

OCR Report to Centres

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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 A (J380)

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Overview

General Comments

Candidates have once again displayed some excellent geographical understanding and skills during this series and it is hoped that the comments provided in this report prove enlightening and helpful.

In the Extreme Environments Unit (A671) it was once again obvious that most foundation candidates appeared to be entered at the correct tier and the vast majority of candidates made a genuine attempt to answer all of the questions they faced. It was pleasing to note that questions relating to climate were answered quite adeptly by candidates. At higher tier those candidates that used the resources effectively, displaying confident knowledge of the places that they had studied, produced some very good and, on occasions, outstanding answers. In the best answers seen candidates used precise locational information and described features using correct geographical vocabulary.

In Unit A672, Controlled Assessment, the majority of centres chose Investigation B for Task 1, relating to the mobile phone industry while for Task 2, Investigation A, a study of how well a local retail area is served by public transport, proved most popular. The moderating team reported that centres that encouraged their candidates to be concise so immediately addressing the investigation title, proved once again to signify best practice. It is also noted that the majority of candidates integrated their analyses with their maps, images and graphs in this series, following advice offered in previous reports. This has been a particularly pleasing development during the life of this specification.

In Unit A673 the majority of foundation candidates attempted all questions. Most candidates were able to name their place and their non-UK place and an increasing number of candidates could state place-specific knowledge and display a clear understanding of 'their place' and their 'non-UK place'. However, few candidates could accurately use subject specific language in their descriptions. At higher tier many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do. However a significant number of candidates misinterpreted exam command words – specifically 'links' and 'similarities'. Level-marked questions on the paper were effective in distinguishing between the quality of candidates' responses.

In the Foundation paper for Unit A674 the Resource Booklet was generally used well and the quality of some of the longer answers showed that candidates had a genuine interest in the topic. However, a number of candidates once again misinterpreted exam command words, in particular 'explain'. At the higher tier, it was good to see answers to the level-marked questions that were wide-ranging, knowledgeable and interesting to read; each candidate generally made many different points and presented their arguments well. However, lifting sentences directly from the resource booklet without interpretation was a feature of a significant minority of the candidates' scripts. Centres are asked to remind candidates of this, whilst at the same time encouraging them to utilise data from the resource booklet to inform and support their answers.

A671/01 Extreme Environments (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

This final Extreme Environments paper in this unitised specification followed the established format, containing structured and resource-based tasks which gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding at their own level. Many were able to take this opportunity and overall performance was similar to that of recent years, with a wide range of performance from candidates who largely appeared to be correctly entered for this tier.

Answers from those candidates who were able to use geographical terminology, include specific detail and develop their ideas, particularly in those questions involving extended writing, were impressive. However, almost all candidates seemed to make a genuine attempt at answering the questions and showed some positive achievement. Most of the candidates wrote legibly and to a reasonable standard and there were very few scripts where it was impossible to decipher answers. It appeared that all candidates had enough time to complete the paper as, where sections were left blank, it was probably due to the candidate being unable to answer the question rather than not having enough time.

The following key points should help future candidates:

- Practise the different skills involved, for example the use of various types of map, photographs and other resources.
- Learn the factual information thoroughly, in order to acquire the required knowledge and understanding.
- Read the questions carefully and, if it helps, use a highlighter to make key words and exact instructions stand out.
- Practise answering questions from past papers to illustrate the importance of reading questions carefully, to ensure that answers are relevant. Teachers should share mark scheme principles with students and spend some time teaching exam technique, ensuring that candidates are familiar with the meaning of common command words used.
- Learn basic geographical vocabulary. Refer to the terms provided in the specification for guidance.

The detailed comments on questions below highlight the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) (i) The majority of candidates answered both parts of this question correctly, though some were unable to identify the Atacama Desert.
- (a) (ii) Marks varied for this question. Some candidates used the resource and identified the 'Tropic of Cancer' and 'western' as the missing words, however a lot selected the Equator, which is a common misconception at this level, however the many candidates who chose that cannot have looked too carefully at the map provided.
- (b) Generally this was well-answered with most candidates scoring at least two out of the three marks for stating simple appropriate ideas, for example 'hot' and 'arid'. Some candidates went beyond this simple level, such as contrasting day time and night time temperatures or referring to annual precipitation amounts. Those candidates who experienced a problem with this question did not seem to understand the word 'climate' and discussed other aspects of the desert environment.

