

Geography

Advanced GCE A2 H483

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H083

Report on the Units

June 2010

HX83/R/10

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

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Chief Examiner's Report

This was the first opportunity to get an appreciation of overall performance as in January only a small minority attempted F763.

Common Problems

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, and others did not use the lineage effectively. It remains important that candidates indicate if they have used additional pages or continued answers elsewhere. This is particularly important for F763 and candidates should avoid writing answers to section B in the space for section A and vice versa.

The quality of communication was worrying; it was markedly worse than January. 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 was an alarming number of geographical errors, showing an ignorance of basic geography.

e.g. in F762 – *'Netherlands where skiing holidays are increasingly popular.for many other caribbean (sic) islands such as Florida and Maritius (sic).'*

Also candidates either didn't check their work or had no idea of scale:

e.g. in F762 – *'The three gorges dam is 174 kms long and 84 kms wide.'*

But equally many demonstrated a failure to read the question or key terms in the question, especially at A2. This is the single biggest cause of under-achievement at both levels of this examination.

The requirement to relate the answer to one named area at AS often produced irrelevant introductions such as this: *'London is the capital of England located in Western Europe.'* Such stating of the obvious wastes time and space but more importantly creates a poor impression at the start of an answer.

The quality 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 the resource shown in the figure in part (a)(i) – e.g. questions 1 and 2 parts (a)(i) in F762
- not following the instruction to describe (what they could see) but rather suggesting generic points
- ignoring particular terms in questions – specifically 'pattern' e.g. in F761 question 1 (a)(i) and F762 question 4 (a)(i). Listing the data is not the same

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- not keeping to the number of points requested. If it says 'two' then don't do three or more. If in doubt number them
- confusing technical terms – e.g. 'issues' does not only mean problems, 'weathering' is not erosion nor weather
- wasting space with irrelevant 'chat' or introductions
- not understanding basic geographical terms e.g. F762 – still not understanding the terms 'political factors' or 'environmental factors'.

Parts (c) and (d) – extended answers, worth 9 marks. Common problems included:

- using inappropriate examples e.g. Oxford as a rural area
- not reading all of the question – e.g. in F762 few saw the 'problems of managing' aspect in question 2(c)
- not understanding terms – e.g. impact, land-use, sustainability
- lack of sketch maps or diagrams
- including long sections of irrelevant material e.g. an account of the farming in South Africa is not relevant to why it is so difficult to manage traffic congestion in rural areas
- 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 e.g. a lot of 'jobs' in F762 questions 3(c) and 4 (b).

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 e.g. *'I am going to write about how human and physical factors make ecosystems in cold environments vulnerable to damage.'*
- Consider whether a sketch map or diagram helps the argument but remember to use black ink or pencil when drawing it
- keep it all relevant to, and focused on, the question posed. Read the question fully and carefully. Too many miss vital key words e.g. 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 'e.g. Manchester' type is not effective
- use more local examples e.g. F761 – 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
- broadly effective essay writing which is often a new challenge to AS candidates
- timing – this did not seem to be an issue
- the papers did seem to differentiate the candidates more effectively.

Notes of caution

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

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

A2 – F763 and F764

This was the second run-through for both papers with a very large number of candidates taking F763.

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 conclusion in relation to an appropriate geographical concept but often this resulted in a description of how they had arrived at those conclusions. 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 space or location
- use diagrams to illustrate points – especially in F764
- structure their work with a worthwhile conclusion.

It was clear in both examinations that candidates, and possibly centres, were not that familiar with the demands or content of the specification, nor the format of the examination papers.

F761 Managing Physical Environments

General Comments:

Overall, this paper produced slightly disappointing results when compared to its two predecessors. The quality of answers to the essay questions was not generally as high with significantly more very weak answers, largely because candidates did not focus on the specific demands of the question.

Many candidates managed to achieve Level 2 quality responses and there were clear indications that centres had prepared candidates with the types of responses needed. However, remarkably few achieved Level 3 in questions due to a tendency to state a range of points with a low level of development rather than going on to fully explain concepts and ideas. Evidence from case studies was also rather lacking in sufficient detail in many instances.

There was a tendency amongst some candidates to try to include an introduction and a conclusion in the 9 mark questions, making the answers unnecessarily long. There were a small number of cases of rubric errors. The most common seemed to be answering question 1 and question 2.

A number of candidates continued their answers on additional writing pages or supplementary answer booklets, but without indicating to the marker that they had done so.

Some centres were surprised to see questions in Section B focusing on the landforms and processes from the first bullet point of topics in the specification, even though this had previously been the case in January. Centres should be aware that Section B questions may be focused on any of the four bullet points in a topic.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question 1 was answered by 67% of candidates.

(a)(i) Most candidates were able to access Level 2 through identifying a basic pattern with supporting evidence. The fourth mark was more elusive; most accessible through comments on the variability of rates of change through the year.

(a)(ii) Most candidates could link the data to climate and saw the role of winter rainfall contributing to increased velocity/energy and either capacity OR erosion, but rarely both. Very few candidates showed a secure understanding of concepts relating to the Hjulstrom curve. Weaker candidates gave reverse responses and quoted summer reasons as well. Many saw freeze- thaw as a major contributor to load, whilst comments about abstraction in the summer were also relevant. Strong candidates recognised the relevance of vegetation but on occasions some thought that evaporation was confined to the river channel itself, rather than in the drainage basin as a whole.

(b) The best answers convincingly explained the roles of urbanisation and deforestation and could include the changes to water transfers, such as infiltration and surface run-off. Weaker responses saw building on flood plains meaning 'the river had nowhere to go', while those that tried to use flood control measures like dams and channelisation often did so without adequate explanation. The very best answers explicitly linked rapid surface run-off to bankfull capacity being exceeded.

