

Geography B

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J385**

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

Examiners' Reports

January 2011

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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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Chief Examiner's Report

General Comments

Centres are now becoming more familiar with the entry format for the individual components of the course. Many centres took the opportunity to enter Year 11 candidates for unit B561 (SDME) and it seems that this will become the most popular time to enter candidates for this assessment. A number of centres also took the opportunity to re-enter candidates for the SDME assessment in the hope of improving candidates' grades from June 2010. Centres also took the first opportunity to enter candidates for the 2011 titles of unit B562 (Controlled Assessment). However, more centres will enter candidates for this component in June.

For most centres the assessment of B562 was a relative step into the unknown. There was the requirement to apply new controlled assessment regulations on levels of control. Centres had to produce work on tasks for the Fieldwork Focus provided by the OCR rather than their own fieldwork titles. Centres are reminded that these tasks along with those of the Geographical Investigation will change each year and centres need to be aware that the titles correspond to the year of submission, and plan their fieldwork accordingly. Task titles are released two years in advance to allow this planning to take place. Centres also had to decide upon their individual approach to Geographical Investigation.

For many centres the SDME was also a new challenge in preparing candidates for an examination based on pre-release material. It is worth reminding centres that the unit being assessed by the SDME will change for June 2011 and the future areas of focus in this assessment are already published by OCR. Centres may enter candidates at either the foundation or higher tier of entry. This may be different from the tier of entry for the Key Geographical Themes examination taken at the end of the course.

The varied nature of the assessments allowed all candidates to demonstrate their strengths and there were many excellent examples of high calibre geography. Many centres have obviously put a great amount of time and effort into preparing their candidates and they are to be commended on this. In all three components there was an overall improvement in marks.

Many centres have attended the Get Started and Get Ahead INSET meetings which have taken place since November 2010. These provided opportunities for teachers of the specification to meet other colleagues and also to meet the Principal Examiners, responsible for setting and marking the different assessments. The INSET meetings were wide-ranging and provided much valuable assistance to teachers in preparing candidates for controlled assessment, the SDME and the terminal examination. There was clear evidence from both the controlled assessment tasks and answers in the SDME examination that advice given in these meetings had been followed. Colleagues are strongly advised to attend future meetings which will focus on feedback on 2011 assessments and preparation of candidates for 2012. Details of the meetings will be published on the OCR website.

Centres are recommended to study the reports of the three assessment components submitted or taken in January 2011. They give many pointers to how candidates may improve their chances of success. The reports are based on the comments of examiners and moderators who were responsible for judging the work of candidates.

B561/01 Sustainable Decision Making (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The paper was of an appropriate level for Foundation Tier and an almost full range of marks was seen from 0 to 38. It was good to see a good number of Foundation candidates achieving such high marks. However there may have been cases where the highest achieving candidates might have been better entered in the Higher Tier paper, in order for them to have the chance of higher grades.

Overall, candidates coped well with the point marked questions but did not score quite as well on the levels marked questions. It was a little disappointing to see so many candidates fail to try to develop their answers, with points such as 'money' and 'pollution' often used with no clarification of their cause or effect.

Many centres had prepared their candidates well. Better candidates showed a clear understanding of resources and attempted to use the information in their answers rather than merely copying them. The more able candidates also showed a good appreciation of the benefits and problems brought by tourism.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1(a): Nearly all the candidates achieved the mark here. Those that answered incorrectly often tried to write out 950 million in figures but added the wrong number of zeros. The correct answer given as a number was credited, even though 'million' was printed to help candidates, after the space for the answer.

Question 1(b): Another well answered question with most candidates achieving two marks and nearly all the rest achieving one mark. Where only one mark was achieved the candidates often gave two points from the same key idea. Where no marks were achieved candidates had often just lifted the titles of the key ideas from the resource book

Question 1(c): Again, the great majority did well on this question. Some candidates lifted phrases that would have answered (b) rather than (c).

Question 2(a): Many candidates did not know an aspect of the human environment and incorrectly wrote about beaches and wildlife. Less than half of the candidates correctly answered this question.

Question 2(b): This question was answered better than 2(a), with more candidates being able to recognise an aspect of the physical environment, although a significant number of candidates gave a human attraction instead. The linkage of these attractions to groups of tourists was less well done. Overall two thirds of candidates scored two or more marks.

Question 3: This was a common question with B561/02 and it was expected therefore that that the better candidates would find it more accessible than the weaker ones. Half of Foundation Tier candidates scored four marks or more, which was pleasing to see. Weaker candidates tended just to lift from the resources rather than developing their answers. Damage to the environment was generally better developed than protection. Where ecotourism was used as an example, candidates often lifted ideas from the resource to explain it. Reference to specific types of tourism was required for access to L3. It was a pity that some otherwise well-developed answers did not make this reference, which the bold type in the question was there to emphasise.

Question 4(a): A variable response was seen to this question, again with much lifting of the resource and with many candidates starting their answers by re-stating Benidorm's history. Even so, about two thirds of candidates scored two or more marks, but there was a lot of misunderstanding here and candidates often did not demonstrate simply the changes to Benidorm itself, which the question was asking.

