

**Geography**

Advanced GCE A2 H483

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H083

**Report on the Units**

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**January 2010**

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# Chief Examiner Report

As the third report on the papers 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 at AS over candidates selecting a question in section B from the same topic as they answered in section A was very rare and no different in occurrence from normal rubric offences – roughly 1%. The chief rubric offence was incorrectly selecting the two questions from section A. Sufficient space was no longer an issue with most candidates at AS but many did use additional sheets in F764, although there are pages at the back of the answer book specifically for this.

The quality of communication was worrying. Many struggled to express their ideas, especially in section A answers of all papers 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, showing an ignorance of basic geographical terms.

eg in F762 question 4(b) on the role of physical factors one candidate offered:  
*'Rome is a common destination for Roman Catholics due to the Pope.'*

Also candidates either did not check their work or had no idea of scale:  
eg In F764 – question 5 fieldwork method  
*'The transect was laid out up the beach for 360kms.'*

But, equally, many demonstrated a failure to read the question or key terms in the question, especially at A2. The requirement to relate the answer to one named area at AS often produced two or three cities or answers such as:  
*'A named urban area I have studied is China.'*

The legibility of handwriting is an ongoing issue.

## AS – F761 and F762

### 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 generic points eg F762 question 1(a)(i) – listing things that simply could not be seen eg high unemployment or crime
- ignoring particular terms in questions – specifically 'pattern' and in F761 question 1(a)(i) and 2(a)(i) – ignoring 'types of human activity'. 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 neither erosion nor weather

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- wasting space with irrelevant 'chat' or introductions
- not understanding basic geographical terms eg F762 – not understanding the terms 'political factors' or 'physical factors'

Parts (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 saw the management aspect in question 2(c)
- not understanding terms – eg impact, land use, 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 the impact of recreation and leisure activities
- including a lot of generic material rather than using material clearly and tightly based on example(s)
- using more than one example when they only repeated what the first exemplified eg a lot of 'jobs' in F762 questions 3(c) and 4(c)

### **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. Indeed AO3 marks often lifted answers
- be wary of chatty introductions eg *'I am going to write about the impact of climate and weathering on the physical landscapes of hot arid areas.'*
- think if a sketch map or diagram helps 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. Too many miss vital key words eg F761 question 5 – 'basins' often ignored
- try to keep answers analytical and explanatory rather than purely descriptive
- make it locational with a clear sense of place. Exemplification of the 'eg Manchester' type is not effective
- use more local examples eg F762 question 5
- 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

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- broadly effective essay writing, which is often a new challenge to AS candidates
- 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.

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 that contained some excellent answers but also careless slips.

### **A2 – F763 and F764**

This was the first series for both A2 papers, with a very large number of candidates taking F764.

The key at A2 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 their methods but too many described them instead. In F763 too many gave causes for their issues in section A – another example of candidates not reading the question.

The key issues were similar to AS. Candidates must learn to:

- read the question carefully and then answer each aspect of it
- be relevant – do not include material that is not needed
- exemplify with a clear sense of place or location
- use diagrams to illustrate points – especially in F764
- structure the work with a worthwhile conclusion

# F761 Managing Physical Environments

## General Comments

There was a wide range of marks but few scores over 65 were recorded. For most candidates the step-up from GCSE did not cause too many problems, but there were inevitably a few that struggled, and for whom sitting this examination at this stage of the course was probably not appropriate.

Some excellent responses were seen, which revealed not only the ability to recall a significant amount of accurate knowledge, but an in-depth understanding of the topic in hand. It was clear that the approach to the essay question had been well rehearsed. Indeed, there was some very detailed case study knowledge in questions 5 and 6.

However, the structure of essay answers was often disappointing. Too many lacked paragraphs or lacked a logical progression. The most effective essays were those that followed a clear sequence with a relevant introduction and appropriate conclusion.

Many failed to read the questions carefully enough. In question 1(c), for instance, many made only cursory reference to rock type or structure. Others described the formation of depositional river features rather than erosional ones, or wrote about processes alone rather than relating them to the landforms. In these 9 mark questions, most candidates failed to reach Level 3 because they were not responding directly to the requirements of the questions. This was also the case with questions 2(c), 3(c) and 4(c).

In questions worth 6 marks, the best answers clearly identified the two reasons/factors/challenges demanded and developed these. Weaker answers tended to ramble through the answer, perhaps mentioning three or four relevant reasons/factors/challenges without developing them sufficiently to reach Level 2.

The concept of sustainability runs through this unit, as it does in F762. Centres might be well advised to devote a little more time and attention to ensuring candidates do have a secure grasp of the principles involved as this was generally lacking in questions 3(c) and 4(c).

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Section A

Question 1 was slightly more popular than question 2, being answered by 53% of candidates.

1(a) (i) While many candidates scored full marks here, a common failing was for candidates simply to write down a feature from the map, eg ferry, rather than identifying the type of activity, ie transportation. A range of relevant types is listed in the specification.