(c) The most common error was a lack of understanding of the term "land-uses". Many answers tried to use flood control measures and conflicts over demands for water. Many weaker candidates used theoretical/possible uses, especially for the River Thames, where industry included "iron and steel" and recreation covered "swimming". There was a lack of knowledge of actual case study details. Better answers used the Mekong, where actual land-uses, their effects and the conflicts between users were clearer and factually based. This included dam building and its effects on fishing and farming. It would be wise for some centres to dwell further on the concept of what a conflict actually involves as many responses were purely descriptive or merely stated that 'there is a conflict.'

Question 2 was answered by 33% of candidates.

(a)(i) Weaker candidates often failed to see the trend, although virtually all were quoting figures so gained some credit. The better responses focused on the fluctuations which candidates found more obvious than those in Fig. 1. Some candidates interpreted distance from the cliff as being towards the sea rather than along the spit, as indicated on the sketch map. This tended to cause problems in (ii).

(a)(ii) Most failed to recognise that this was a spit, despite the sketch map provided, and therefore the importance of longshore drift. If they did, attrition was usually the only factor given. A few referred to cliff weathering and/or erosion, but many interpreted the data as a beach profile and tried to use temporal variations in wave energy as a reason. A few stronger responses gave convincing explanations of the competence of waves and their ability to transport sediment of different sizes.

(b) This was generally well done, with methods clearly identified and their role explained in the context of process. The best answers referred to the impact of the method on wave energy, via absorption and reflection. The most common methods chosen were sea walls and groynes. Some answers on groynes did not go far enough, simply referring to them stopping longshore drift, and not developing the idea that a beach builds up, which absorbs wave energy. Better answers were aided by reference to specific examples, even though not required by the question.

(c) Many weaker responses concentrated on coastal defences without any resultant conflicts. Others just described activities with no conflicts e.g. "building on cliff tops". As always, the best answers contained specific case study knowledge and precise locations, rather than vague areas such as "Florida". Too much introductory material was provided in many responses.

Question 3 was answered by 68% of candidates.

(a)(i) Weaker responses had poor expression of latitude and knowledge of Arctic /Antarctic Circles, often stating 'at the top of the world.' Most answers recognised the location of the ice sheets, but fewer saw a pattern to ice caps and glaciers. The best answers recognised that these are found in low latitudes in areas of high altitude.

(a)(ii) Nearly all candidates could describe the cold conditions and offer explanations such as latitude, relief or albedo, but few could explain how they created ice masses. The formation of ice is fundamental to this topic. Too often candidates suggested that ice masses are made from frozen water or permafrost. Even the better responses failed to include summer conditions, or else just implied cold. Hardly any responses recognised the lack of summer melting or annual accumulation of layers of snow being compressed and compacted. Some answers noted that precipitation was needed, but sometimes wrongly suggested that high latitude areas have high annual totals.

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(b) Most responses quoted tourism and mineral extraction (such as Alaskan oil). The strongest responses recognised both the economic gains and the short term, unsustainable nature of the activities. However, many failed to recognise both aspects of the question with extraction being seen as synonymous with exploitation. Unsustainable impacts on people and the economy were as valid as references to environmental issues.

(c) Only the better responses had detailed understanding of relevant physical processes and could then apply them explicitly to the resultant landforms. Plucking and abrasion are fundamental concepts in a cold environment, but freeze-thaw weathering or any process involving ice are just as valid. Locations were often vague: Alps, Rockies and Antarctica were often cited. The best answers gave named examples of landforms such as corries in the Lake District/Snowdonia. Often there was much detail on nivation in corrie formation and very little on the impact of glacial erosional processes. In addition, candidates wasted time by including introductions or by trying to explain several landforms when two were sufficient to meet the demands of the question.

Question 4 was answered by 30% of candidates.

(a)(i) Answers were often lacking detail, with many not differentiating between arid and semi-arid locations. References to latitudes/tropics were sometimes inaccurate and anomalies were seldom noted.

(a)(ii) Detailed knowledge of the different climatic characteristics of the two types of area was not common, with only the best answer quoting comparative rainfall figures. Very few were able to quantify differences in temperature. Some very good responses noted differences in diurnal temperature ranges and seasonality of rainfall. There was a tendency for weaker candidates to drift away from the climate and introduce contrasts in vegetation.

(b) Generally quite well done. Candidates were largely able to identify two ways such environments could be exploited for short-term gain, typically tourism and agriculture. As with question 3(b), many did not explicitly address the short-term/unsustainable nature of the activity.

(c) There were a few good responses on the Grand Canyon and wadis, alluvial fans and playas but examples were lacking; often “The Sahara” or “Namib” was lifted from the resource. The role of salt crystallisation in weathering was also poorly known and often confused with other weathering mechanisms. Details of specific fluvial erosion processes were very limited whilst deposition was seldom explained in terms of energy reduction. Candidates frequently did not clearly link the role of water to the shaping of the landforms. This resulted in some not explicitly addressing the question.

Section B

Question 5 was answered by 16% of candidates.

Knowledge of landforms of fluvial depositional was surprisingly weak. Examiners saw very few good answers to this question. The most successful responses identified relevant landforms (typically flood plains and deltas) and explained the factors responsible for their development (such as river energy and sediment supply). Many candidates struggled to produce anything meaningful, discussing flood protection and general management issues. A small number saw “development” of the landform as economic development ON the landform; credit was given for this approach. A few discussed factors relevant to deposition, but did not link these to any specific landforms. Answers that clearly focused on the factors involved, often making each one the focus of a separate paragraph, tended to score well.

Question 6 was answered by 53% of candidates.