- (c) (i) Almost all candidates achieved the mark.
 - (c) (ii) The majority were able to perform this skill, with the most common error being an under- estimate, 15%.
 - (d) (i) Candidates who were successful here read the question carefully and tried to apply their understanding in this unfamiliar circumstance by correctly focusing their answers on how the natural environment would challenge the riders in the Finke Desert race, rather than simply listing the challenges i.e. 'it is hot/dry' etc which they had previously stated in 1(b), for example 'the high temperatures would result in them suffering heat exhaustion', 'the dry conditions will cause them to be dehydrated', 'the sand will make it difficult to ride the bikes' etc.
 - (d) (ii) The best answers centred around the use of the Internet or other media, and identified a piece of helpful information about the environment which could be discovered by a spectator when planning a visit. Weak responses did not score because they identified resources which could help during the race, for example binoculars to watch it. This was not what the question was asking.
- 2
- (a) (i) This was very well-answered with either camel or cactus being the answer from most candidates.
 - (a) (ii) Many answers here were also impressive, with wide-ranging ideas and good attempts to develop ideas from many candidates. Such answers explained adaptations e.g. 'long roots which can reach down well underground to get water' rather than just stating the features e.g. 'long roots'. It was clear that the adaptations of plants and animals to living in desert environments were generally well known and understood.
 - (b) This question proved more problematic for many candidates whose explanations did little more than acknowledge the role of wind in sand dune formation. There were exceptions and these better candidates included meaningful diagrams and displayed their awareness of the different stages of dune formation, with an emphasis on how sand deposition was originally encouraged by an object, such as a rock or animal carcass.
- 3
- (a) (i) The majority of answers given were acceptable, though Arctic was not considered specific enough.
 - (a) (ii) Those candidates who understood how to describe a location scored well, providing their answers were precise and used geographical terminology rather than words like 'below', 'above', 'left' or 'right'. Candidates who were not familiar with the word 'location' obviously had problems as they wrote about other irrelevant features of their named extreme environment, such as climate, vegetation or relief.
 - (b) (i) The majority of candidates was successful here as they were able to describe elements of the climate which made it extreme. Typically even weaker candidates remembered that the climate was cold in their chosen area, and many elaborated using statistics. There were also good references to precipitation, obviously those references being dependent on the choice of polar or mountain area, as some are arid whilst others have high rainfall. A significant minority of candidates strayed into irrelevant ideas such as 'thin air' and 'lack of oxygen' which were not accepted as climatic elements.

- (b) (ii)** Most candidates were able to identify an appropriate resource by referring to the type of resource or its title, seldom were both seen in answers. Nevertheless this enabled candidates to progress into level 2, typically by describing what it had told them about their chosen extreme environment, rather than explaining how it helped them to understand that environment. The latter element was achieved by those candidates who referred, for example, to the value of visual stimuli or the spoken word, or possibly how their understanding had been enhanced as a result of being engrossed in a film or documentary, making it seem much more 'real' than any other form of learning.
- 4 (a) (i)** Candidates described a wide range of uses of their chosen extreme environment, though some needed a little more elaboration e.g. 'living there'. Tourism, extreme sports and scientific research were common acceptable answers, valid for whatever type of extreme environment was chosen.
- (a) (ii)** Many candidates often wrote a single word as an idea rather than identifying a difficulty as such e.g. 'food' rather than 'it is not easy to grow food'. Nevertheless most candidates were able to score at least one mark per difficulty by explaining how it is overcome. In order to score full marks candidates had to make it clear what the difficulty was and give a suggestion as to how people overcome it. Generally the best answers were related to difficulties concerned with cold temperatures – Mountains and Polar – and the lack of oxygen which causes difficulty breathing (Mountain) but there were many other correct ideas, depending on the extreme environment chosen.
- (b) (i)/(ii)** Success in these final two sections largely depended upon an appropriate choice of a change. Those who selected 'global warming which melts the ice' for example, and then followed this up with suitable impacts upon people and wildlife, such as 'flooding' and 'loss of habitat and species extinction' scored highly. Similarly a choice of an 'increase in tourism' offered plenty of scope to explain effects on people and environment. Some candidates seemed to struggle with the concept of 'change', instead writing about difficulties which have always been posed by their chosen extreme environment, such as the low temperatures, steep slopes or 24 hours of darkness in the winter months. These answers were clearly irrelevant – more suitable as answers to 4(a)(ii) and therefore not credited.

A671/02 Extreme Environments (Higher Tier)

General Comments

Many candidates used their knowledge, understanding and skills appropriately to respond to the questions on deserts and their chosen extreme environment. The best answers on deserts, polar and mountain environments used the resources well, addressed the specific questions asked, considered all aspects of the questions in a relevant way, and were supported with analysis, evaluation and place specific detail as appropriate.

The paper produced a wide range of marks. Whilst some candidates might have been better able to cope with the demands of the foundation tier, in most cases there was plenty of evidence of positive achievement and, at the top end, some candidates showed an outstanding grasp of the content tested, along with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of those extreme environments studied, including case studies. Good practice was demonstrated by those candidates' whose answers were focused, and fluently written, showing good development of ideas in the longer answers and using specialist terms and fully-labelled diagrams where appropriate. Weak responses included misinterpretation of questions, an inability to respond to the command words and/or key words, and poorly focused answers which lacked both detail and precision.

There did not appear to be any time-management issues as most candidates were able to complete the whole paper, most attempting to answer each question and using their time effectively with varying degrees of success.

Key messages:

- Locational information needs to be precise and described using geographical vocabulary whenever possible.
- Candidates need to be able to describe a distribution rather than focusing on location of, for example, an individual desert.
- Candidates need to know the causes of extreme climates and explain them with precision, rather than giving vague responses which lack key terms.
- Candidates should be able to develop answers, particularly where extended writing is required.
- Choice of specific study areas is crucial; the more precise the named region the better it is for candidates to write with relevance and precision. Candidates need to be aware that they should only write about one specific area, if that is what the question asks, rather than writing about several examples or writing in generic terms.
- Study the resources carefully, using appropriate facts and statistics to back up an answer and interpret them by making appropriate comments.
- Detailed knowledge of case studies allows candidates to include place-specific detail – this varies immensely between candidates; from some it is excellent but from others it is totally absent.
- Be able to evaluate if asked to do so and ensure the meanings of all command words are known – ensure that the question is read properly so that all elements are included in answers.
- Candidates must follow through a question and its linked parts as the question progresses.