1(a) (ii) The best answers made clear or implicit reference to the map, addressing “that location” as demanded by the question. The most effective explanations related to the industry/docks at B, with reference to imports/exports, flat land and accessibility by road links. However, many candidates considered the vehicle ferry to be an important method of transport for the export of cars. Housing also produced reasonable responses, although the river was frequently cited as a source of drinking water for the population. The weakest explanations were on tourism. Many answers gave general reasons for such activities’ locations, which restricted their marks to Level 1.

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- 1(b) This was generally well done, with most answers focusing on the human causes, such as urbanisation and deforestation, rather than the environmental ones. The best clearly identified two reasons, often very succinctly, and demonstrated clear links between that reason and increased flood vulnerability. Understanding of processes such as infiltration and run-off often lifted responses into Level 2.
- 1(c) Understanding of the influence of rock type and structure was weak. Many examined landforms (meanders and ox-bow lakes) where rock type and structure are of limited or no importance. Others mentioned irrelevant depositional landforms, like deltas. The most effective responses discussed waterfalls and the relative hardness/softness of two rock types. Even with these, however, exemplification was weak, with very few able to identify the specific rock types of their chosen waterfall or why the rock types are particularly weak or resistant. Answers to this question were generally less successful than those to the parallel question under Coastal Environments.
- 2(a)(i) While many candidates scored full marks here, a common failing was for candidates simply to write down a feature from the map, eg Nature Reserve, rather than identifying the type of activity ie conservation. Examples of different types of activity are listed in the specification.
- 2(a) (ii) The best answers made clear or implicit reference to the map, addressing “that location” as stated in the question. The most effective explanations related to conservation through the Nature Reserve at C, with reference to the salt marsh being an ecologically rich environment. Tourism related to the footpath also produced reasonable responses, with references to sea views and varied landscapes. The weakest explanations were on oil extraction. The ferry was seen by many as an important transport link for exports of oil. Many answers gave general reasons for such activities’ locations, which restricted their marks to Level 1.
- 2(b) This was generally well done, with answers covering both the threats posed by physical processes and the economic or environmental value placed upon coastal areas. Better answers were often aided by reference to specific examples, even though not required by the question. This helped candidates to avoid vague generalisations about “economic importance” or “high land values”.
- 2(c) As with 1(c), understanding of the role of rock type and structure on coastal landforms was relatively weak. Reference to discordant coasts was surprisingly uncommon and, although caves, arches and stacks were often referred to, the structural influences on their development were rarely mentioned. Disappointingly few linked physical weaknesses such as joints to specific erosion mechanisms such as hydraulic action. Knowledge of located examples was often sound, although granite was frequently quoted as a resistant rock in locations as diverse as the Isle of Purbeck and Holderness.

Question 3 was much more popular than question 4, and was answered by 67% of candidates.

- 3(a)(i) Nearly half of candidates scored full marks on this question, either using specific knowledge of alpine vegetation or successfully applying their knowledge of the key features of tundra vegetation. Credit was given for generic description about features such as density, spacing and height. The most common correct points referred to their being coniferous, evergreen and having small needles. There was a tendency for answers to include unnecessary explanations of the characteristics identified.
- 3(a) (ii) Answers here were highly variable. Many candidates clearly knew the adaptations and explained the links between adaptation and climate clearly. The best responses related the short growing season to their evergreen habit and the need to photosynthesise. Others had very little idea, often broadly discussing climate and not linking it to

vegetation characteristics. One common misconception was the belief that these locations are dark all year round.

- 3(b) This was generally well done. Candidates were largely able to identify two challenges and develop their points. The most common and effective related to remoteness and consequent inaccessibility and to the cold temperatures and consequent difficulties for economic development. Some good references to the challenges of the active layer and/or permafrost were seen. Some used examples as illustration very effectively. Many candidates, however, did not relate their explanation to economic development, just describing harsh conditions or remote location with no mention of human activity.
- 3(c) Most answers did not demonstrate a clear and full understanding of the concept of “sustainability”, most commonly through responses that concentrated on environmental conservation and protection. The important socio-economic element was only directly considered in the best answers, most including it only implicitly, if that. The most effective exemplification came from Alaska and the Alps, with answers based on Antarctica tending to be less effective. Some responses did not focus on the management aspect and, mostly irrelevantly, discussed the extent of, and reasons for, environmental degradation in cold environments.
- 4(a) (i) Descriptions of the main characteristics of the hot arid environment plants were generally good. The most common correct points referred to the low level of much of the vegetation apart from the cacti, and drew on their own knowledge through reference to such characteristics as the plants being succulents, having widespread roots or spines. There was a tendency for answers to include unnecessary explanations of the characteristics identified.
- 4(a)(ii) Answers here were highly variable in quality. Many candidates clearly knew the adaptations and explained the links between adaptation and climate clearly. There were particularly good explanations of the waxy surface and sunken stomata, linked to high temperatures and the need to limit water losses through transpiration. Others had very little idea, often broadly discussing climate and not linking to vegetation characteristics. One common misconception was the belief that the plants take in water through their leaves, rather than their root systems. Answers linking the presence of spines to the need for protection from predators generally failed to relate this to the climatic conditions.
- 4(b) This was generally well done. Candidates were largely able to identify two challenges and develop their points. The most common and effective related to the shortage of water and the high temperatures and consequent difficulties for food production to support a population. Some used examples as illustration very effectively. Amongst weaker responses, there was a tendency to discuss the difficulties of the environment in general terms, without clearly identifying specific challenges. This applied to comments about the presence of sand in particular.
- 4(c) Many answers did not demonstrate a clear and full understanding of the concept of “sustainability”, most commonly through answers that concentrated on environmental protection and conservation. The important socio-economic element was only directly discussed by the very best responses, most including it only implicitly, if that. The most effective exemplification came from SW USA and the Khushab Project of Pakistan. References to the tombs in the Valley of the Kings were often poorly applied to the question. Some responses did not focus on the management aspect and, mostly irrelevantly, discussed the extent of, and reasons for, environmental degradation in arid environments. Answers here tended to be less effective than those to the parallel question 3(c).