Most candidates could identify appropriate depositional landforms, such as spits and bars, and most recognised some factors, such as wave type. However many began well and then went astray into coastal management, which was often not well linked back to the question. Some mistakenly addressed erosion and gave lengthy accounts of the formation of caves, arches, stacks and stumps. A relevant point could be made about the role of erosion in the supply of sediment for depositional landforms, but this was generally not mentioned or oversimplified. Some excellent answers came from students who had learnt the material well and understood exactly how to tackle the question. An obvious omission of the possible landforms was the bay beach which was rarely considered.

Question 7 was answered by 17% of candidates.

Whilst most candidates produced examples from appropriate locations, most commonly Alaska and the Alps, knowledge of the impact on ecosystems tended to lack detail. A major weakness amongst poorer quality answers was to focus upon the vulnerability of environments broadly rather than of ecosystems more specifically. There was, therefore, limited reference to particular plants or animals in the ecosystems. The best answers tended to begin from the point of view that physical factors are responsible for the vulnerability through cold temperatures, strong winds, permafrost and steep slopes, and then develop their answer by introducing human factors that worsened the vulnerability – mineral extraction, tourism. Such answers were also well located and clearly focused on ecosystems. There was a tendency amongst some answers to include references to management strategies, which are not strictly relevant to the question.

Question 8 was answered by 14% of candidates.

Many of the issues identified above for question 7 applied here too. Good answers were very explicit about the impact of climatic conditions on productivity and the length of the growing season. The fragility of cryptobiotic crusts was often usefully applied. The use of the Valley of the Kings as an example seldom worked well, with the focus often on the damage caused to wall paintings being irrelevant to the question requirement to address the ecosystem.

F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question 1 was answered by 63% of candidates.

(a)(i) Use of Fig. 1 was generally good with the majority of candidates identifying and comparing the service provision in the two districts accurately. A number of candidates went on to consider proportional differences and made the point that Lapa had a higher level of service provision overall. A significant number of candidates considered the wage and literacy data which are not “service” data. When done in conjunction with the service provision data this made little difference; when done in isolation the candidates did not really address the question. A small number of candidates failed to realise that the two districts were from the same city, some considering them from different countries; others seeing one as urban and the other rural. This lack of understanding was then carried through to question (a)(ii) where it became self-limiting.

(a)(ii) Candidates generally showed a sound understanding of the question and were able to suggest reasons for the differences expressed in Fig. 1. The main reason expressed was linked to income. This idea was often thoughtfully expressed and effectively developed. A number of candidates recognised Guaianazes as a “slum area” and developed their responses around this theme, often with considerable success. Ideas about illegal squatter settlements, problems of rapid urban growth and lack of government funding for basic services were considered by a number of candidates.

(b) The majority of candidates showed some awareness of how economic factors influence land use, although in many cases this was limited to simple descriptive observations. Responses were frequently linked to land-use models and bid-rent ideas. This approach provided the basis for sound answers when used effectively. A significant number of responses centred around historical studies which focused on industrial growth and the development of “workers” terraced housing, or dated case studies (London Docklands). This type of approach often produced very descriptive accounts with limited understanding or reasoning. The use of more contemporary examples was generally far more successful in showing an understanding of the question.

(c) The majority of candidates identified transport as the major cause of atmospheric pollution and consequently based their responses on studies of traffic management. When done thoroughly, (rather than as one element of policy such as congestion charging) this provided a useful approach to the question. Many responses were largely descriptive and not fully developed. The result of this was that the key idea of “managing pollution levels” was not always addressed. A small number of candidates adopted a broader approach which considered traffic and industrial management as well as carbon neutral building initiatives, or based their answer on a detailed case study (Curitiba was a popular choice). This approach produced some well-documented and thoughtful responses.

Question 2 was answered by 37% of candidates.

(a)(i) Most candidates used Fig. 2 effectively to describe the differences in the number and type of functions in the settlements. A number considered the idea of a school as a function and went on to describe the pattern of change in pupil numbers in the two schools. A small number of candidates failed to understand the word “function” and addressed the question using only the employment information. In some cases candidates went on to offer reasons for the differences expressed. This was not only inappropriate, it also tended to divert them from addressing question (a)(ii) effectively.

(a)(ii) Many answers were based on generic ideas which virtually ignored Fig. 2. As the question command was "Suggest...", so long as the observations made were appropriate they were worthy of credit. In general terms responses centred around the idea of Village B being a dormitory village and consequently not requiring many functions and Village A being a growing settlement where demand was increasing. Few candidates picked up the possibility of Village A having a tourism link (evidence of hotel, cafe) and consequently having a wider range of local economic opportunities.

(b) The majority of candidates showed a clear awareness of "environmental factors", considering a range of possibilities which included observations about height, slope, nearness to water and rivers and soil quality. These ideas were then developed to consider how they might limit or encourage economic development, often with the use of located examples. A number of candidates developed thoughtful ideas about the way in which the physical environment can be an important resource in the development of tourism or agriculture. In a small number of cases the question of isolation was considered, either in terms of remoteness or related to harsh climatic conditions. These ideas often provided thoughtful responses when clearly linked to economic development.

(c) The majority of candidates tended to focus on problems of congestion rather than "problems of managing congestion". This approach often provided a useful avenue for debate and allowed candidates to generate effective answers. Those candidates who did identify the key idea of "problems of managing congestion", generally focused on issues of cost, environmental degradation linked to road building and local conflicts. When well-documented these responses provided thoughtful and imaginative answers. A major issue for some candidates was the choice of example. A number of candidates based their response on urban areas (London, Oxford and Cambridge were the most popular). This was clearly not acceptable unless there was a strong link to surrounding rural areas and the emphasis was on the rural aspect.

Question 3 was answered by 46% of candidates.

(a)(i) The majority of candidates made excellent use of Fig. 3 and were able to use the data to identify the significant changes to the energy sources used to generate electricity. A small number of candidates failed to use specific data, simply making observations such as "it went up" or "it went down". This tended to limit responses to Level 1.