The detailed comments on questions below highlight the strengths and weaknesses of candidates. Careful consideration of these comments and the advice therein should be invaluable in preparing candidates for future examinations.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Many candidates were able to score one or two marks here for identifying that deserts were close to the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and/or for giving an appropriate latitude reference. Very few identified that they were on the west or centre of land masses or that they were found in 5 of the 7 continents. Unacceptable answers tended to lack precision, for example 'between the tropics', or were inaccurate such as 'on the Equator'. Some candidates are still not as well-prepared as they should be for describing a distribution, using terms like 'above and below the Equator' or writing about the location of individual deserts.
- (b) This was generally well-answered and many candidates were able to achieve 3 marks.
- (c) This question required candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of desert climates to an unfamiliar situation and perceptive candidates were able to explain the significance of the distance from the sea, the rain shadow effect of the Great Dividing Range and the high pressure air over the Tropic of Capricorn. Such answers were very impressive, however others tended to be vague and lack precision.
- (d) The quality of candidates' responses hinged on their understanding of a 'resource' through which they could gain information which would be useful when planning the visit. Weak responses did not score because they identified physical resources which could help with survival like camels or water. Some did not identify 'another' resource' and sought to use Fig. 3. The best answers centred around the use of the Internet or other media, and identified a range of helpful information about the environment which could be gleaned from them. Some candidates identified a suitable resource but only described how it could be useful only in the vaguest of terms e.g. 'to find out about the environment' rather than being specific about how it would be useful to prepare them for a successful trip to this desert environment.
- 2 (a) Examples were seen of all desert landforms listed in the specification however rock pedestals and sand dunes were the most common. There were many very good answers, especially where rock pedestals were the selected landform. Those who chose sand dunes rarely scored more than 2 marks as they were not able to develop the description with details about gradient differences between the windward and leeward slopes or dimensions and instead began to explain their formation, a common error made by many candidates irrespective of their choice of landform. Whilst marks were not lost for this, some candidates explained instead of writing detailed descriptions.
- (b) There were some excellent answers about the formation of rock pedestals which went beyond simple wind abrasion and explained sand transportation processes together with insolation weathering of the upper part of the feature. Whilst there were a few notable exceptions, explanations of the formation of sand dunes, mesa, buttes, wadis etc tended to struggle for a convincing and detailed explanation. Whatever their choice of landform, most candidates drew a labelled diagram which aided their written response, although from some this was simple and did little more than show features of the landform rather than explaining processes which formed it. Many candidates were able to enter level 2 as they developed ideas and linked processes with landform development, and those answers with a fully-annotated diagram with convincing links between the landform and processes achieved level 3.

- 3 (a) (i)** Few answers scored both marks, regardless of which type of environment was chosen however most candidates scored at least one mark for plate boundaries (Mountains) and near the North and South Poles (Polar). Few referred to the types of boundary associated with mountain ranges and few gave any valid latitude references for polar regions. Many gave the latitude for the Arctic and Antarctic Circles, but this needed to go further and show an understanding that the region stretched from there to 90 degrees North and South. As in Q1 (a) some candidates used inappropriate non-geographical terms or wrote about the location of individual mountains or polar areas.
- (a) (ii)** The scale of the map made it difficult for candidates to be completely accurate, however most candidates who had an example of a specific polar or mountain area could name it and locate it within the tolerance allowed. Common choices were the Andes and Antarctica, although more precise locations such as the Altiplano and Svalbard were seen. Mountains were generally better named and located than polar regions, as some candidates simply labelled the Arctic rather than naming a specific area like Alaska.
- (b) (i)** This was a good differentiator between candidates whose answers tended to give generalised ideas which could fit any mountain or polar region e.g. tourists go to see the spectacular scenery, and those who were able to develop their ideas with specific details about crops grown e.g. quinoa in the Andes, or that tourists want to see penguins in their natural habitat in the Antarctic, or that scientists study climate change through taking ice cores etc. Answers were capped at level 1 if candidates had not identified a specific area of polar or mountain environment, however generic information was credited.
- (b) (ii)** Where the candidates had read the question carefully there were some excellent responses identifying specific dangers within the chosen environment and how they were overcome by different groups of people. There were some good ideas about how to overcome physical and climatic problems and some good development seen from many candidates. Some lengthy answers only identified the risks rather than answering the question and only a minority went into level 3, as many did not evaluate.
- 4 (a)** It was possible to select any change and global warming and increasing tourism were the most popular choices. Answers about the impacts of global warming on both polar and mountain environments tended to score well although candidates generally described the impacts on people more effectively than on the natural environment. As always the quality of the response, and the level awarded, depended on the extent to which points had been developed (level 2) and whether the answer had an appropriate balance between people and environment, and related specifically to the chosen polar or mountain area rather than being generic (level 3).
- (b)** The best answers were those that focused on a very specific impact – for example, avalanches, and then went on to give clearly identifiable solutions such as controlled explosions, avalanche shelters etc. There were relatively few good answers to this question and little development of ideas. Many were linked to the impacts of the greenhouse effect but were short on practical solutions. Similarly the idea of restricting tourist numbers to either Machu Picchu or the Antarctic often lacked credible specific measures to achieve this. Significant numbers explained why it is necessary to reduce the chosen impact, which is not what the question asked for.