## **Section B**

With all the essay questions, the principal common weakness was the lack of focus on the question. Many answers showed good knowledge of their chosen located examples but tended to approach the questions in an entirely descriptive fashion. As a result only a minority gained Level 3 in AO2.

Questions 5 and 6 were both popular questions, with question 6 being answered by almost half of the candidature.

- 5 The best answers focused on a couple of detailed examples that contained clear differences in their impacts. There were some effective contrasts between MEDC and LEDC floods, and this approach led naturally into effective explanations for the different impacts. Most answers limited themselves by mentioning the availability of capital whilst often ignoring the issue of available technology as well. Other effective approaches, seen rather less frequently, identified positive as well negative impacts or classified impacts into social, economic and environmental categories. Some useful references to the fertility of flood plains were seen. Effective illustration came especially from the Mekong, Bangladesh and the Severn.

There were two main weaknesses in terms of knowledge and understanding. The first was in the lack of specific details over the impacts of the examples chosen: references to "lots of" deaths and "many" homeless lacked the conviction of those answers that did quantify such details. The second was the tendency to explain the causes of the flooding, rather than the differences in the impacts of flooding.

References to the management of flood hazards were relevant, if recognised as being part of the human response to the events ie were an impact of flooding, not just a preventative measure.

- 6 The best answers were also firmly based upon specific examples. Most answers were able to describe the methods of protection employed and most were accurate in their identification. The most effective answers contrasted examples of hard engineering with those of soft engineering and/or managed retreat. Effective exemplification was provided from a variety of locations, including Pevensy, Holderness, N. Norfolk and Dorset. The most common weakness was a tendency for many not to explain fully how their methods protected the coastline. A good example of this is the role played by groynes. Most answers using this method referred only to their impact on longshore drift. Very few then linked this to the retention of a beach and its significance in absorbing wave energy. This also applied in answers referring to beach nourishment schemes. The part played by sea walls was also typically explained in a low level manner. Much confusion existed between the reflection/deflection/refraction of wave energy by such structures. Much uncertainty existed over how managed retreat schemes actually protected coastlines.

Many candidates also included largely irrelevant material that explained why a stretch of coast needed protection, rather than focusing on protection methods and how they work.

Questions 7 and 8 were distinctly less popular than the other two, each being answered by only 6-7% of candidates.

- 7 While there were a few high quality answers, most showed limited understanding of the links between climate and weathering and landforms. Good answers tended to be stronger in linking weathering to landforms, rather than climate, although some achieved this more indirectly by referring to the role of moving ice. A main weakness of the weaker scripts was the lack of focus on specific landforms. The application of a systems approach (factors-processes-landforms) would have helped raise the quality of many of

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the responses seen. Landforms commonly quoted included corries and arêtes for moving ice and scree for weathering. Case study material was often rather vague and generic, with the Lake District most often mentioned.

- 8 A larger proportion of high quality answers were seen than in question 7. The best clearly identified relevant landforms and explained their formation. As with question 7, explanations based on weathering were better than those based on climate, although a minority did use the role of wind effectively in explaining dunes and pedestal rocks. A few also made good use of convectional thunderstorms and flash flooding in wadi formation, although process detail was often missing. Again, application of a systems approach would have helped. Examples tended to be regional rather than specific and references to scale were seldom seen. The most commonly used locations were Death Valley and the Sahara Desert.