(a)(ii) Candidates showed a good general understanding of the question and were able to identify a range of possible reasons for the changes shown in Fig. 3. These included observations about relative price, ease of use and the development of technology. A number of candidates brought in broader issues about climate change and the drive towards the use of "cleaner" fossil fuels and renewable energy sources. A number of candidates took the slightly simplistic view that there were few fossil fuels left or appeared to think that it was "the government" who totally managed the exploitation of energy resources and the generation of electricity.

(b) The idea of "Political factors" was generally not well understood. Many candidates appeared to hold the view that the government were effectively responsible for the whole business of resource exploitation, energy generation and transmission. Consequently, responses were often based around this premise and therefore showed a limited understanding of the question. Those candidates who clearly understood the idea of "Political" and had a greater awareness of how the energy industry works, and the way that political decisions can influence energy supply decisions, often produced excellent answers. Considerations such as political instability, government corruption, renewable and nuclear energy policy, international environmental policy and the use of international rivers were all considered.

(c) Candidates produced some excellent answers to this question, often bringing in detailed case studies which included very specific statistical information. The majority of candidates went beyond the basic “jobs and money” idea and brought in a range of points about the socio-economic multiplier and the way that energy wealth can be a significant development spur. A number of candidates developed this idea further by considering that the current development of renewable technology was providing opportunities for economic growth in a number of places. Locational examples were often detailed and well-developed; the most popular were, Norway, Sweden, California, Alaska and the Three Gorges Dam scheme in China.

Question 4 was answered by 54% of candidates.

(a)(i) Candidates generally used Fig. 4 effectively to describe the number of visitors to European countries. A number simply repeated the data, listing each country with an identified number. Clearly this approach did not address the question which was asking for a description of the pattern. Those candidates who did consider the idea of pattern generally scored full marks.

(a)(ii) The majority of candidates were able to offer appropriate reasons for the pattern expressed in Fig. 4. The most common reason expressed was that of distance/access with a number of candidates offering a quite detailed explanation of this idea. Other reasons considered included the attraction of warmer climates and beaches, the idea of marketing and the level of tourism development. Those candidates who failed to pick up the idea of “pattern” on part (a)(i) often found this question more challenging.

(b) The idea of “community development” was not generally well understood. The majority of candidates simply interpreted this in terms of “jobs” and “money” and offered limited development. While this approach had some credit, it did not fully address the question and was somewhat self-limiting. Those candidates who did appreciate the idea of “community” often brought in points about the development of infrastructure, links to education, health, local business and local cultural ideas. A small number of candidates based their response around a located example. When well-documented this provided an excellent vehicle to address the question.

(c) The majority of candidates showed a good general understanding of this question and were able to use appropriate examples. Responses tended to vary in terms of the detail of the chosen case studies and the range of examples of “degradation”. At the basic level candidates simply mentioned “National Parks”, sometimes with a name, and based their response on footpath erosion and litter. More comprehensive answers used detailed case studies and brought in specific examples related to development/building pressures and the loss/threat to fragile habitats.

Section B

A significant number of candidates failed to identify their choice of question.

Question 5 was answered by 25% of candidates.

There were some excellent responses to this question with the majority of candidates showing a good level of understanding. A range of case study material was used. This ranged from small scale examples of sustainable projects (Bedzed) to complete urban policy initiatives such as Curitiba. The level of detailed knowledge expressed by many candidates was impressive. When this went beyond the merely descriptive, answers showed a high level of sophistication. A small number of candidates focused on one aspect of urban management, usually transport. While this had some merit when linked in to the idea of sustainability, it was often slightly limiting in terms of the holistic nature of the question. Some candidates failed to recognise the question in terms of “sustainable management”, and saw it as a question about urban regeneration. In

examples where regeneration schemes were clearly based around sustainable principles this was a useful approach, in examples where this was not immediately obvious this was somewhat limiting in terms of the question.

Question 6 was answered by 11% of candidates.

The strength of the responses to this question was largely determined by the choice and depth of the selected case studies. Those candidates who used appropriate case studies generally produced good, well-documented answers. In many cases, however, case studies were not totally appropriate since they were focused on urban areas or on the urban fringes. When used appropriately, rural-urban fringe ideas were a useful vehicle for the question and a number of candidates considered the relationship between rural areas and their nearby towns as an issue which required careful management in order to achieve a degree of sustainability. In a number of cases located examples were used very superficially and it was evident that some candidates had only a basic understanding of the idea of "sustainability". Rather too often candidates saw the question as an opportunity to write about issues in National Parks with only isolated ideas about management in relation to problems such as footpath erosion.

Question 7 was answered by 25% of candidates.

There were some excellent responses to this question with many candidates offering detailed case study material and at times sophisticated discussion about managing future energy supplies. The most successful answers were based on detailed examples and used these as a vehicle to express an understanding of the question. Commonly used examples included, Norway, Germany, California and Iceland, while various individual examples of renewable energy generation from many parts of both the developed and developing world were also used. At the highest level, candidates picked up the idea of "can play an important part" by considering the on-going relative importance of both renewable and non-renewable sources of energy. At the lowest level candidates simply described the range of possible renewable options with only tentative references to located examples.

Question 8 was answered by 39% of candidates.

Candidates showed a good understanding of the question and brought in a range of examples to express their ideas. These varied in scale from whole countries to smaller regions including individual resorts and National Parks. For many candidates "economic development" was seen as largely "job opportunities and money". When considered in relation to the economic multiplier and infrastructural development this generally produced very effective responses, especially when backed up by detailed locational information. A number of candidates took a slightly broader view of "economic development", bringing in ideas beyond purely economic factors and including points about social development and links to service development (water and energy), especially in developing parts of the world. This approach often produced very thoughtful and impressive essays which showed a high level of understanding.

