

GCE

Geography

Advanced GCE **A2 H483**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H083**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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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F761 Managing Physical Environments

General Comments:

Candidate performance on this unit was very variable. Some high quality scripts were seen, in which candidates demonstrated wide-ranging knowledge and a good depth of understanding. The best scripts revealed that the candidates were able to interpret question demands fully and accurately. However, there was a significant number of weak scripts in which there was evidence of gaps in the knowledge of candidates. Difficulties with question interpretation were also seen, especially in Section B where key words in questions seemed to have been missed or ignored. One particular issue was an apparent lack of knowledge of the term “fauna” in questions 3(b) and 4(b). This term appears in the specification and so candidates should be aware of its meaning.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

1(a)(i) Many candidates were able to identify channel characteristics, such as the presence of meanders and ox-bow lakes. However, these were not always located with evidence from the map, such as accurate grid references. Irrelevant material was sometimes included which did not relate to the channel, such as features of the landscape around the river and human land uses.

1(a)(ii) Most responses to this question included mention of erosion and deposition. Some candidates developed their answers by explaining process mechanisms, such as corrosion and hydraulic action, whilst others explained why erosion occurs on the outside of meander bends and deposition on the inside. The best answers were then able to link the processes explicitly to the shaping of the channel, such as the development of ox-bow lakes from meanders.

1(b) Answers to this question were generally of high quality. Valid aspects of development such as deforestation and urbanisation were often the focus, with good links to flood risk made through processes such as interception, infiltration and surface run-off.

1(c) This question required a located example, and so if a second one was used as well, it was not credited. Common examples used were the Thames, Yangtze and Brahmaputra rivers. The focus of the question was on different land uses, and sometimes this was lacking in candidate answers. This was especially true in answers that addressed the impact of human activities on the environment. The best answers made explicit links between the management methods used and the conflicts that existed. Weaker answers tended to simply state that there were different land uses in the same basin, without making it clear how one land use was negatively impacting upon another in order for there to be a conflict. Reference to management was often rather vague. This was especially true in the use of zoning, with specific detail of the location of the different zones in the basin lacking.

2(a)(i) Many candidates were able to identify characteristics, such as the presence of bays and headlands. However, these were not always located with evidence from the map, such as accurate grid references. Irrelevant material was sometimes included, such as the presence of nature reserves and settlements.

2(a)(ii) Most responses to this question included mention of erosion and deposition. Some candidates developed their answers by explaining process mechanisms, such as corrosion and hydraulic action, whilst others explained why erosion occurs more rapidly on areas of weak rock compared to resistant rock. The best answers were then able to link the processes explicitly to the shaping of the coastline, such as the development of arches and stacks from caves.

2(b) Many candidates were able to explain the issue relating to the installation of groynes, and the consequent sediment starvation down-drift. However, many struggled to provide a sufficiently detailed second issue. References to habitat destruction and species extinction were often vaguely related to noise and pollution from machinery used in the installation of defences. A better alternative was modification of sea bed habitats caused by off-shore dredging for beach nourishment. Even here, though, details of the impact were very vague and often suggested nothing more than "destruction" and "damage".

2(c) This question required a located example, and so if a second one was used as well, it was not credited. Common examples used were the Solent, St. Lucia and Studland. The focus of the question was on different human activities, and sometimes this was lacking in candidate answers. This was especially true in answers that addressed the impact of human activities on the environment. The best answers made explicit links between the management methods used and the conflicts that existed. Weaker answers tended to simply state that there were different human activities in the same area, without making it clear how one activity was negatively impacting upon another in order for there to be a conflict. Reference to management was often rather vague. This was especially true in the use of zoning, with specific detail of the location of the different zones in the area lacking.

3(a)(i) Most candidates were able to identify changes in rate with distance, and plenty of data was used as evidence. Some recognised that changes in rate occur at different speeds. However, very few offered an overview of the pattern.

3(a)(ii) Most answers referred to potential differences in the resistance of geologies to erosion and variations in the velocity of glacier movement. Other valid reasons offered included the amount and type of debris being carried in the ice. However, relatively few answers correctly linked these reasons to specific mechanisms of erosion. Many wrongly asserted that a higher velocity would lead to more plucking, for example. Seldom were such stated links clearly or accurately explained.