Question 4(b): Good marks were scored if candidates focused on stage 5. Many candidates wrote about earlier periods e.g. the building of the airport. Overall just over half of candidates scored two or three marks.

Question 5: In this question all sections seemed to differentiate well. Candidates largely followed the rubric and few sections were left unanswered. All options were fairly evenly chosen in part (a), with the most popular being option 2, by a small margin.

Candidates who chose Option 1 could see that large resorts would cause more environmental damage than smaller resorts. References were often given to make 'more money' or 'more pollution' for the large resort ideas, with no development of these ideas. Developed ideas often came from more traffic/more air pollution/global warming ideas and tended to be general rather than being specific to St Lucia.

The candidates that chose Option 2 often tended to do quite well. However, there was a common misunderstanding of the nature of ecotourism, with many believing that with fewer tourists the resorts would soon go out of business. Disadvantages of this option were often given in terms of disadvantages to the tourist, e.g. no TV, rather than to the government or economy of St Lucia.

Those that chose Option 3 referred to the fact that the east coast would remain unspoilt – but frequently went on to say that it would therefore be great for tourists to visit or that the natives of St Lucia could continue to live there, showing a lack of understanding of St Lucia. There was also a general lack of understanding of the difference between developing new resorts as in Option 1 and further developing the existing resort areas in Option 3.

Some of the best answers showed an understanding of the geography of St Lucia and referred to the differences between the geographical positioning of the east coast – facing the Atlantic and the west coast – facing the Caribbean and the associated physical geography of these locations (climate/wind and wave conditions/protection from tropical storms). This was very pleasing, particularly at Foundation Tier, and did illustrate that some very good preparation had clearly been done in the classroom. Given that the resource booklet is available before the examination is taken, it would be encouraging to see more evidence of extended geographical knowledge of the study area being used in future SDMEs.

B561/02 Sustainable Decision Making (Higher Tier)

General Comments

A wide range of marks was seen from 5 to 40/40. The rubric was followed with few errors. There were very few instances when candidates made no attempt to answer a question. There was evidence of good preparation for the examination with all abilities providing evidence that they found the resources accessible. Some candidates made good use of other relevant case studies to support their answers for example in the protection of the environment section of Question 3. Candidates need to be aware that developing one or two strong points will often gain more credit than making multiple points but only covering them superficially.

The standard of written work was good overall and acceptable for the weaker candidates. Candidates need to be encouraged to use paragraphs in their answers. More candidates showed an understanding of relevant geographical terminology this session, although weaker candidates are still just referencing the terms. In answers broad terms such as 'pollution' and 'environmental damage' were used by a considerable number of candidates without giving further detail and some used extremes such as 'all the resorts' or 'locals have no water' for which they gained no credit. There was some misconception by candidates as to what constituted human and physical attractions in Question 2.

It was pleasing to see many well-considered answers from candidates who wrote fluently about their reasons for choosing or rejecting options in making their decision in Question 5. Examiners commented that such candidates showed maturity of expression and understanding above that normally seen in GCSE examinations.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1(a): More than half the candidates gave a correct figure and unit (million) to score 1/1 for this section. Too many candidates either did not get the figure correct (poor arithmetic) or omitted the unit, so scored 0/1.

Question 1(b): Most candidates scored 2/3 for this section. They were credited with LM (lifted material) and an additional mark for developing an idea linked to their chosen factor. Many candidates failed then to develop this for the third mark. Candidates choosing the factor of employment were able to develop their ideas more clearly and relate them back to the question.

Question 2: This question was generally well answered with the majority of candidates scoring 5/6 or 6/6. A broad definition of type of tourist was accepted and candidates were able to identify human and physical attractions, although not always under the correct heading. Those candidates who made reference to why they appealed to specific types of tourist were able to access Level 3. A small minority of candidates referred to the pictures on the resource as 'bottom left' or 'middle right' without stating the attraction as such. Very few candidates selected either only physical or human attractions.

Question 3: Candidates scored well on this question, with marks being mainly 6/7 or 7/7. Candidates mainly chose 'mass tourism' and 'responsible' or 'ecotourism' as their 'types of tourism'. The section on damage to the environment had more developed answers scoring Level 3. The section on protection of the environment was less well done with too many candidates relying on lifting material from the resources. A minority of candidates did refer to specific case study examples to illustrate their point, particularly in relation to damage to the environment and, if relevant they scored Level 3. Most candidates referred to the physical environment but there were some good answers relating to the social and economic

environment as well. Weaker candidates lifted ideas from the resource without developing them by showing either cause or effect relating to their chosen type of environment.

Question 4: The majority of candidates scored 6/7 marks with many being awarded 7/7. Almost all the candidates linked material from resources 5 and 6. The best answers related the stages of the model, from resource 6, in a sequence and used resource 5 to illustrate the stages. If candidates did not show sequencing through all five stages then they remained at Level 2. The better candidates then referred to re-branding/redevelopment/re-imaging in Stage 5 to access Level 3 with the very good candidates making overt reference to the extent to which Benidorm followed the model. Many weaker candidates focused only on resource 5 and did not refer to the model at all. Some candidates wrote about going 'back' to Stages 2 or 3 or that the pattern was cyclical which was incorrect.