A672 You as a Global Citizen – the impact of our decisions (Controlled Assessment)

General Comments

For Task 1, the majority of centres chose either Investigation B, relating to the mobile phone industry and its impacts on different groups of people or Investigation A, with the focus on the positive or negative impacts that supermarket purchases have on different groups of people. The investigations in Task 2 attracted a more even entry profile with Investigation A, a study of how well a local retail area is served by public transport, proving most popular.

The candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the investigation titles and the submitted marks spanned the full mark range. Candidates have again visited some interesting fieldwork locations and utilised some effective fieldwork skills; this was seen more often across both investigations this year. It was very pleasing to see many centres once again contextualising the tasks so that they became more relevant to the candidates' own experiences, although very few centres once again moved too far away from the published titles. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their knowledge and understanding relating to the set tasks, but should not lose the focus of the investigation; candidates that did, displayed increasing confusion as their investigation progressed, and tended to lose focus in their concluding statements. It is advisable for candidates to use the investigation title as a heading at the beginning of their work, and they should also be encouraged to return to the title at the end when drawing their conclusions.

In Task 1A many candidates chose to focus their work on supermarket purchases. They utilised questionnaires and surveys which allowed many candidates the opportunity to display their flair for research, although many candidates did not focus on positive or negative impacts, preferring to discuss both. Task 1B was a very popular investigation title, and produced some engaging and thought-provoking geography. Many candidates offered very structured investigations, many utilising a wide research base.

The better candidates offered some effective in-depth analysis of the impacts of named groups, with a sizeable minority continuing by offering a very personal perspective about how their research may influence their own spending habits. Additionally, many of the weaker work seen tended to rely heavily upon secondary resources, with little personalisation of the investigation evident. While the use of such a resource is useful, candidates should always be encouraged to go beyond what is written by developing or processing the information in some way. Written reports proved popular for this assessment piece; they all gave candidates the opportunity to access the full mark range.

Tasks 2A and 2C proved very popular and gave candidates many opportunities to plan and execute some very effective primary data collection. Some posters were seen as were written reports; in both cases, the best work seen contained some carefully chosen photographs which were annotated with detailed and thoughtful analytical comments. A number of candidates used their own photographs, which helped to personalise the investigation for them even more. Some imaginative data was collected, such as from interviews with shop owners and shoppers, allowing candidates to reflect on the issue from a number of different perspectives. Moderators learned a lot about public transport issues in a range of locations within England and, in the better work seen, candidates had been encouraged to research fully and develop a clear sequence to their enquiry. They clearly understood the reasons for undertaking the fieldwork; they became absorbed in their work and were able to use the data collected in a selective and informed manner. Once again Westfield Shopping Centre proved a popular fieldwork focus, as did Birmingham's Bull Ring, Meadowhall in Sheffield, Liverpool and Cabot Circus in Bristol. These and other excellent locations illustrate the possibilities available in using the same fieldwork locations each year, but asking different questions of it.

Centres that encouraged their candidates to prepare concise pieces of work and immediately address the investigation title, proved once again to signify best practice. Those candidates who had clearly researched and decided upon a clear, logical and sequenced line of investigation in the research phase were able to immediately focus their work when beginning the final analytical and evaluative part of their work. Candidates who included a clear bibliography in their investigations also seemed to produce work that was concise, more relevant and more closely focused on the investigation title.

It must be noted once again that the work from a minority of centres tended to display little originality and proved very formulaic to read and moderate. This disadvantages the candidates as they are unable to easily display the knowledge, skills and understanding that allow sustained access to marks at the higher end of the mark scheme. Centres that maximised their use of local areas, and fieldwork opportunities within them, seemed to really engage candidates and helped them to display their deep understanding of local geography. Much effective fieldwork evidence was seen, with an increasing number of centres adopting fieldwork for both investigations; this is to be commended. Also, the questions posed in some candidate questionnaires proved a little vague, and were not always tied closely enough to the investigation title. Candidates should be encouraged to pilot their questionnaires to establish the extent to which the questions posed are both relevant and helpful to their investigations.

All centres should again remind candidates of the need to include a wide range of data presentation techniques; at GCSE level the use of bar or pie charts alone is not sufficient. It is hoped that, despite the regulatory constraints, candidates are still encouraged to develop their expertise in this area, having practised a range of skills throughout their GCSE course. It is once again very pleasing to report that a significantly greater proportion of candidates integrated their analysis with their maps, images and graphs in this series. This has undoubtedly enabled candidates to analyse more effectively, and it has been very heartening to see centres encourage their candidates to follow the advice given in these annual reports.

The moderating team commented once again on the quality of the geography seen from many of the candidates. With the excellent support of their teachers, candidates clearly enjoyed completing their investigations and produced some effectively planned and very engaging pieces of work.

A673/01 Similarities and Differences (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The level of challenge was appropriate for foundation candidates and very few questions received 'NR' annotation. Most candidates were able to name their place and their non-UK place and many candidates could state place-specific knowledge particularly in relation to the climate of their non-UK location. Others wrote generic statements about landscape and climate which could relate to anywhere in the world. Many candidates were successful at interpreting the resources provided and were able to use the evidence given to their advantage however this was not the case for all candidates and it should be an on-going focus for centres to develop candidates' skills. Literacy skills regarding grammar and spelling varied. Few candidates could accurately use subject-specific language – centres must continue to develop candidates' abilities to describe both locations using subject specific language and accurate climate data.