3(b) The quality of answers to this question was disappointing overall, with many not seeming to know the term "fauna", hence writing instead about flora. Those with the correct focus were able to offer suitable physiological and/or behavioural adaptations, such as fur, migration and hibernation, although these were not always explicitly linked to the climate. A legitimate alternative approach would have been a more general view of how climatic difficulties result in low species diversity and low population totals.

3(c) Responses to this question were generally sound or better, with many candidates drawing upon more than one example. Locations such as Alaska, the Alps and Siberia were widely and appropriately used, although those choosing Antarctica found it difficult to make the example relevant to the question. It is expected at the top level that candidates should be able to provide evidence of jobs, earnings or tax revenues to show the gain achieved. To emphasise the short-term nature of this gain, an understanding of unsustainability and the finite nature of some resources was expected. Reference to negative social and environmental impacts of the exploitation were helpful in explaining this.

4(a)(i) Most candidates were able to identify changes in rate over time, and plenty of data was used as evidence. Some recognised that changes in rate occur at different speeds. However, very few offered an overview of the pattern.

4(a)(ii) Many candidates found reaching Level 2 in this question challenging. Most were able to suggest valid reasons such as variations in wind speed and sediment supply, but few were able to explicitly link these to the pattern shown in the figure. Explanations were often limited or lacking, with disappointingly few linking wind speed to available energy and the process of entrainment and different mechanisms of transportation.

4(b) The quality of answers to this question was disappointing overall, with many not seeming to know the term “fauna”, hence writing instead about flora. Those with the correct focus were able to offer suitable physiological and/or behavioural adaptations, such as the production of concentrated urine, large ears, migration and nocturnal habit, although these were not always explicitly linked to the climate. A legitimate alternative approach would have been a more general view of how climatic difficulties result in low species diversity and low population totals.

4(c) Responses to this question were generally sound or better, with many candidates drawing upon more than one example. Locations such as the Draa valley, Arches NP and Valley of the Kings were widely and appropriately used. It is expected at the top level that candidates should be able to provide evidence of jobs, earnings or tax revenues to show the gain achieved. To emphasise the short-term nature of this gain, an understanding of unsustainability and the finite nature of some resources was expected. Reference to negative social and environmental impacts of the exploitation were helpful in explaining this.

Section B

5 In this question, answers really needed to be focused upon the need for management of risk. Risk may relate to the likelihood of the flood event occurring, or the potential impacts that it could have. The likelihood could depend upon vulnerability factors, such as climate, topography and geology. The impacts could be social, economic and/or environmental. Evidence was required from more than one located river basin, with contrasting examples offering the best evidence of varying need. Commonly used examples were basins of Boscastle, Bangladesh and the River Thames. For high marks in AO2, explicit comments were expected in the body of the answer about how and why need varied.

Disappointingly, many responses lacked a clear focus on the precise demands of the question. Many wrote at great length about HOW the flood risk was managed, rather than explaining the NEED for management. Comments about variations in need were often lacking, with the emphasis being on variations in management strategies. The best answers had sufficient focus on variations in likelihood and impact.

6 In this question, answers really needed to be focused upon the need for management of development. Need could depend upon vulnerability factors, such as climate, topography and geology. The impacts could be social, economic and/or environmental. Evidence was required from more than one located coastline, with contrasting examples offering the best evidence of varying need. Commonly used examples were Dubai, St. Lucia, Poole Harbour and Studland. For high marks in AO2, explicit comments were expected in the body of the answer about how and why need varied.

Disappointingly, many responses lacked a clear focus on the precise demands of the question. Many wrote at great length about HOW the development was managed, rather than explaining the NEED for management. Comments about variations in need were often lacking, with the emphasis being on variations in management strategies. The best answers had sufficient focus on variations in vulnerability and impact, with useful comments made about cost-benefit relationships.

7 Answers to this question really needed to be focused on the challenges FOR economic development, whereas many responses tended to concentrate on the challenges FROM economic development. References to environmental damage caused by development could have been made more relevant with appropriate reference to the fragility of cold environment ecosystems. Challenges for development include social, economic and environmental. Most importantly, in having to overcome such challenges, additional effort, time and costs are typically incurred which reduces the benefits of development. Common examples seen included Alaska, Siberia, the Alps and Antarctica.

Good answers had the correct focus, provided evidence from contrasting locations and explicitly commented on how and why there is such a range of challenges in the body of the answer. This could be achieved by linking challenges together, such as climate and ground conditions. Good contrasts could be achieved by selecting examples with and without conflicts with indigenous populations, for instance.