Question 5: Rubric was followed by most candidates and this provided a checklist to ensure that they answered all parts of the question. Weaker candidates did not follow the task in a logical sequence and many omitted sections. The most common rubric error on this question was when candidates rejected each of the other options instead of just one. Valuable time was wasted and a minority of candidates did not finish the question because of this. The majority chose either Option 2 or 3.

Candidates showed a better understanding of sustainability this series with the best candidates referring to social, economic and environmental sustainability in their answers. For many candidates the sustainability element tended to be a description of the disadvantages of the other options or, more frequently, they discussed sustainability of the chosen option without reference to the other options. There were fewer references this session made to geographical terms such as 'multiplier effect' without an understanding being shown. Generally the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen option were well written, with many candidates accessing Level 3, and the very best responses Level 4, for this section.

Better candidates tended to be succinct and showed a very good understanding of the concepts. They used the resources well to support their answers and relevant case study materials were often used to good effect.

Weaker candidates remained in Levels 1 and 2 as they focused on a limited range of issues. In many cases they gave 'taught' quotations that were often used out of context, material was 'lifted' from the resources and their arguments lacked development. Some answers focused on the advantages of the option to the tourist and did not link this to local benefits other than 'more will come'.

B562 and A771 Geographical Enquiry

In this third session for entry for this new specification for controlled assessment for B562 and A771 there has been a significant increase on June of last year. Entries are nearly all from Year 11 candidates. We anticipate a further increase in the numbers for this June.

Administration by centres has improved, but there are still difficulties with centres' e-mail addresses which can make it difficult to communicate. Some centres did not use the official assessment grids or did not complete them fully with candidate numbers. It is essential that this is done and that the two assessments for each candidate are put together. If centres did this and annotated the grids so that moderators could see where credit was given for the various objectives it would be greatly appreciated and would allow the process to run smoothly. A very few centres selected the 2010 titles in error; centres should note that it is essential to use the titles for the correct submission year.

The Enquiry involves centres selecting one Fieldwork Focus title from four and one from a choice of 18 titles for the Geographical Investigation. The Fieldwork Focus titles were all selected but the majority were Rivers and Coasts. Most centres split the title into several appropriate key questions and this provided a focus for primary data collection, analysis, evaluation and making substantiated conclusions. Most centres selected one title for their candidates to research in the Geographical Investigation. The favourites were Obesity, Stadia, Gun crime, National Parks, London Fashion Week and F1. There were some centres who allowed a free choice or one from four titles. The vast majority of candidates chose to write a research report, while others did a Powerpoint presentation, booklet/poster or even an oral interview. Some centres provided some sources for their candidates but the vast majority allowed candidates access to the internet for their research which was recorded in a diary. ICT was used extensively by most centres in both the fieldwork and reports for research and presentation of their work.

The standard of marking by centres was mixed as one might expect for a new specification, but an improvement on June 2010 and it was obvious that many centres had attended INSET and fully understood the requirements of controlled assessment. As a result of moderation, there were some mark adjustments in a downward direction and a few in an upward direction. The reasons for these changes were many and are mentioned below.

The Fieldwork Focus on the whole was marked closely to the assessment criteria. Centres that did not were those who did not split the title into key questions, provide a methodology table, collect sufficient primary data or present it in a variety of graphs. Some did not locate their study area on a map and did not set the scene or give a sense of place. They also had students analysing their findings in a superficial manner and not giving any reasoning. There were some excellent examples of students who had combined maps, photographs, graphs and their analysis on one page. They also made substantiated conclusions and realistic evaluations.

The Geographical Investigation was marked more closely to the assessment criteria than in June 2010. Some centres did encourage their candidates to write a 'thought shower' to help them identify key questions and give their report a logical structure. The majority of centres continued to insist on a research diary and the best had candidates acknowledging sources and evaluating their validity. They also acknowledged images directly and linked them to their bibliography. Some candidates however, had no images, maps, quotations or graphs. They also failed to acknowledge their sources and made no mention of stakeholders. High level candidates made substantiated conclusions, looked to the future where appropriate and had researched sources extensively.

In both assessments some centres' candidates had significantly exceeded the word limit. This needs to be strongly discouraged because this work tends to lack focus and precision, as well as

succinctness. Importantly also, since not exceeding the word limit forms part of the marking criteria, moderators expect to see that centres have taken this into account in the marking process.

Overall there was an improvement in the quality of the work produced and it was very encouraging to see candidates enthusiastically take the opportunities offered. They showed initiative, imagination and independence at a high level. Once again it was also encouraging to moderate complete pieces of work, even from weaker candidates, where they had attempted all elements of the assessment. I am confident that centres and candidates will become more familiar with controlled assessment and that many of the difficulties experienced first time round will be overcome in the future.

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