Many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do and all candidates appeared to have adequate time and completed the paper. A significant number of candidates misinterpreted exam command words - specifically 'links' and 'differences' and many candidates wrote a generic response to 'an issue that has affected your place'. It was positive to read candidates responses where they had a clear understanding of 'their place' and their 'non-UK place'. Many candidates were clearly able to describe how they would feel about living in their 'non-UK place' – most candidates included positive and negative feelings in their response.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) (i) Most candidates correctly named a feature from the map linked to tourism and achieved full marks. Some candidates stated general features such as 'countryside' or 'woods' and no credit was given.
- (a) (ii) Almost all candidates correctly named the River Derwent.
- (a) (iii) Most candidates stated the proximity of the River Derwent. Some candidates identified the location of the settlement on flat land with drainage off the surrounding hills. Candidates stating 'heavy rainfall' or 'no flood defences' gained no credit.
- (b) A significant number of candidates wrote about problems created by the flooded roads making it difficult to access school or work. Many candidates developed their responses by outlining their concerns about the knock-on effect this would have on children's education. Some candidates wrote about loss of income for different named groups of people.
- (c) (i) Many candidates were able to successfully locate their place in the UK. Most candidates used compass points in relation to other settlements or referenced the county 'their place' was in.
- (c) (ii) The issues chosen by candidates varied widely from generic UK issues such as the recession/unemployment/riots/migration to specific local issues which centres had clearly focused on e.g. the building of a new road/housing estate. Candidates who wrote specifically about a named local issue achieved 2 marks.

- (c) (iii) This question differentiated between candidates. Most candidates achieved at level 1 or level 2. Higher achieving candidates were able to present a balance of positive and negative viewpoints on the issue including some place-specific detail. Candidates expressed views which were the result of personal experience and/or views expressed by people in their homes and communities. Some candidates were able to describe their feelings on the issue but they did not include any place-specific detail.
- 2 (a) (i) Many candidates could correctly locate their 'non-UK place'. There was a significant number of candidates who could only identify the country their non-UK place was located in.
- (a) (ii) 'Landscape' was less better described than 'Climate'. Some candidates used good geographical terminology such as plateau, natural harbour or coastal. Many candidates referred to the urban landscape of Mumbai which was creditworthy. Climate descriptions were largely accurate using terminology such as tropical, monsoon or seasonal. Fewer candidates were able to quote accurate climate statistics. Some candidates used simplistic terms such as hot, wet, dry etc.
- (b) Many candidates were able to describe how they would feel living in their non-UK place. Higher level responses developed their viewpoint with place-specific detail backed up by sound reasoning. Many candidates wrote about the two faces of Mumbai accurately comparing what it would be like to live in the richer areas as opposed to the Dharavi slums. Some candidates focused only on how they felt about slum dwellings in general with little reference to any place-specific detail. Most candidates did attempt to describe positive and negative views on their non-UK place.
- 3 (a) Most candidates scored well on this question and made good use of the resource provided. Some candidates did not make comparative statements or misread data from the resource.
- (b) The question directed candidates to outline 'differences' between their two locations. Many candidates correctly selected two themes such as levels of development and climate and described the detail of the two locations, often quoting statistics or place-specific detail. Some candidates achieved 2 marks for correctly stating a difference with little development e.g. Mumbai is coastal, Birmingham is inland.
- (c) Well-answered by most candidates. Candidates correctly identified from the resource two ways the government helped Pakistan.
- (d) (i) Most candidates achieved 1 or 2 marks on this question. Some candidates misread the command words in the question and wrote about 'similarities' which the two locations shared. Credit was given for candidates describing two links between the locations. Many candidates were able to identify possible links using the prompt words in Fig. 5 but candidates were unable to develop their descriptions of the links choosing instead to write about reasons for those links. Candidates achieving well on this question identified specific links such as import and export of products and developed their description by naming specific companies and products such as Tata steel or Primark clothing.
- (d) (ii) Most candidates wrote about immigration in the UK and its potential effect on the availability of jobs for current UK residents. There was little development of responses, with most candidates achieving 1 mark.

- (d) (iii)** Most candidates focused on the impact of migration on the people leaving to come to the UK, not the impact of migration of those in the communities left behind. The question asks for the impact on the people in your non-UK location. There was repetition of responses between 3(d)(i), 3(d)(ii) and 3(d)(iii) from many candidates.
- (e)** Many candidates could describe some changes that may take place in the future in their non-UK location. Some candidates wrote about their UK location and therefore no credit was given. Some candidates wrote about changes which had already happened and were credited at level 2. Higher achieving candidates used their geographical knowledge to produce some predictions about changes which may occur to development indicators such as life expectancy or literacy rates. Many candidates wrote in detail about the redevelopment programme for the Dharavi slums in Mumbai and the development of the Mumbai – Delhi transport corridor.

Most candidates scored 0 or 1 on SPG. Many candidates were limited in their ability to write in full sentences using capital letters and basic punctuation accurately. Spelling was generally stronger than grammar and punctuation. Some candidates were able to use subject-specific language accurately.

A673/02 Similarities and Differences (Higher Tier)

General Comments

The level of challenge was deemed appropriate for higher candidates and very few questions received 'NR' annotation. Many candidates took time to consider what the questions were requiring them to do and all candidates appeared to have adequate time and completed the paper; a significant number of candidates extended their writing onto the additional pages.