# F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Section A

- 1(a)(i) The majority of candidates used Fig. 1 effectively to identify characteristics of urban decay. A small number of candidates failed to use the resource at all while in some cases the command “Describe” was totally ignored and an explanation was offered. This was clearly self limiting.
- 1(a) (ii) Candidates generally understood the question and were able to express ideas about industrial decline and counter-urbanisation. Answers were not always well developed and at times were rather simplistic, assuming that everyone might suddenly move out of an area because a particular industry had closed down. A significant number of responses were set in a historical context which was not very realistic. Discussions about “workers’ houses” linked to the industrial revolution or the development of the mining industry were often not very helpful. A number of candidates considered a lack of government investment as a major cause of decline and a small number suggested that the area in the photograph may have been taken over by the local authority prior to a redevelopment scheme. These types of ideas provided a useful vehicle for discussion.
- 1(b) Few candidates showed a clear understanding of “political factors”. Those that did show some awareness of the idea generally made vague comments about planning decisions or environmental restrictions (Green Belt). Responses were generally not well developed and largely descriptive. It was evident that in some cases candidates had no understanding of the question at all.
- 1(c) The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the question and were able to use effective examples to develop their answers. A number of candidates simply described a range of traffic management schemes. This approach was reasonably effective but did not fully address the question, which demanded an explanation of how such schemes operate to reduce congestion. There was a clear distinction between candidates who used a wide range of examples, often producing quite superficial responses, and those that used one or two well documented examples in detail. This approach generally produced more effective and coherent answers.
- 2(a)(i) The majority of candidates used Fig. 2 effectively to identify characteristics of rural dereliction. In most cases candidates picked out points about both the condition of the buildings and the general state of the environment. A small number of candidates failed to identify the command “Describe” and began to offer reasons for decline. This not only limited the marks on this question but also led to a certain amount of confusion when it came to question 2(a) (ii).
- 2(a) (ii) Candidates showed a good general understanding of the question and were able to suggest a range of possible reasons for the decline of rural areas. The main ideas expressed often focused on agricultural change, population decline and general issues of remoteness and lack of investment. When well developed these ideas provided the basis for a sound response.
- 2(b) Few candidates showed a clear understanding of “political factors”. Those that did tended to focus on ideas about political support for remote rural areas and points about improving transport infrastructure. When these ideas were well developed candidates

were able to produce effective responses. However, in most cases the points made were quite vague and lacked real detail.

- 2(c) Candidates were able to identify a wide range of environmental pressures in rural areas and were often able to use detailed examples to develop this theme. A number then went on to consider methods being used to manage these pressures, producing detailed and well documented responses. Some candidates did not go beyond a description of the environmental pressures and consequently failed to fully address the question.
- 3(a) (i) The majority of candidates used the data effectively to describe the basic relationship between energy use and economic development. Most then went on to consider Canada and Japan as anomalies, producing a thorough response to the question. A few candidates totally ignored the command “Describe” and suggested reasons for the relationship. This was not only self limiting for this question, it also tended to cause a certain amount of confusion when it came to question 3(a) (ii).
- 3(a) (ii) The majority of candidates picked out the basic relationship between energy use and economic development. This was often expressed in a relatively simple way, focusing on the ability to being able to afford more energy. More sophisticated responses extended this idea and considered that more developed countries had a wider range of industry and usually individual energy supply to households. A small number of candidates considered the question by looking at the development spectrum, bringing in ideas about rapid economic growth and urbanisation.
- 3(b) The idea of “physical influences” was not well understood by many candidates. Most responses tended to be quite superficial, often picking out simple ideas about the need for certain physical characteristics in relation to renewable energy, usually without showing a thorough understanding. The exception to this was where candidates used the example of geothermal energy, often showing a good level of understanding. Those candidates who did clearly understand the question used a range of impressive ideas including points about geology, remoteness and the difficulty of harsh environments, as well as developing the renewable theme with greater accuracy and detail.
- 3(c) Candidates showed a good general understanding of the question and were able to bring in a range of appropriate examples. The major focus for most candidates was Nigeria and Alaska and where these examples were used effectively with detailed and thoroughly documented information the responses were very impressive. A number of candidates produced very effective responses which considered the environmental issues associated with the development of large scale hydro power and wind turbines. A very small number of candidates drifted into discussion about the historical development of coal mines in the United Kingdom. This approach was generally rather self limiting.
- 4(a) (i) The majority of candidates used Fig. 4 effectively to describe the pattern of change in tourist destinations. In a small number of cases candidates failed to use the data or calculated changes incorrectly.
- 4(a) (ii) The key to this question was suggesting reasons for the changes to the “pattern” shown in Fig. 4. In many cases candidates failed to address the idea of “pattern” and simply suggested reasons for the growth of tourist numbers. General points about increasing affluence, longer paid holidays and the development of low price airlines gained some credit but failed fully to answer the question. Those candidates who clearly addressed the question usually produced very effective responses which contained a number of thoughtful ideas. The more usual ideas included points about the growth of long haul destinations, the way that developing countries are using tourism as a development tool and the link between increasing growth and the development of transport networks in Europe.

- 4(b) It was clear that a number of candidates did not really understand the words “physical environment” and consequently these responses tended to identify any factors that might influence the development of tourism. Those candidates who clearly linked either the supply or demand for tourism to the physical environment generally produced effective answers. There were two main approaches to the question. Candidates either took the view that the physical environment was a significant attraction which encouraged development or that it was a significant hindrance to development. The first of these approaches tended to produce more reasoned discussions; the second approach often generated quite vague and undeveloped ideas.
- 4(c) A number of candidates produced well documented responses which used appropriate examples to develop ideas about the way in which the growth of tourism can cause problems for people. A wide range of examples from many different parts of the world were used, although National Parks featured strongly in a considerable number of answers. A number of candidates failed to pick up the idea of “problems for people” and based their answer on environmental problems. Where there were no clear human links considered this approach did not address the question and consequently achieved very few marks.