F763 Global Issues

General Comments:

This was the second session that this unit was available and the entry was expectedly much larger than in January. This more complete experience for both candidates and examiners thus offers some valuable evidence to help inform future teaching and learning.

The full range in quality of answers was seen and there were responses to all questions on the paper for the examiners to read although some questions received far more answers than others. The rubric regarding question choice was almost universally followed.

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. It is clear that time spent planning Section B essay responses is time well spent as the resulting responses tend to answer explicitly the question set.

There were few problems with timing as indicated by the nature of the scripts. There is an important point regarding the organisation of the answer booklet for centres to note and pass onto candidates sitting this paper next academic year, either in January or in June. The answer booklet comes in two sections, mirroring the question paper. Candidates should not start their responses to Section B questions in the space allocated to Section A. The number of pages allocated to Section A will increase so as to avoid candidates continuing their responses to Section A in the part of the booklet reserved for Section B. It is also hoped that this will also avoid the need to use additional sheets.

A concern registered by all the examiners is the poor and, in some cases, very poor, handwriting of too many candidates. This is nothing whatever to do with the scanning process; in fact the facility to magnify a script is available which can help. Candidates should be made aware, well ahead of sitting the paper, of any difficulties in reading their handwriting and measures put in place to overcome these.

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. For example, it is not sufficient at A2 level to simply state that flooding is the issue without extending this to identifying how it impacts on an area such as the effect on businesses or housing areas. Reference to the resource is sensible, using details from it such as a particular observation from a photograph or map, a quote 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 further paragraphs suggesting appropriate strategies for the management of that issue and explaining how each particular strategy would help manage the issue. One side of unstructured writing is not conducive to an effective response.

Earth hazards

Question 1 was answered by 89% of candidates.

This was the most popular question on the entire paper and required candidates to study a GIS river and coastal flood hazard map of Inverness. The more successful responses used the resource to identify the scale of the flood risk, estimating area using grid squares and the different types of land-use likely to be affected such as infrastructure, industrial estate and sports centre for example. The social and economic impacts were then considered and appropriate strategies suggested. These were at their most convincing when each strategy was clearly related to how it would help manage flooding. For example, raising river banks allows an increased volume of water to be contained; higher sea walls prevent high tides from overtopping existing coastlines; afforestation is best carried out further up-stream to increase lag time and evapo-transpiration rates. For too many candidates this question was their chance to write all they could recall about river flooding in Bangladesh and examiners were left wading through sometimes voluminous responses in attempt to extract any appropriate material.

Ecosystems and environments under threat

Question 2 was answered by 29% of candidates.

Too many candidates using the choropleth map resource of changing percentages of forest cover in part of Asia, were unable to read the map's key correctly. It was disappointing to read in so many answers of the rapid deforestation in China and Vietnam, when they are clearly designated as examples of positive change in forest cover. Candidates should be reminded to spend a little time assimilating the resources so that such fundamental errors are avoided. The issue of deforestation was picked up by the vast majority with the more convincing responses then identifying its implications for such issues as reductions in bio-diversity and enhanced flood risk in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. Strategies to manage these issues were not often written about in sufficient detail. At A2 level, one is looking for more than a listing of strategies such as afforestation or the designation of an area as a national park. Even in the context of these shorter responses, candidates should be able to offer some comment about how their chosen strategy might or might not operate.

Climatic hazards

Question 3 was answered by 53% of candidates.

The satellite image showing a succession of tropical storms approaching the Caribbean and southern USA was generally well-handled by the majority of candidates. Issues were most convincing when they linked to actual effects on the ground, for example, strong winds (quoting figures from the resource) to structural damage to buildings and agriculture, the destruction of banana plantations for example. A wide range of strategies was suggested including some of the latest technological attempts to counter the development of a full-blown hurricane from a tropical storm or depression. Clearly the resource itself offered a clue as to one appropriate strategy, the observation and monitoring of these storms as they are born and develop over the warm waters of the mid-Atlantic. Many of the more authoritative responses drew attention to contrasting strategies likely to be adopted amongst the affected countries of various levels of development.

Population and resources

Question 4 was answered by 49% of candidates.

Most candidates answering this Option identified the basic mis-match between population growth and level of agricultural resource available in various world regions. The plight of sub-Saharan Africa in particular was identified. The better responses then made the point that food shortages and famine had a higher probability of occurring, with the peoples of this region being the least able to cope. While there were plenty of answers highlighting the role of NGOs in both reducing population growth rates and enhancing food production, there was a sizeable minority who identified government subsidies on fertiliser as an appropriate management strategy without making the point of the severely limited funding for such an approach and the restricted availability of fertilisers in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Many answers to this question would have been helped through a stronger command of technical terms such as food security and food entitlement.

Globalisation

Question 5 was answered by 36% of candidates.

Most candidates identifying an issue from the world choropleth map of the value of exports of manufactured goods and services did so successfully. The significant gap between regions such as Western Europe, North America and much of Africa was often highlighted. Some clearly struggled to comprehend China's and India's allocation in the lowest category with their perception of them as 'workshops of the world', and so failed to pick up that the map was on the basis of per capita. There were, however, those whose sophisticated grasp of globalisation led them to identify the types of manufactures coming out of these two 'giants' as tending towards the lower value end of the spectrum, such as clothing and footwear and domestic items such as irons. This was compared with high-value manufactures such as vehicles and bio-technology exported from MEDCs. They also picked up the point that services were included and this was very significant in identifying global contrasts. The more successful also identified the exports of many LEDCs as being dominated by primary products and that these represented comparatively little added value. Strategies were focused on trading relationships and role of TNCs. Disappointingly few picked up on the role aid might have in supporting the development of various types of infrastructure and education to assist more value-adding activities developing in LEDCs.