8 Answers to this question really needed to be focused on the challenges FOR economic development, whereas many responses tended to concentrate on the challenges FROM economic development. References to environmental damage caused by development could have been made more relevant with appropriate reference to the fragility of hot arid/semi-arid environment ecosystems. Challenges for development include social, economic and environmental. Most importantly, in having to overcome such challenges, additional effort, time and costs are typically incurred which reduces the benefits of development. Common examples seen included the Draa Valley, Arches NP and Australia's Olympic Dam mine.

Good answers had the correct focus, provided evidence from contrasting locations and explicitly commented on how and why there is such a range challenges in the body of the answer. This could be achieved by linking challenges together, such as climate and ground conditions. Good contrasts could be achieved by selecting examples with and without conflicts with indigenous populations, for instance.

F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

General Comments

Virtually all candidates completed the paper, suggesting a high level of preparation in relation to the timing of the paper. There were very few rubric errors.

The use of the resources was not always consistent, errors in basic skills costing a significant number of candidates what might be considered fairly easy marks. The follow on question (part (ii)) was often answered effectively. This pattern suggests a basic lack of practice in relation to the use of resources while at the same time sound understanding of the key ideas being examined.

Responses to the six mark questions generally showed a good level of basic understanding and in many cases some sound development. However, a number of candidates failed to respond to the command which asked for “two” factors and went on to mention three or four factors. This often resulted in rather superficial answers and was usually self-limiting since only the first two factors identified were creditworthy.

A significant number of candidates used appropriate and well developed examples in the nine mark questions, at times to great effect. However, on questions 3(c) and 4(c), which asked for a single example, a number of candidates used multiple examples which was usually self-limiting since only the first example identified was creditworthy.

Responses to the essay questions were generally sound. They showed a good level of understanding and in many cases considerable locational detail. It was evident that the majority of candidates had been well prepared for the essay and a significant proportion of candidates drew up a clear plan which was then used to produce an effectively structured essay, often with a sound conclusion.

Two general concerns were identified from a number of scripts. Firstly, it was evident that a number of candidates did not understand some of the basic specification generic terminology. This was particularly evident in relation to, “economic”, “socio-economic” and “environmental” factors where a number of candidates drifted away from the key idea and began to introduce inappropriate observations. More specifically, terms such as “sustainable”, “conflict”, “ecotourism”, “exploitation” (in relation to energy resources) and “dereliction” were not always clearly understood. Although not a significant issue it was also apparent that a small number of candidates did not fully grasp the meaning of “pattern” (Question 1) and “variations” (Question 4). A second concern was the use of examples which were somewhat generic or not entirely appropriate. While general examples (which give ideas about the topic rather than consider the specific aspect of the topic under discussion) can give some insight into the question they often lead to answers which are rather vague or superficial and can be rather descriptive. This can be a significant factor in showing depth of understanding. The choice of example(s) often dictates the overall quality of the response. This is very noticeable at the higher mark levels.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Managing Urban Change

Question 1

(a)(i) The majority of candidates used Figure 1 effectively to describe the pattern of child poverty shown on the map. In most cases specific data was used effectively to identify particular levels of poverty or illustrate specific areas shown on the map. In most cases candidates identified a general trend of decreasing levels of child poverty with distance from the city centre. A number of candidates identified what they considered to be an anomaly in relation to the city centre and the nearby area of Tower Hamlets. A small number of candidates simply identified areas and quoted their child poverty rates with no reference to the overall pattern.

(a)(ii) Answers to this question were variable. In a number of cases candidates simply made the point that those areas with higher levels of child poverty were areas which were poor. This was something of a self-evident observation which did not really address the question. Those candidates who considered the question in relation to why some areas are more affluent than others and showed an understanding of urban deprivation generally scored high marks. In those cases candidates often brought in observations about socio-economic inequalities and how they are reflected in rates of child poverty, particularly in relation to inner city areas and more affluent suburbs. A number of candidates drifted into a more historical dialogue, in a small number of cases referencing the development of slum areas related to post war industrial decline. While this may have some basis in relation to more recent areas of deprivation it was somewhat self-limiting. A very small number of candidates either made simplistic points about areas with a high level of child poverty being largely populated by immigrant families or drifted into observations which would be more appropriate in a developing world context.

