

OCR Report to Centres

January 2012

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Geography B (J385)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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Overview

General Comments

Centres are now becoming more familiar with the entry format for the individual components of the course. Many centres took the opportunity to enter Year 11 candidates for unit B561 (SDME) and it seems that this will become the most popular time of the year to enter candidates for this assessment. A number of centres also took the opportunity to re-enter candidates for the SDME assessment in the hope of improving candidates' grades from June 2011. Centres also took the first opportunity to enter candidates for the 2012 titles of unit B562 (Controlled Assessment). However, more centres will enter candidates for this component in June.

Centres are now becoming more familiar with the requirements of controlled assessment, in particular the regulations on levels of control. Centres produced a variety of work on the Fieldwork Focus titles provided by the examination board. They also used different approaches in selecting their Geographical Investigation titles. Centres are reminded that both sets of titles change each year and centres need to be aware that the both titles correspond to the year of submission, which may not be the same as when the task was undertaken.

Centres are also becoming more familiar with the demands of the SDME and made thorough use of the pre-release material. It is worth reminding centres that the unit being assessed by the SDME will change for June 2012 and the future areas of focus in this assessment are already published by the examination board. Centres may enter candidates at either the Foundation or Higher Tier of entry. This may be different from the tier of entry of the Key Geographical Themes examination taken at the end of the course.

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

Centres are recommended to study the reports of the three assessment components submitted or taken in January 2012. They give many pointers to how candidates may improve their chances of success. The reports are based on the comments of examiners and moderators who were responsible for judging the work of candidates.

B561/01 Sustainable Decision Making (Foundation Tier)

The entire range of marks was achieved on this paper for the full range of candidates. The mark range showed a typical standard distribution pattern. Evidence of preparation for this paper is increasingly apparent. The range of question types enabled candidates to access mid-range total marks even if some struggled with the extended writing questions. Only a very small number of candidates scored below 15 marks. Significant numbers of candidates scored between 15 and 30 marks and a sizable proportion were able to attain 30 to 40 marks. This shows that a good proportion of candidates are able to access Level 3 on the Levels of Response questions.

The standard of English was generally good however the quality of handwriting was, at times, extremely poor, with some papers being almost impossible to read. In order that candidates' results are not affected by this, some centres should consider the use of a scribe.

Candidates are reminded to label any continued work on additional pages.

Questions 1 and 2 were designed to test the candidates' background knowledge of hydrology and storm hydrographs.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Candidates seemed well-prepared for this question and all parts of the question were generally well-answered.

Question 2

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) This produced a great deal of variation with most candidates achieving one mark having identified that basin B has more forest than basin A. The second mark for both basins having steep slopes was less well-achieved.
- (c) Every possible combination of answers appeared here. The four correct responses were not as common as three mark responses. No error dominated, but Moorland seemed to be the answer least correctly identified.

Question 3

This question expected candidates to be able to differentiate between a risk and a hazard and to identify the impacts caused by a flood.

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify the disaster. Risk was less well identified.
- (b) Many candidates gained 4 marks here as there were a number of ways these marks could be achieved. Those who did less well tended to focus on the causes of flooding rather than the impacts of a flood and should be reminded to read the question carefully.

Question 4

This question focused on the human use of floodplains and potential flood hazards.

- (a) The majority of candidates correctly identified the golf course.
- (b) Most candidates were able to show an understanding of why the town centre was less likely to flood due to height above, or distance from, the river.
- (c) The responses to this question often had simple reasons for the use of a floodplain and so were able to achieve Level 2, the mark scheme crediting candidates with simple but clear development of their answers.

Question 5

This was the decision question. The candidates were expected to bring together their understanding of flood risk/hazard and the methods that can be used to alleviate these. The highly-structured framework guided the responses of the candidates.

- (a) The options were chosen in relatively even proportions. Candidates needed to give developed explanations of their chosen options. The majority of candidates achieved Level 2. Where only Level 1 was achieved, candidates either only described the method or misunderstood the method they were writing about. Level 3 answers focused specifically on Brisbane and its environs, with an understanding of the cost implications of the options.
- (b) The disadvantages of (a) were often well-answered and, as development points were not required in this answer, many candidates scored 2 or 3 marks. The word 'unsustainable' with no explanation was often seen and is to be discouraged as an answer.
- (c) Most candidates were able to score 2 marks here, either by being able to develop one idea, or by giving a simple advantage for the two options. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their answer for the extension marks, especially where 'explain' is in the stem of the question.
- (d) Many candidates were able to score 2 marks on this question. In order to be awarded the mark reserved for sustainability as a development point, candidates needed to fully explain Social, Economic or Environmental sustainability.

B561/02 Sustainable Decision Making (Higher Tier)

General Comments

There was evidence of good preparation for the examination and candidates of all abilities were able to access the resources. A full range of marks was seen. The rubric was followed with few errors. Most candidates completed the paper. Candidates were able to include their additional research and gain credit in their answers particularly for Questions 4 and 5. Candidates need to be reminded that developing one or two ideas will gain more credit than stating multiple ideas on level response questions such as Question 5.