Development and inequalities

Question 6 was answered by 43% of candidates.

The fundamental issue of inequalities in quality of lives in different countries was identified by those answering this Option. More aware candidates used the resource to chart the continuing high HDI of MEDCs such as Denmark, the rise in living standards in some countries as represented here by Malaysia and persistent struggle for advancement of some as highlighted by Zambia. A wide variety of strategies was suggested with the discriminating aspect being how well they were applied to doing something positive about the lives people in countries such as Zambia, are living. Thus governments attracting FDI needed to be linked with raising GDP per capita and providing individuals and governments with funds to spend on health care and education. It was also good to read of the need for both Denmark and Malaysia to continue to invest in areas such as education, health care and housing in order to maintain and even increase their HDI values.

Section B

Extended essay writing seems to have galvanised some candidates to really demonstrate their evaluative skills. These candidates demonstrated in convincing ways, their abilities to manipulate authoritative understanding and substantial knowledge to generate essays which were a pleasure to read. However, at the lower end, there were quite a few candidates who clearly struggle to grasp the complexities of the topics considered in this Section. They tend to retreat into extended narrative, which rarely engages with the question set but merely replicates pre-learned material.

The very best candidates were able to substantiate their generic points through the relevant deployment of detailed factual exemplification. Questions such as, what is the current population growth rate of a particular region / country?; what is the proportion of GDP/GNP/GNI coming from primary/secondary/tertiary sectors?; what was the rainfall total falling over the previous few hours before the mass movement / flood took place?, were answered so as to lend conviction to an essay.

One point centres should consider is the use of diagrams to support discussion. Examiners felt that opportunities to add to or communicate more effectively via diagrams (including sketch maps) were rarely taken. Candidates can be reassured that the quality of scanning makes the use of clear and simple diagrams effective.

Earth hazards

Question 7 was answered by 49% of candidates.

Discussions of the extent to which an earthquake's impact depends upon its strength were generally effective. On the whole, candidate's knowledge of the fundamental physical processes generating earthquakes was sound, although too few seemed confident regarding contrasts depending upon type of plate boundary and intra-plate quakes. The working of the Richter scale was well-known but only a few included the modified Mercalli scale to discuss the degree of ground shaking, something of relevance to this question's focus on impact. Candidates were confident when discussing factors such as level of development of locations affected by earthquakes and usually made sensible evaluations of aspects such as degree of preparation and quality of building codes and their enforcement. Examiners read many helpful comments about contrasts in population density, proximity to epicentre and time of day as having significant influence on earthquake impact. There were many instances of useful exemplification from a wide variety of actual quakes with discrimination coming from variations in quality of detail and its referral back to the question. One other point regarding contrasting candidate performance relates to whether a distinction was made between primary and secondary effects of earthquakes, with the latter group appearing only in the higher quality responses.

Question 8 was answered by 33% of candidates.

A more generic discussion of earth hazards was called for in this question when candidates were asked to evaluate between human and physical causes. It was encouraging to read thoughtful opening sections in which candidates discussed what makes an event such as a volcano/flood/mass movement a hazard. Comments about risk, vulnerability, perception and management were all appropriate. This is an area where those candidates looking to achieve at the very highest level should excel and should have produced some truly discursive material in their preparation for the exam.

As with all answers in this paper, there is a variety of routes through to the top level. It was possible to offer a suitable discussion based on just one type of earth hazard, mass movement for example, but few of these contained sufficient evaluation and detail and different events to reach the very top of the levels. Much use was made of the Venezuelan and Aberfan debris

slides to illustrate the combination of physical and human factors but some responses did not use their factual material with sufficient discrimination. They thus used much examination time giving factual accounts which were fascinating but did not really advance the argument as perhaps a consideration of other earth hazards might have done.

Ecosystems and environments under threat

Question 9 was answered by 8% of candidates.

Responses assessing the extent to which human activity impacts on physical environments depending on the level of development were not convincing. The most common approach was a comparison of two countries, one LEDC and the other MEDC. This format had potential to reach the top levels but candidates tended not to achieve these due to a lack of explicit evaluation nor sufficient factual detail. Comments about deforestation were particularly disappointing as they tended to be condemnatory of countries such as Brazil and Indonesia and the reduction in extent of tropical rainforest but affirmative of conservation methods in North America or Western Europe, national parks especially. This rather ignores the historical large-scale deforestation which many MEDCs have undergone and leads to an unconvincing argument. It was, however, encouraging to read responses where candidates drew on their AS geography in the form of exemplification involving tourist developments such as the Great Barrier Reef and various sand dune examples. One area that would yield considerable discursive material is a consideration of a single country / region through time.

Question 10 was answered by 2% of candidates.

Unfortunately very few truly discursive responses were read dealing with the relative importance of factors creating unique characteristics of local ecosystem(s)/environment(s). Too often examiners saw lengthy narratives simply describing the factors with little or no attempt to assess their relative contributions to the example. It was very disappointing that so few candidates acknowledged the role of geology and therefore soil type when dealing with their chosen location. Epping Forest was often used by candidates in this context with appropriate statements made about forestry management, coppicing and pollarding for example. These and other management approaches were rarely placed in context of changing demand for timber, the growth of London outwards, increasing recreational pressures for example and the basic physical factors of the area were often poorly known.

Climatic hazards

Question 11 was answered by 4% of candidates.

Discussions dealing with contrasts in the length of impacts of low and high pressure atmospheric systems were not especially successful as they tended not to pick up on the key phrase in the question '... have more of...'. The more convincing evaluations looked at tropical storms *vis-a-vis* lengthy dry spells which led to drought for example. What was lacking were the type of statements that began 'On the other hand, low pressure can have long-term impacts such as ...' or 'On the other hand high pressure can have short-term impacts such as...'. Comments about long-term economic loss from tropical storms or the very personal issue of the death of an individual in a family were rarely included.