(b) The majority of candidates tended to completely ignore the idea of land use patterns and instead focus on specific land uses. Consequently, ideas about how rivers might encourage industrial development or how flood plains might discourage development and subsequently be used for recreational land uses were common. While this approach provided an opportunity to show an appreciation of the relationship between physical geography and land use it did not always fully address the question. A number of candidates used land use models as a basis for their answer. Where there were clear references to physical geography, responses often showed an impressive level of sophistication. Unfortunately this was quite rare and more often responses tended to be a largely descriptive analysis of a particular land use model where the discussion was more focused on economic factors. A small number of candidates used examples from developing countries, often very effectively. An example of this was how vulnerable slopes were used for poor quality housing or slum areas in Rio de Janeiro.

(c) The majority of candidates successfully responded to the instruction “environmentally sustainable” expressed in the question, with only a small number drifting into ideas which were clearly more economic. Responses were often differentiated by the range of ideas expressed or the example(s) used to express an understanding of the question. In many cases ideas were focused on the management of transport, with the bus system in Curitiba and “Boris bikes” being popular examples. While this provided an opportunity to show some awareness of the question it tended to be a very narrow focus which at times drifted as much into economic factors as environmental considerations. Those candidates that took a broader view and also brought into the discussion ideas about resource management, urban greening, urban farming and pollution control gave themselves a much better opportunity to show an understanding of “environmental sustainability”, which was a clear trigger towards a Level 3 answer.

Managing Rural Change

Question 2

(a)(i) The majority of candidates used Figure 2 effectively to describe the pattern of child poverty shown on the map. In most cases specific data was used effectively to identify particular levels of poverty or illustrate specific areas shown on the map. In most cases candidates identified a general trend of increasing levels of child poverty with distance from the coast. A small number of candidates simply identified areas and quoted their child poverty rates with no reference to the overall pattern.

(a)(ii) A number of candidates found this question quite challenging, often drifting into ideas which might be more appropriate in relation to urban areas. The relationship between rural and urban areas was not always clearly expressed in relation to the question. Those candidates who did express this idea effectively, considering that access to urban areas might provide opportunities which in turn might reduce rates of rural poverty, often produced thoughtful responses. In general terms responses tended to focus on the idea of how any type of opportunity might reduce rural poverty, or how the lack of opportunity might create rural poverty. In this context, the more popular ideas expressed included points about business opportunities, access (or remoteness) and constraints related to the physical landscape or lack of government investment.

(b) In general terms this question was not answered very effectively. The majority of candidates identified habitat loss as one of their answers but often failed to fully develop the idea. After that the second most popular idea was based around pollution linked to transport, either in relation to increasing vehicle numbers or in relation to the heavy goods vehicles related to development projects. In either case responses were generally quite vague and lacked any real detail in terms of why this might create “environmental issues”. A small number of candidates moved into ideas about large scale deforestation and climate change; generally this was either self-limiting or inappropriate in relation to the topic as expressed in the question.

(c) Very few candidates showed a detailed appreciation of the idea of economic sustainability. More often responses tended to focus on describing changes rather than expressing how the identified changes might make an area more economically secure in the longer term. While this approach clearly showed some awareness of the question it did not fully address the key idea and consequently failed to score at the highest level. A small number of candidates did use examples of rural development programmes to express the link between community development and economic sustainability, often very effectively. In some cases candidates virtually ignored the term “economic sustainability” and drifted more into ideas about environmental management or conservation. Where this had some link to the economic viability of an area it was creditworthy, where it did not the response was often somewhat marginal.

The Energy Issue

Question 3

(a)(i) The majority of candidates used Figure 3 effectively to identify the differences in energy supply between rural and urban areas in India. In most cases candidates used specific comparative data effectively and a number went on to categorise supplies in relation to renewables/non-renewables or fossil fuels.

(a)(ii) In general terms candidates showed a sound awareness of the links between economic development and energy mix, many going on to express this in relation to how urban areas demand a greater amount of secondary energy in the form of electricity and gas. Points about the relative level of infrastructure in urban and rural areas were frequently made, and when effectively linked to energy supply these ideas produced excellent points. At the higher level candidates not only considered the individual energy sources but also brought in broader points about energy mix. At the lower level the focus was generally based around the availability of resources, often considering that rural areas had access to biomass while urban areas did not. While this approach offered some understanding it was often expressed in very simple terms and the points made were not fully developed.