## **Section B**

- 5 The majority of candidates who answered this question showed a good general level of understanding and were able to express a number of ways that urban change can affect the environment. Candidates used a wide range of examples, many of which were well documented and effectively developed. Responses tended to fall into two main categories; firstly there were a considerable number of candidates who simply focused on one main “pressure”, usually the issue of traffic pollution. Secondly, some candidates took a broader view and brought in a range of ideas which included issues about traffic and water pollution, land use change and dealing with waste. This slightly broader approach often allowed candidates to show a better understanding of the question. In some cases candidates drifted away from the question and brought in largely economic ideas or began a discussion about managing urban environments without really identifying the pressures. In a very small number of cases it was clear that candidates did not fully understand what the terms “environmental, economic and social” actually mean. This question showed the importance of selecting the most appropriate example. The majority of candidates who used developing world examples usually found a great deal to say and produced some of the best answers.
- 6 The majority of candidates who answered this question showed a good general level of understanding and were able to use a range of appropriate examples. The types of “pressures” discussed were often dictated by the examples used. The most commonly used ideas were discussions about building pressures, recreation pressures and pressures resulting from agricultural change. All of these ideas provided an excellent opportunity to show a detailed understanding of the question. A number of candidates drifted away from the question and began a discussion about managing environmental pressures, without really identifying them. This approach did not fully address the question and was often self limiting.
- 7 The majority of candidates who answered this question showed a good general understanding of the key ideas and a wide range of examples were used. Often the strength of the response was dictated by the choice of examples used. Those candidates who used clear and well developed examples of where energy development had played a significant part in the economic and social development of an area generally produced very effective responses. On the other hand, candidates who chose examples where the impacts of energy exploitation had been more negative (Nigeria was commonly used) tended to drift from the idea of opportunity towards discussing problems. A significant

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number of candidates failed to pick up the idea of “social” opportunity, simply concentrating on economic factors which largely centred around jobs and money.

- 8 The majority of candidates who answered this question showed a good general understanding of the key ideas and a wide range of examples were used. It was evident that candidates appreciated the range of economic opportunities that the development of tourism can bring. However, there was often a lack of focus on the social possibilities and this tended to restrict the development of some responses. A number of candidates focused on problems rather than opportunities, often producing some interesting geography that was unfortunately not appropriate.

## F763 Global Issues

### General Comments

Although the entry was small, as expected, the responses written by candidates offer some valuable insights for examiners, centres and future candidates. The full range in quality of answers was seen and there were responses to all questions on the paper for the examiners to mark. No candidate disobeyed the rubric regarding question choice.

In the upper quartile, answers in both Section A and B were focused, detailed and above all, evaluative. Candidates in the lower quartile tended to ignore the resource in Section A and offer unrealistic strategies for the management of the geographical issue. Their essays in Section B did not offer convincing arguments through a weak grasp of theory and concepts and a lack of detailed exemplification.

There were no apparent problems with timing and the layout of the answer booklet seems to have operated in the candidates' favour. Centres are reminded that the answer booklet comes in two sections, mirroring the question paper. Candidates should be sure to turn on to the part of the answer booklet set out for Section B, even if they have space left, and not start their responses to Section B questions in the space allocated to Section A.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

The most common error seen was that of candidates simply describing, at length, the resource rather than explicitly outlining a geographical issue indicated. An issue does not emerge in a convincing fashion from a purely descriptive approach. Future candidates should be strongly advised to identify the issue and write one paragraph outlining it. Reference to the resource is sensible, using details from it such as a particular observation from a photograph, a quotation from text or facts and figures abstracted from a table, chart or map. It might be that a pattern is a suitable geographical issue but what is not required is a detailed explanation of that pattern. Neither is it appropriate to identify a generic issue and then spend the rest of the answer detailing a pre-learned example with no regard to the question. Candidates would probably find it helpful to write one paragraph identifying the issue and the further paragraphs suggesting appropriate strategies for the management of that issue. One side of unstructured writing is not conducive to an effective response.

#### Earth Hazards

- 1 This, the single most popular option, was tackled with confidence by the majority of the entry. Candidates clearly knew much about mass movements and slope failure. Some were very secure in their knowledge and understanding of the physical processes at work in such situations. The better answers included comments about the balance between shear strength and shear stress and the factors causing equilibrium to be disturbed. Most candidates offered sensible issues relating to human activities in the circumstances indicated by the resource. However, it was disappointing to read a good number of scripts where the opening sentence stated that "The photograph shows a landslide.", and then proceeded to give a pre-learned detailed description of the mass movement event that led to the destruction of the Holbeck Hall Hotel, offering nothing as regards management. The more convincing answers used the resource to outline issues such as the impact on transport and thereby on a variety of human activities in areas where levels of development are relatively low. Likewise suggestions of management

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strategies were more secure when they related to the difficulties faced in such circumstances. Particularly effective were comments distinguishing between short and longer term strategies.