Higher achieving candidates demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of 'your place' and 'non-UK place'; they wrote in place-specific detail and were able to compare similarities and links between the two locations. Many candidates could describe place-specific knowledge in relation to the landscape and climate of their non-UK location and some could explain the extent to which these physical features affected the lives of people living there. Other candidates wrote generic statements about landscape and climate which could relate to anywhere in the world.

Many candidates were successful at interpreting the resources provided and were able to use the evidence given to their advantage however this was not the case for all candidates and it should be an on-going focus for centres to develop candidates' skills particularly in relation to map skills. Literacy skills regarding grammar and spelling varied. Some candidates could accurately use subject-specific language; however centres must continue to develop candidates' abilities to describe both locations using subject-specific language and accurate climate data.

Levelled questions on the paper were effective in distinguishing between the quality of responses. It was positive to read candidates responses where they had a clear understanding of 'their place' and their 'non-UK place'. Many candidates were clearly able to describe how their communities had been affected by an issue and, whilst many candidates were able to write effectively about other people's views, all too often these were general groups of people not specific named groups. A significant number of candidates misinterpreted exam command words – specifically 'links' and 'similarities'- and many candidates selected a generic issue in response to 'an issue that has recently affected your place'.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most candidates correctly named two features from the map linked to tourism and achieved full marks. Some candidates stated general features such as 'countryside', 'woods' or 'other tourist feature' and gained no credit.
- (b) (i) Many candidates were not able to state a compass direction. Common responses included 'bird's eye view' or 'downward'. In developing map skills centres should include comparison work of a map and a photograph.
- (b) (ii) Most candidates wrote about the proximity to the River Derwent. Some candidates identified other features from the map such as the drainage basin and low-lying, flat land as the site of the settlement.
- (c) Many candidates wrote about the economic problem created by the flooded hotel and the subsequent repairs and loss of business. Some candidates focused their response by outlining the impact the potential for flood might have on the reputation of Cockermouth. Some candidates wrote about loss of income for a different named group of people. Candidates who had not read the question carefully wrote about more than one economic impact; only the first impact was credited.

- (d)** This question was answered competently in the vast majority of cases, achieving level 2. The issues chosen by candidates varied widely from generic UK issues such as the recession/unemployment/migration to specific local issues which centres had clearly focussed on. Candidates' descriptions of the issues were generally clear although person-specific impacts often lacked detail. Many of the better answers focused on more place-specific issues such as HS2 or the impact of a new shopping/housing development in their local area. Many candidates described the issue in brief rather than detailed terms, preferring to move rapidly onto the two affected groups. Some candidates clearly identified groups but in a small number of cases, candidates identified 'tourists' as a group, thereby losing valuable marks. Many candidates did not provide place-specific detail, preferring to explain impacts in broad terms e.g. 'elderly people would be afraid to go out of their homes because of the increase in crime so would consider moving away from the area.'
- (e)** Most candidates identified a different issue and spent time describing the issue, which was not asked for. Many candidates made limited reference to explaining how the issue affects you and people you know. Many responses to this question focused in on the links between immigration and the loss of jobs, across many parts of the UK. Higher achieving candidates were able to present a balance of positive and negative viewpoints on the impacts of the issue including some place-specific detail.
- 2 (a)** Many candidates had studied Mumbai as their non-UK location. Some candidates used good geographical terminology such as plateau, natural harbour or coastal to describe the landscape. Many candidates also referred to the urban landscape of Mumbai which was creditworthy. Climate descriptions were largely accurate using terminology such as tropical, monsoon or seasonal. Many candidates were able to quote accurate climate statistics. Key temperature and precipitation data had been learned effectively. Some candidates wrote effectively about the landscape and climate of Mediterranean locations.
- (b)** Many candidates were more able to describe how the climate rather than the landscape affected local residents in their non-UK place. Higher level responses made a judgement about the extent to which residents' lives were affected; candidates developed their viewpoint with place-specific detail backed up by sound reasoning. Many candidates wrote about the impact of the climate in the Dharavi slums. Some candidates focused only on describing life in a slum dwelling in general with little reference to any place-specific detail. Some candidates wrote about the effects of the climate on tourists in their non-UK location and no credit was given. Some candidates wrote about rice farming in Mumbai city rather than the wider Maharashtra state and so no credit was given.
- 3 (a)** Many candidates wrote about two differences in the 'effects' of the flooding not the 'responses' to the flooding. Some candidates gave well-structured responses which outlined a different response with developed reasoning for that difference. Other candidates compared what happened on a specific day rather than looking for differences in response and some made reference to either Cockermonth or Pakistan without explicitly stating the difference.
- (b)** The question directed candidates to outline two 'similarities' between their UK and non-UK locations. Many candidates were awarded full marks; they used place-specific details well, showing their breadth of knowledge of their respective places. Some candidates identified simplistic similarities starting their responses with 'both have...' and were awarded 2 marks.
- (c)** Well-answered by most candidates. Candidates correctly identified from the resource links that had been created between the UK and Pakistan.