Question 12 was answered by 3% of candidates.

There were relatively few responses assessing the success or otherwise of strategies designed to reduce the impact of either acid rain or photochemical smog. The latter phenomenon was frequently confused with fog. There were some convincing evaluations looking at contrasting approaches between MEDCs and LEDCs such as UK and China. Generally this question seemed the reserve of those who had run out of alternatives to answer.

Population and resources

Question 13 was answered by 24% of candidates.

There was a wide range in the standard of responses discussing the viewpoint that the supply of resources owes more to physical factors than to anything else. Some of the best offered a breadth of approach which covered considerable ground as regards different types of resources. Fuels tended to figure large in most accounts which was sensible as these offer a rich vein of material, for example the changing status of wind power through time and changing attitudes towards fossil fuels and coal in particular. More convincing essays explored contrasts and the reasons for these amongst countries at different levels of economic development. The role of technology was usually well-covered with the more effective discussions displaying substantial knowledge of the techniques relating to the technology such as different mining techniques. One resource type under-represented in responses was biological such as plants and animals, although fish stocks were included by some.

Question 14 was answered by 10% of candidates.

Examiners, by and large, read only disappointing discussions in answer to the claim that overpopulation is only found in areas of high population. Most candidates answering this question seemed unsure of possible definitions of overpopulation and the issues surrounding these. Just as in Question 8, where there were opportunities for some really considered debate in a theoretical sense but with possibilities for considerable engagement with the real world, so here debate about what might be considered to be overpopulation was possible. Responses seemed at best tentative in their approach and simply did not know enough about the topic.

Globalisation

Question 15 was answered by 34% of candidates.

Many candidates felt comfortable discussing the issue of the advantages and disadvantages brought by TNCs to locations where they operate. Comments tended to focus on the role of TNCs involved in the secondary sector and the employment, wealth and multiplier effects they bring as well as issues such as working conditions, wage levels and pollution emitted, especially in TNCs. It was the case, however, that some responses tended to offer rather vague argument, hoping that unsubstantiated assertion would carry the day. It took them so far but only so far and more authoritative responses came from those whose research had led them to sources of information that could be weighed up against each other, such as the web-sites of actual TNCs and NGOs such as Fair Trade and various labour organisations. It was good to read discussions of the impacts of TNCs on MEDCs, both positive and negative, and in one or two cases, it seemed as if such knowledge and understanding was the result of local experience and or fieldwork, something to be encouraged wherever possible.

Question 16 was answered by 3% of candidates.

Very few responses were read to the question, 'Can aid ever do more than reinforce dependence?' Those that were indicated they were not comfortable with the topic and tended to rarely climb very high in the Levels. Different types of aid were known, but not in sufficient depth nor detail to make a difference to the quality of discussion.

Development and inequalities

Question 17 was answered by 15% of candidates.

Candidates tackling the issue of increasing inequalities within a country arising as a result of development tended to deploy either China or the UK as exemplification. These were successful depending on the quality and quantity of detail a response manipulated to answer the question. Spatial and socio-economic inequalities were commonly described and accounted for with varying degrees of success. In both China's and the UK's cases, candidates might have made more convincing arguments had they possessed a stronger historical perspective. For example, in China inequalities were extreme under the feudal system and there are some interesting patterns to discuss in the UK's evolution as an industrial and then post-industrial nation. Examiners reported reading very few authoritative theoretical sections, with only occasional and not always convincing references to Myrdal and Friedmann. The latter's ideas have for example, been interestingly applied to Brazil. The role of government in addressing inequality was helpfully discussed in some responses, the most effective of which were right up-to-date with commentary about implications of the proposed cuts in central and local spending on different regions and groups in society in the UK.

Question 18 was answered by 14% of candidates.

Fewer candidates answering in this Option selected to assess the extent to which the Development Gap is narrowing. There were some persuasive discussions of global scale inequality with candidates pointing out the continuing dominance of a relatively small group of countries, the rise of another group and persistent lack of progress on almost whatever measures one adopts of yet a third group. While the example of Zimbabwe is an unfortunate one, some candidates perhaps dwelt for too long on events of the past few years to the detriment of the overall evaluative balance of their response. The inclusion of some other examples would have helped give a more comprehensive discussion that gave the response a stronger sense of purpose as regards explicitly answering this particular question.

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 set 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 e.g. Question 5 *'My conclusion sort of supported the Burgess model to some extent.'*

Many, again, seemed to see this as a 'write all you know about' paper and missed the key demands to justify and evaluate. Some centres have clearly carried on their traditional fieldwork investigations without fully appreciating the changed demands of the specification.

Too many candidates failed to recognise that this was a geography examination which, as such, expected some linkage to spatial or locational dimensions. This is what distinguishes geographical investigations from those of other subjects. Centres should remember this when devising investigations and appropriate titles.

It is vital that centres read and follow the specification. The examination is based on the topics and structure spelled out in 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 5 as coming from the analysis and interpretation stage (5) rather than stage 6.

At times the poor level of English and lack of geographical knowledge left the candidates very exposed e.g. *'We conducted our investigation in the Peak District just near the slopes of Durdle Door.'*

Section A

This section is testing the candidates' basic understanding of the 'tools' of a geographer. Overall this was answered more effectively than section B but it was disturbing how many scored 0 for a sub section – usually 3(b). Sadly many 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 do not know the very basics e.g. what 'central tendency' means.

Question 1 was answered by 22% of candidates.