### Ecosystems and environments under threat

- 2 Candidates answering this question were generally secure in their knowledge and understanding of energy flows through an ecosystem and the effect the removal of substantial numbers of producers might have on higher trophic levels. Suggestions of management strategies were sensible such as the need to boost producer numbers and some thoughtful consideration was given to reducing consumer numbers either by culling or removal.

### Climatic hazards

- 3 Both heavy snowfall and intense cold were the focus of the resource in this option. A few candidates identified the geographical issue as the formation of these conditions and were mostly successful in their grasp of the fundamental physical processes. Others focused on the impacts on human activities although some of these were too vague. Comments about appropriate management usually headed in the right direction but were not always convincing in lack of attention to detail. The better answers identified the need to have strategies that identified and protected the more vulnerable groups in society or recognised rural – urban differences in both impacts and strategies.

### Population and resources

- 4 The range in fertility rates for selected countries drew some encouraging responses. The higher quality answers identified the issue of the basic LEDC-MEDC difference but then went on to discuss the contrasting fertility experiences amongst LEDC and MEDC countries. Issues such as implications for resources were outlined and then strategies such as family planning (both discouraging and promoting fertility), health care and education were commonly described. At the lower end there were still naive comments about the impact of religion for example that indicated a lack of appreciation of the situation “on the ground”. Candidates at this level of study ought to be aware of the subtleties of influences on fertility patterns.

### Globalisation

- 5 The line graph indicating flows of Foreign Direct Investment into MEDCs and LEDCs was generally well handled. Most of the answers drew attention to the fundamental geographical issue of the contrast between LEDCs and MEDCs and then linked this with ideas such as the development gap. Strategies tended to focus on the LEDCs and the desirability for their governments to encourage as much FDI as possible. As with the previous option, an appreciation of the subtleties of the implications for inward investment tends to carry the response into Level 3. There were for example, a few comments about the desirability of overseas takeovers / investments, with Kraft’s acquisition of Cadbury’s cited, an interesting contemporary impact of FDI on a MEDC.

### Development and inequalities

- 6 The global scale map showing GNP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity drew some effective answers. The issue of a divided world was picked up by all with more convincing responses identifying MEDCs, NICs and LEDCs or a global core and periphery. Possible management strategies were generally well described such as the role of fair trade and various types of aid prominent.

## Section B

There was the full range in quality of essay written in this section. At the top end were answers that impressed through their strong structure, attention to detail both conceptually and factually and most significantly by their wholehearted engagement with evaluation. Less effective essays, more often than not, drifted into narrative which, while often interesting and informative, tended to lead the response away from the actual question set. The regurgitation of pre-learned material is not going to address questions such as “To what extent ...” or “Assess the degree to which...”. Planning is essential here to help provide the focus required to deliver convincing responses.

### Earth Hazards

- 7 The focus of this question was an assessment of the relative significance of physical and human factors to flooding. The more convincing responses examined both river and coastal flooding and gave evidence of their firm grasp of processes from their AS studies. There was no expectation that both would be discussed to reach Level 3 but interesting points of contrast between the two types of flooding did make for particularly effective essays. The fundamental importance of physical factors both preceding and during the hazard event were exemplified by the better discussions. These then went on to show how human activities can have a significant role to play. Factors such as occupation of flood-plains and estuary locations were commonly cited.
- 8 The second Earth Hazards question asked for a comparison of the primary and secondary effects of volcanic eruptions. As there are various interpretations of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’, the mark scheme was not prescriptive about this issue. The more effective responses were clear that both sets of impacts are present in all eruptions but that their relative effects vary from place to place and from time to time. As with all discussions of hazard impacts, the contrast between MEDC and LEDC is a rich source of material. It would have been encouraging to read more about contrasts amongst different types of volcanic eruptions as regards the fundamental physical processes at work. For example, the contrast between volcanic eruptions around the Pacific ‘Ring of Fire’ and the Hawaiian eruptions.

### Ecosystems and environments under threat

- 9 Only a couple of responses were read and so meaningful comments are not possible.
- 10 There were many more essays discussing the extent to which physical environments can be managed to ensure sustainability. Effective use was made of examples here, such as the Great Barrier Reef and Arches National Park, when describing management schemes. Crucial for a really convincing debate is the way management can influence the interaction of the flows of energy and the cycling of nutrients when ecosystems are the focus. Less convincing were the essays using Epping Forest as their example. Here there was too little detail about ecosystems processes and knowledge and understanding of management tended to be rather superficial. One characteristic of answers to this question was the use of abbreviations created by the candidate, such as GBR for Great Barrier Reef; such fictional shorthand is not acceptable in full prose responses. Conventionally accepted abbreviations such as NPP are acceptable.

### Climatic hazards

- 11 This question asked candidates to evaluate the environmental impacts of tropical storms against others, such as social, economic and political. There is a wealth of environmental material to draw upon which only a few were able to do in an authoritative form. Some facts and figures of, for example, rainfall amounts could prove helpful. There were a few encouraging discussions drawing on material from the impact of Hurricane Katrina on

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New Orleans. Rather more could have been made of the contrasting effects of tropical storms on MEDCs and LEDCs.