- (d)** A wide range of quality in the level of responses to this question. Candidates who wrote more concise responses which were place-specific did best as they identified the links more clearly. There were many candidates who identified appropriate Mumbai links with the UK and some really good answers from candidates who wrote about Chengdu and Sheffield with steel industry/football team links. Those candidates who described general links about trade, fashion and food were awarded level 1. Candidates found evaluating the strength of all the links challenging, typically successfully evaluating the first link only. The best responses referred to either school linkages (twinned school programmes) or their own personal experiences (an interest in, for example, cricket), suggesting that links were made more effectively if they were personalised. Some candidates misread the command words in the question and wrote about 'similarities' which the two locations shared.
- (e)** Many candidates responses to this question gave a detailed description of the change rather than an explanation of why the change might happen. Many candidates wrote in detail about the redevelopment programme for the Dharavi slums in Mumbai. Few candidates then proceeded to identify reasons behind the redevelopment including further place-specific detail e.g. Vision Mumbai. Candidates did detail the impacts of the identified change effectively, gaining good marks from this question. Some candidates wrote about more than one change, credit was only given for the first change described.

Most candidates scored 1 or 2 on SPG. Many candidates were able to write in full sentences using capital letters and basic punctuation accurately. Spelling was generally stronger than grammar and punctuation. Some candidates were able to use subject- specific language accurately.

A674/01 Issues in our Fast Changing World (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The paper was considered appropriate for foundation tier candidates as demonstrated by the wide range of marks suggesting that the questions provided good differentiation between candidates. Almost all candidates made a genuine attempt at answering all of the questions showing that they engaged with the questions. There were also very few questions left blank indicating that candidates had enough time to complete the exam. The Resource Booklet was generally used well and the quality of some of the longer answers showed that candidates had a genuine interest in the topic and had a good understanding of the way the information was presented.

Most candidates were correctly entered for this tier. Only a small minority wrote answers showing greater sophistication and understanding, suggesting that they would have benefited from entering the higher tier.

The following points will provide areas for centres to work on in future:

- Ensure that students know their command words, especially 'explain'.
- Be clear about the difference between Human and Physical impacts.
- Try and go beyond a simple statement and consider the implications of an impact.
- Ensure CO₂ is written correctly; CO² was far too common.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) (i) This question was well-answered and very few candidates did not get full marks.
- (a) (ii) The best answers were specific outlining which actions maybe leading to an increase in the amount of greenhouse gases. Weaker answers were either non-specific using phrases such as "human activity" or did not develop the point they were making.
- (b) (i) Most candidates were able to pick out statement 1, 4 and 5 as the correct answer. Candidates with a clear understanding of the process that leads to climate change recognised that the arrow on the left was showing re-radiated heat being reflected by the atmosphere. Weaker answers tended to swap response 5 and 1.
- (b) (ii) The key word from this question was "change" and the candidates that recognised this were able to comment on the increase in greenhouses gases. Where candidates identified this change correctly, they were able to develop their statement and link it accurately to global warming. There was some confusion where candidates brought in some of the incorrect ideas from 1(b)(i) such as 'holes in the atmosphere' or incorrect ideas such as the ozone layer.

- 2**
- (a)** This question was well-answered and very few candidates did not get full marks.
 - (b)** The best candidates were able to go beyond the Resource Booklet using the ideas as a basis for more complex answers. The best answers were based on sunspot activities and the role of volcanic gases. Candidates were able to link the ideas to either warmer or cooling of the atmosphere rather than vague phrases. Changes in the Earth's orbit were generally poorly understood as were the differing effects of volcanic gases and ash which were frequently inter-linked. The role of the ozone layer was another inaccurate answer that was used frequently.
 - (c)** This question was well-answered and most candidates gained full marks.
 - (d)**
 - (i)** Candidates generally answered this question well using the Resource Booklet. Too many candidates confused physical and human impacts with weaker candidates not understanding the key words and some stronger candidates bringing in human elements as an extension of their answer.
 - (ii)** There were a large number of level 2 answers where candidates were able to use the Resource Booklet to identify the impacts of global warming and give basic development of the point that they had made and then stopped. The most common idea was to describe the impact of flooding and the impact on people's houses. Better candidates were then able to further develop the point and highlight further implications such as a rise in the cost of insurance due to flooding. Most candidates were able to follow the rubric and stick to two discrete impacts but some tried to combine their answers or repeating ideas for coastal flooding and river flooding.
- 3**
- (a)**
 - (i)** This question was generally well-answered and candidates knew the difference between adapt and mitigate. There was some misunderstanding of the rubric with a number of candidates repeating the example provided for them and some deciding to use one of the boxes as a space for an explanation.
 - (ii)** The best responses were able to provide a more complex idea of why each idea might be useful moving beyond simple points, such as less use of heating or less cars on the road, and linking them directly to the change in the amount of greenhouse gases that might be produced. The need to do this for both answers meant that full marks were rare and there was a wide differentiation of marks.
 - (b)** This question was well-answered and most candidates gained full marks.
 - (c)** There was a wide variety of answers to this question and it showed a good level of differentiation. Answers varied from the basic description of the problems faced by the fishermen in Lake Victoria to discussions of the relative roles of men and women, the empowerment of women, impact on families and on the wider economy of Kenya. The majority of the answers were limited to the gain/loss of jobs or money with fewer making more complex points. There was a lot of lifting of material from the Resource Booklet without any interpretation of the information; this does not gain credit.

A674/02 Issues in our Fast Changing World (Higher Tier)

General Comments

The level of difficulty was appropriate for higher tier candidates, many of them understanding the requirements of the questions, making good use of the resources, and showing an appropriate knowledge of the issues and concepts being tested. This paper contained questions of an open nature giving candidates scope to use their skills in using and interpreting a Resource Booklet and the response to this was a series of scripts that showed the questions engaged the candidates well and most presented well-structured answers, often with sufficient detail or developed points for higher credit. Candidates appear to have studied the Resource Booklet effectively in preparation for the exam as it was clear that the candidates understood what the resources showed and were able to write in detail about the implications of those resources.