The standard of written work was good overall. Candidates need to be encouraged to use paragraphs in their answers. Many candidates showed a good understanding and use of appropriate geographical terminology this session particularly in Question 2. Candidates need to be aware that they should develop terms such as 'interception' and 'environmental damage' to access the higher levels of marking. The majority of candidates was able to accurately read the hydrograph in answer to Question 1.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates scored 2/2 for this question. A small minority of candidates included fractions or decimal points but usually for only one of the answers so gaining 1/2 marks.
- (b) Drainage Basin A was generally better described than Drainage Basin B. Some candidates wrote about lag-times or referred to only part of the hydrograph. Some candidates, having given the correct answer for Drainage Basin A, made a comparative statement for the shape of Drainage Basin B which did not reflect its actual shape so gained no credit. Some candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about why they were the shape they were.

Question 2

This question was generally well-answered with candidates making good use of geographical terms and concepts. Most gave 'vegetation' and 'steep slopes' as their explanations and were able to offer some development. Many realised that more/less surface run-off is caused but did not link this to the speed that water reached the river and hence its likelihood of flooding. Candidates should be reminded to develop all parts of an answer in order to be awarded the highest available marks. Most candidates made a comparison between the two drainage basins although this was often done in different parts of the answer. A small minority referred to only one of them.

Question 3

Many candidates focused on the likelihood of flooding between the two areas rather than the impacts. Many repeated similar ideas that had been used in Question 2. The impacts were often added on at the end of the answer without any explanation. Suggested impacts mainly focused on simple ideas about death and houses with fewer candidates referring to economic or environmental impacts involving the factory and power station. The best answers developed ideas about insurance costs, workers losing their jobs, power cuts, loss of business and river pollution. A minority of candidates referred to the extent of urbanisation but only in relation as to how this could increase surface run-off because of impermeable surfaces.

Question 4

The question proved to be a good discriminator. Most candidates entered Level 2 with many scoring 6/8 marks and used Resource 5 as a stimulus to develop their ideas about why floodplains are used even though there is a risk of flooding. Few candidates were able to refer to the flood risk/flood return period of their chosen land uses with full understanding. The weaker answers were ideas listed from Resource 5. A small minority of candidates discussed zoning ideas with reference to Resource 4 or flood defences.

Question 5

Most of the candidates followed the bullet points in the question to structure their answer so ensuring they covered all parts. No one option was chosen over the other three. Many candidates showed an understanding of the term 'sustainability'. The best answers looked at economic, social and environmental aspects of the schemes. They showed a good knowledge of the Brisbane floods and used the resources and their own knowledge to support their answer. Explanations were fully developed comparing the sustainability of their chosen option with the rejected ones. Many candidates gave an introduction which included the advantages of their chosen option with some making reference to sustainability. They then gave disadvantages of the rejected options without making the necessary comparative statements. Ideas were poorly developed and repetitive so gained minimum credit. These candidates often gained most credit for the disadvantages of their chosen option particularly if they had chosen Option 3 when they wrote about costs, loss of habitat and displacement of population.

B562 Geographical Enquiry

The Enquiry involves centres selecting one Fieldwork Focus title from four and a choice of 18 titles for the Geographical Investigation. The Fieldwork Focus titles were all selected but the majority chosen were Rivers and Coasts. Most centres split the title into several appropriate key questions and this provided a focus for primary data collection, analysis, evaluation and making substantiated conclusions. Most centres selected one title for their candidates to research in the Geographical Investigation. The favourites were the Premier League, endangered species, wind energy and tourism.

There were some centres who allowed a free choice or one from four titles. The vast majority of candidates chose to write a research report, with a few Powerpoint presentations, booklet/posters and oral interviews. Some centres provided some sources for their candidates; the vast majority allowed candidates access to the internet for their research which was recorded in a diary. ICT was used extensively in both the fieldwork and reports for research and presentation of their work.

The standard of marking was much better this year as one would expect centres to have responded to the reports provided by moderators last January. It was obvious that centres had attended INSET and fully understood the requirements of controlled assessment. There were fewer adjustments in a downward direction and only a few in an upward direction. The reasons for these changes were many and are mentioned below.

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

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

In both assessments one common problem was the word count which in some centres was exceeded significantly. This meant that the work lacked focus, precision and succinctness.

Administration by centres has improved with centres' email addresses being correct. Some centres still did not complete assessment grids fully with candidate numbers. It is essential that this is done and that the two assessments for each candidate are put together. If centres did this, and annotated the grids so that moderators could see where credit was given for the various objectives, it would be greatly appreciated and would allow the process to run smoothly. No centres selected incorrect titles.

Overall there was an improvement in the quality of the work produced and it was very encouraging to see candidates enthusiastically take the opportunities offered. They showed initiative, imagination and independence at a high level. Once again it was also encouraging to moderate complete pieces of work, even from weaker candidates, where they had attempted all elements of the assessment.

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