- 12 There were very few answers to this question, asking candidates to discuss strategies employed to reduce the effects of climatic hazards. Too little was made of the contrast between relatively short term hazards such as tornadoes and longer term ones such as heat waves and droughts. Much more could have been made of the contrasts amongst countries at different levels of development.

### Population and resources

- 13 There were some interesting discussions concerning the extent to which changes in technology and society result in changes in the definition of resources. A common focus was energy resources such as coal and oil. There were references to wind but it was disappointing that more was not known about the role of renewable sources of energy in the past such as wind and tidal energy to power mills and other machinery. Some effective discussion was offered as the role of technology in allowing opening up of difficult to reach sources of resources such as in deep off-shore water or remote inland locations such as deserts. Changes in society were less well handled with little being made of shared resources and attitudes towards them such as marine fish stocks.
- 14 Answers to this question needed to weigh up the relative significance to population change of social, economic and political factors. There is a wide interpretation of what constitutes such factors so candidates need not be anxious when considering this topic. The important aspect is to offer substantial and authoritative discussion that highlights how factors tend to interact and how this interaction varies from time to time and from place to place.

### Globalisation

- 15 This was by far the more popular of the two questions in this option. Responses were clear that MEDCs have benefited strongly from the globalisation process but tended to focus most on economic advantages, rather neglecting other aspects such as environmental, social and political. In addition, the answers tended to give unconvincing material about the disadvantages to MEDCs, such as environmental and social problems faced in areas undergoing deindustrialisation. Too frequently essays paid insufficient attention to the effects of globalisation on NICs and LEDCs. When such material was included, evaluations tended to emerge of little advantage which rather neglects the raising of living standards for so many around the globe and the infrastructural developments which many countries have succeeded in putting in place.
- 16 Only a few responses were marked and all that can be helpfully reported is that, critical for a successful evaluation of the role of international trade agreements in influencing global patterns of production is the link between agreement and global pattern. Answers tended to rely on a narrative outlining various agreements and then drifting into a discussion of the fairness or otherwise of these.

### Development and inequalities

- 17 The focus of this question was an evaluation of the link between the level of economic development and quality of life. There were some sustained attempts in response but not many. Candidates fundamentally agreed with the proposition of the question and tried with varying degrees of success both to illustrate cause and effect and to suggest that the relationship was an uneasy one.

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- 18 This was the more popular of the two questions in this option and generated some effective discussions on the degree to which a country has reduced inequalities within it. A few essays offered a strong conceptual framework using Friedmann's terminology and applied this to Brazil. The main weakness was the absence of data to support an assessment over time. There were also some interesting discussions of how inequalities in factors such as race and gender have been tackled at the national scale rather than simply focusing on regional differences and how these have changed through time.

## F764 Geographical Skills

### General Comments

Candidates produced a wide range of performance. This examination proved quite challenging for some candidates who failed to read the question carefully enough. The group that achieved high 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. Those more marginal candidates had two or more of these essential elements missing. There were relatively few at the highest level as candidates struggled to evaluate effectively. Candidates who did try to evaluate often saw this as 'list all the problems':

Many seemed to see this as a 'write all you know about' paper and missed the key demands to justify and evaluate. Many seemed to see this paper as similar to the legacy AS 2682 and forgot that this is an A2 paper which requires greater depth of understanding. Other centres have clearly carried on their traditional fieldwork investigations without fully appreciating the changed demands of the specification.

Many failed to recognise that this was a geography examination which as such expected some linkage to spatial or locational dimensions. That is what distinguishes geographical investigations from those of other subjects. Centres should remember this when devising investigations.

It is vital that centres read and follow the specification. Essay questions will be set that come from different stages of the investigation and candidates are expected to know what constitutes each of the six stages. Too many saw question 4 and question 5 as coming from the same stage.

Many candidates scored highly on this paper but this seemed to be by centre suggesting some centres had understood the nature of the specification and the requirements of the paper, while others had clearly not.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

This section is testing candidates' basic understanding of the 'tools' of a geographer. Many seem to know the tools but not when, how and why to use them. There was little evidence of critical thinking in so many answers. This is an A2 paper and it is alarming to see how many candidates have reached this stage in their geographical education yet not know the very basics eg what an isopleth or isoline actually shows.

- 1(a)(i) Most candidates gave two valid reasons for using isopleths but few gave advantages or related its use to the data in Fig. 1 so failed to get out of level 1. The vital aspect of this is the ability to interpolate data values to create spatial patterns.
- 1(a)(ii) Most candidates offered suitable spatial techniques – mainly choropleth, although some chose bar graphs/charts. The latter could have been appropriate if located on a map but this spatial aspect was ignored. Descriptions were thin and cried out for the use of diagrams to illustrate the method.

The chief limitation was the failure to justify the choice of the technique as an alternative to the isopleths. The term 'justify' is clearly not well understood.