In the longer level-marked questions, it was good to see answers from the candidates that were wide-ranging, knowledgeable and interesting to read with each candidate generally making many different points and presenting their arguments well. It was clear to see in some of the best and most detailed answers that candidates took time to construct an outline plan of the answer before writing anything down.

The following points will provide areas for centres to work on in future:

- Ensuring that students know their command words especially 'explain'.
- Fully developed paragraphs score more highly than a longer "list" of 5–6 key ideas each one sentence long.
- Copying sentences directly from the resource booklet will not score highly without interpretation, explaining what the information is trying to say.
- Using data from the Resource Booklet to answer the question especially when it is specified in the question.
- Ensuring CO₂ is written correctly. CO² was far too common.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) (i) A generally well-answered question where candidates identified the correct information from the Resource Booklet and were able to interpret the information accurately. Not achieving full marks was usually due to not following the command word.
- (a) (ii) Candidates that focused on the idea of an increase or continuation in the level of carbon dioxide production and the effect that it had scored full marks. Weaker answers tended to be descriptive in nature or be very general using phrases like 'an increase in human activity' without being specific.
- (b) (i) The best answers were those that were able to go beyond the Resource Booklet and increase the level of detail of description that was provided such as exemplifying the gases involved in the processes. A lot of the candidates were limited to two marks as they used the Resource Booklet to identify the idea of reflection/re-radiation and trapping but did not extend the answer beyond those two ideas. There was still a lot of confusion in the understanding of climate change with ideas concerning the role of the ozone layer and other unhelpful phrases such as 'thickening the atmosphere' obscuring the meaning that the candidate was trying to convey.

- (b) (ii)** Responses from candidates that showed a specific understanding of the role of human beings scored highly in this question. Poorer responses were either vague, often just repeating the phrase ‘increased human activity’ or did not fully link their response to the effect on the climate or the role of greenhouse gases.
- 2 (a)** Most students were able to identify information from the timeline and many provided a short conclusion as to why this information was seen to confirm that the IPCC was correct. The main issues seemed to be when candidates made sweeping generalisations that could not be supported by the evidence such as, ‘the timeline showed that the every year was warmer than the last’.
- (b)** Most of the candidates followed the instruction to ‘explain in your own words’ which allowed marks to be awarded, but in many cases they only marginally did so. Moving beyond what was supplied by the Resource Booklet and interpreting the information with relation to how the climate might change was one way to achieve high marks in this question. Many candidates successfully negotiated the challenge to explain the opposite effects on climate of different volcanic ejected matter: ash/sulphur dioxide (cooling), and carbon dioxide (warming). Some candidates provided examples of specific case studies to highlight the point they were making and, while this was effective, it was not necessary to achieve full marks.
- (c)** This question asked candidates to use two resources in combination and showed some good examples of analytical skills. The best answers used a structured and logical approach identifying the point that was being made, such as a larger population, and then used evidence from both resources to back up that point using contrasting countries. A number of candidates did not use data as the question asked so were limited to two marks whilst other candidates declared that Resource 6 showed the same order as Resource 5 and did not consider the size of the emissions per person.
- (d)** Most answers were balanced between the two types of impact although generally the stronger arguments were presented for the human aspect. Most candidates gave some limited description of the impacts but quickly moved on to explain their significance in some detail, so many answers received mid- to high-level marks. Some ideas seemed easier to explain for candidates and achieve the higher marks, for example, how coastal erosion affects the natural environment was a difficult example for candidates to use. Some candidates’ natural environment arguments incorporated human elements, such as crop yields, and gained no credit. A small minority of candidates presented more than one impact for each section – in each case the first stated was assessed and any subsequent impact(s) were not considered. It is important that candidates adhere to command words in questions.
- 3 (a) (i)/(ii)** Generally well-answered with candidates clearly understanding what ‘adapt’ and ‘mitigate’ are. The best answers were those that clearly linked the method to the way that it adapts to or mitigates climate change rather than describing what the technique was.
- (a) (iii)** Two marks were achieved by most candidates who were able to identify that MEDCs would have money available and then provided an example of what the money could be spent on. The other two marks were harder to achieve. A majority of candidates re-stated the same points but in reverse and this was only credited once. The idea that LEDCs have additional challenges to face was not mentioned in many responses.

- (b)** The candidates had a clear understanding of what was happening on Lake Victoria and there were some very good answers that took in ideas such as gender equality or the role of education in alleviating poverty. However, the majority of candidates did not demonstrate particularly clear understanding of the effect of this water weed on the local people. The detail in the explanations was often very basic and did not go beyond the ideas of gaining or losing money. There was a large amount of material copied directly from the Resource Booklet with little or no interpretation, especially on the section concerned with ‘opportunities’.
- (c)** A very open question and the candidates’ answers were wide-ranging, knowledgeable and interesting to read. The best candidates generally made 1 or 2 points in detail rather than providing a long list of briefly expressed points. Low level answers, generally, only described difficult problems rather than considered why they are difficult to deal with. The highest level answers were often characterised by the inclusion of relevant references to a number of Resources from the Booklet providing evidence for the point that they are trying to make. Most of the candidates presented their material objectively and only a few allowed a personal, subjective opinion or ‘rant’ on what the world should do to intrude.

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