellent responses to this question, most of which used well documented examples very effectively. The general approach of the majority of candidates was to use examples of rural areas in decline or where local economic and social facilities were under threat, and then discuss how these problems are being managed. Ideas ranged from basic economic regeneration to improvements in infrastructure, social opportunities and rural housing initiatives. These ideas were often seen as a way of ensuring the long term survival of rural areas and as such there were clear and obvious links to the basic concept of sustainability.

### **Question 7**

The majority of candidates showed a sound understanding of the question and used well documented examples to build up a thoughtful response. The idea of 'opportunity' was generally expressed in economic terms and largely centred on 'jobs' and 'money'. This basic idea was often developed by bringing in points about the economic multiplier and linked infrastructure ideas. At the highest level candidates extended this further by considering broader economic opportunities (local taxation) and how these may generate improvements in social conditions. A small number of candidates took this theme further by considering how resource revenues could be used to ensure socio-economic sustainability in the future.

### **Question 8**

The majority of candidates showed a sound understanding of the question and were able to express the links between tourism and economic opportunities by using well documented examples. In many cases the idea of 'opportunity' was seen in a fairly narrow way by considering 'jobs' and 'incomes'. This approach allowed candidates to show a good general awareness of the question but was slightly self-limiting. Candidates who developed this theme by bringing in ideas about the economic multiplier and the links to infrastructural and other developments often produced a more rounded response. At the highest level candidates developed this theme further by considering social and environmental opportunities created by the growth of tourism.

## Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Geography H083 H483  
January 2009 Examination Series

### Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F761	Raw	75	54	48	42	37	32	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30
F762	Raw	75	52	46	41	36	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

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