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- 1(b) This was generally answered well, perhaps because it was not an evaluative question. Candidates offered a wide range of valid uses linking them into clear stages in a geographical investigation and often offering examples. A broad interpretation of GIS was accepted but some candidates muddle it up with general ICT applications eg '*One use of Excel is to tabulate the data findings.*'

Again the key element was the link to spatial data and its location.

- 2(a)(i) There were three clear points of interpretation – strength, direction and significance which all could have been read from Fig. 2. Few gave the supporting data from Fig. 2 and some even saw this as the Mann Whitney test. Alarming, many failed to identify it as a positive correlation.

- 2(a) (ii) Again it was the need to evaluate that prevented so many answers from achieving at the higher levels. The majority of candidates knew why and how it is used but all seemed to think it was effective. Few offered its limitations or gave limitations that reflected poorly on their own abilities eg '*It is hard to calculate.*'

Few seem to recognise this is a geography examination so failed to link Spearman's to locational or spatial data.

- 2(b) Many seemed confused by this partly as the term 'reliability' was not well known. This is a question of balancing sufficient numbers in the sample so that it does represent the whole population from which it is drawn, against the inability or impracticability to have 100% of the population. This was an answer that needed an example. Some candidates did point out the role of standard error or quoted a formula.

- 3(a) Again the word "justify" limited answers all too often. All candidates could suggest something that could be added to the photograph, be it simple eg date or more sophisticated eg its location within the urban area. What let some candidates down was their failure to indicate why that information was needed or was useful as a resource in a report.

- 3(b) In this case it was a (b) as there was no link to the resource used in (a). Candidates should have remembered the need to link in questions 1(a) (ii) and 2(a) (ii).

Again candidates knew the nature and use of secondary data quite well but again they failed to evaluate. Weaker candidates only appreciated the advantages such as '*Saves having to collect it yourself.*' Few candidates explained the advantages and disadvantages of its use in geographical investigations let alone suggested this could vary with the nature of the investigation.

Again the spatial dimension was largely ignored.

- 3(c) This was covered well again perhaps because it was a straightforward demand without any evaluation or justification. Better answers gave either two advantages in depth with examples eg '*to ensure questionnaires didn't include any misleading or ambiguous questions*' or gave a greater range of less developed points eg '*To identify potential risks in the area.*'

## Section B

Both questions are compulsory and must show evidence of candidates carrying out real investigations. Generally this was so but at times weaker candidates made it all too obvious that they were not quoting their own practical experiences.

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Answers had to be relevant to the title of the investigation. At times this exposed the poorly selected title:

*'What is the impact of the opening of a new retail park on the CBD?'*

Such a title is unsuitable as an investigation as it is speculative and difficult to test. It also contains no location so is unclear if it is a field or desk investigation. About half the candidates used a different title for the two questions.

Some titles were not helpful:

*'Bridgwater'*

Others lacked any spatial dimension:

*'To what extent does tourism impact on Oxford?'*

Those candidates that achieved the highest grades:

- 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
- answered the question set

It is not expected that answers will be of equal length in section B. In this case it was quite possible to link strategies to a geographical concept in question 4 in a fairly concise way whereas question 5 might require a greater length. In both cases it is the depth of evaluation that is critical.

- 4 This was from stage 1 of an investigation. This was poorly answered by most candidates. Candidates missed vital words, so many ignored the geographical idea aspect, 'the strategies for conducting' and 'Discuss the extent to which'.

Many answers were simply descriptive of the methods used so remained in Level 1 whilst others discussed the relative success of their investigation. Many used the same material for question 4 and question 5 regardless. Those that did link what (and where, when and how) they planned to investigate to a geographical idea, concept or model scored well.

Many had no knowledge of any geographical concept whilst others merely quoted '*we used the Bradshaw model*' without saying what that was. Many included lists of hypotheses which again exposed their lack of understanding of their chosen model or concept. For example, some candidates did a traffic survey to test whether traffic flows declined with distance from the CBD '*as suggested by the Burgess model of land use.*'

- 5 This was from stage 6 of an investigation. This was more successfully attempted by candidates but again the level of evaluation was disappointing. Some gave lists of techniques and their limitations rather than evaluate their effectiveness and too many saw this as an opportunity to evaluate the overall success of their investigation. Even those candidates that did evaluate didn't really explain their relative effectiveness:

*'We used dog biscuits to measure the speed of flow in the stream. This was not a success as they often were difficult to see or got stuck on weeds in the river.'*

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So what did this do to the data collected on river speeds? Again if candidates had tested a large range of hypotheses they were almost forced into long lists rather than a more in depth focus on one or two methods.

There was no evidence that those choosing to exemplify from human based geographical investigations were at a disadvantage compared to those selecting purely physical investigations.

# Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Geography (H483)  
Advanced Subsidiary GCE Geography (H083)  
January 2010 Examination Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F761	Raw	75	55	49	43	37	32	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
F762	Raw	75	52	47	42	37	32	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
F763	Raw	90	71	62	53	44	36	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
F764	Raw	60	45	40	36	32	28	0
	UMS	80	64	56	48	40	32	0

## 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	17.7	39.1	70.8	89.1	98.3	100.0	295

## 295 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums/index.html>

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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