(a)(i) This was not that popular yet offered scope for a vast range of investigations both physical and human (many of which could have been their investigation but applied to a sensible location on the map). It was clear that map work was a weakness for some – the idea of scale clearly was a challenge: *'I would measure the flow of the river between 000082 to 990053 – round a meander.'* This is the river Daugleddau making its depth and width rather inappropriate for an A level investigation. Some candidates struggled to present map evidence. Others had not read part (ii) as they offered titles that created massive problems for them in part (ii) as this focused on primary data. For example a title about estimating the flood risk of an area required secondary rather than primary data.

Report on the Units taken in June 2010

(a)(ii) The chief limitation was the failure to justify the choice of the primary data collection method. The term justify is clearly not well understood. All too often it was the use of a questionnaire. Clearly this is appropriate for many investigations but there was an expectation that how it would be used would be described. This is a 10 mark question so more detail than e.g. *'I would use a questionnaire'* is required. Others gave details of systematic sampling along a river but failed to say what they were sampling. Again it needed some reference to the map and with an appreciation of the scale e.g. *'I would use a chain to measure the Pembroke river cross-section and a metre rule for its depth.'*

(b) This was generally answered well. Candidates offered a wide range of valid factors and types of maps linking them into clear stages in a geographical investigation and often offering examples. Most focused on aspects of scale and being up-to-date.

Question 2 was answered by 40% of candidates.

(a)(i) This was a popular question but too many focused on the attractiveness of the pie chart (positive) or the inability to know the percentages of the different types of vegetation (negative). The key was that such a diagram is totally inappropriate to show data along a transect. Again the inability to show the locational aspects was ignored.

(a)(ii) If the candidate missed the locational aspect in (i) then they tended to do so here and offered a bar chart. More effective answers suggested located bars along a transect, kite diagram or simple scatter or line graphs. Some did try to simplify things by suggesting the plant types be grouped e.g. grasses, rushes etc. It was striking how few offered diagrams. Most of the description could have been achieved by a well-annotated diagram. Several candidates offered more than one way of presenting the data. The best one was marked.

(b) This was generally answered well although some purely linked it to vegetation as in (a). Candidates should remember parts (i) and (ii) are linked but (a) and (b) are not. Most focused on seasons or the weather whilst daily differences were pointed out by those that had done human geography topics such as using questionnaires to identify shopping habits. Some focused on longer term aspects e.g. *'Latest census is nearly 10 years out- of- date.'* Some failed to see 'when' so produced irrelevant answers.

Question 3 was answered by 38% of candidates.

(a)(i) This was generally done well but some candidates in effect stated two examples of the same problem – usually either the need to close the questions or to not ask intrusive questions. Some gave generic answers such as: *'If you ask people in the street not all will stop and answer your question so producing a biased sample.'* The question said 'this questionnaire' so clear linkage to Fig. 2 was expected.

(a)(ii) Most candidates offered improvements on the problems suggested in part (i). These were often appropriate and detailed. Again some merely gave one improvement with a range of examples – usually of how to ask closed questions. Some gave impractical improvements such as using a postal questionnaire.

(b) This was either known or not. Too many saw this as the Spearman's Rank question so gained no credit whilst others left it blank. Others played safe and chose the mean or median. Extensions into interquartile range or standard deviation were relatively rare. Even those that selected an appropriate measurement often failed to evaluate its usefulness. Again it must be stressed that the ability to evaluate is key at A2.

Section B

Both questions are compulsory and must show evidence of candidates carrying out real investigations. Generally this was more effective than in January with some good reference to their real experiences but, at times, weaker candidates made it all too obvious that they were quoting all of their own practical experiences rather than selecting the appropriate sections needed by the question. Answers had to be relevant to the title of the investigation. These seemed more geographical than in January which helped the spatial aspects of Question 5. There is no need to use the same title for both questions, although about 50% did.

Try to avoid vague titles such as: *'To investigate pebble size on the beach'*
Where and what aspect? – an improvement would be: *To investigate the changes in pebble size down drift on Slapton beach.*

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 – they knew why they were doing a particular activity
- 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 minimising risks in Question 4 in a fairly concise way whereas Question 5 might require a greater length or some had very succinct conclusions easily related to a geographical concept so Question 5 was markedly shorter. It is the depth of evaluation that is critical.

Question 4

This was from stage 2 of an investigation. This was poorly answered by many candidates. Candidates 'missed' it was a two- part answer or missed vital words so:

- many ignored the 'how and why' so merely described what the risks were
- many ignored 'justify the strategies you used'
- too many ignored that this was effectively a two-part question so produced unbalanced answers.

Many answers were simply descriptive of the risks and the methods used to reduce them so remained in Level 1. Candidates are expected to know that likelihood of occurrence and severity of the potential risks are key to 'how'. 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.

Question 5

This was from stage 6 of an investigation. This was more successfully attempted by candidates but again the level of evaluation was disappointing. Conclusions (stage 6) were often confused with results (stage 5) or even with data collection (stage 3) and too many candidates included irrelevant asides e.g. *'I used Spearman's Rank to see if there was any link between my various variables.'*

Report on the Units taken in June 2010

A single conclusion is acceptable, if in some detail, but the key element was relating the conclusion(s) to the geographical idea that underpinned the investigation. Some struggled with this. Some quite stimulating titles floundered as no thought had been given to a concept that could help to explain the conclusion. A candidate who looked at the way the price of beer changed with distance from the CBD needed some geographical concept such as distance decay or even bid rent to help explain his/her findings.

It is perfectly acceptable to say that the conclusions didn't support the geographical concept but then you are expected to say why it didn't – it may be that the concept is questionable or as one candidate pointed out: *'It is only a model and models are generalisations and simplifications of complex reality so for individual towns with their own unique history the model is unlikely to fit perfectly.'*

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 an environmental survey to test whether the quality of the environment increased with distance from the CBD *'as suggested by the Burgess model of land use.'*

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