(b) The majority of candidates showed a sound understanding of this question, in most cases identifying the finite nature of some energy resources and the impact of burning fossil fuels on the environment as fundamentally significant points in relation to sustainability.

(c) The major issue with this question was the extent to which candidates ignored the clear instruction “With reference to a located example”. Those candidates who focused on one example often produced effective responses which showed a good general understanding of the question. Where candidates used more than one example (in some cases four or five) responses were often superficial and lacked any real development. In some cases the first example used was not the strongest and this was clearly self-limiting in the context of the question rubric. Those candidates who did focus on one example often produced effective responses which showed a good level of understanding in relation to the issues related to resource exploitation. More popular examples included the exploitation of oil in the Niger delta and Alaska and the development of the Three Gorges dam in China. A small number of candidates used more contemporary examples including oil tars, fracking and large scale wind farms, often very effectively. At the higher level differentiation was often related to the extent that candidates moved beyond identifying issues and considered “conflict” in a more detailed way.

The Growth of Tourism

Question 4

(a)(i) The majority of candidates used Figure 4 effectively to identify the general trend in the number of international tourists and pick out particular years where there were significant short term changes or significant changes in relation to the general trend. Virtually all candidates used the data to express the descriptive points that they were making.

(a)(ii) Those candidates who identified the idea of “global” expressed in the question generally produced sound responses. The most popular ideas related to decline were based around the impacts of global recession and international terrorism while a number of candidates suggested that international sporting events might produce a short term increase in tourist arrivals. A number of candidates focused on very generic ideas, including points about increasing wealth or holiday time, or the development of air travel.

(b) It was encouraging to see that the majority of candidates had a clear understanding about the characteristics of ecotourism. A wide range of points were seen across the scripts, including observations about scale, conservation, education, use of local materials, the management of environmental issues and community involvement. Those candidates who selected two appropriate ideas and showed a clear awareness about how they encouraged sustainability generally scored very high marks.

(c) The major issue with this question was the extent to which candidates ignored the clear instruction “With reference to a located example”. Those candidates who focused on one example often produced effective responses which showed a good general understanding of the question. Where candidates used more than one example (in some cases four or five) responses were often superficial and lacked any real development. In some cases the first example used was not the strongest and this was clearly self-limiting in the context of the question rubric. Those candidates who did focus on one example often produced effective responses which showed a good level of understanding in relation to the problems created by the growth of tourism. More popular examples included the development of tourism in Myanmar and Thailand and the Spanish coast or Spanish islands. These examples provided a useful vehicle to express an understanding of the question, although responses were often quite descriptive and lacked a detailed appreciation of “cause-effect” in relation to the question. Those candidates who used a more specific example, with particular reference to a relatively small area, often produced more detailed and analytical responses.

Section B

Managing Urban Change

Question 5

A number of candidates found this question quite challenging, often confusing dereliction with deprivation and consequently using examples which were more focused on the development of poor quality housing areas in developed countries or slums in developing countries. While the distinction between dereliction and deprivation can, at times, be blurred, this approach did not always fully address the question and was consequently somewhat self-limiting. A small number of candidates took this approach one step further and based the whole of their essay on rural – urban migration and the consequent development of urban slums in developing countries, producing some excellent geographical analysis but unfortunately not effectively addressing the question. Those candidates who focused more precisely on dereliction often produced impressive responses. In most cases the key consideration was industrial decline and how this created areas of industrial and residential dereliction as factories and housing were left vacant and became increasingly the focus of vandalism. Two of the most effectively used examples were Detroit and east London (prior to regeneration). A number of candidates drifted into historical examples, most notably considering industrial decline in parts of the UK.

Managing Rural Change

Question 6

Candidates generally produced thoughtful and well documented responses to this question. In most cases the focus was based around land degradation resulting from the intensification of agriculture, with the removal of hedgerows, soil erosion and the impact of agricultural chemicals on the land and water courses featuring in many essays. The use of examples was variable. Those candidates who developed their answer around a specific example generally offered more precision and in-depth analysis. A number of candidates took a broader view and considered the question in relation to both negative and positive influences on the environment, considering how stewardship and aspects of permaculture are creating a positive environmental feedback loop. Candidates who took this approach often produced thoughtful and evaluative responses.

The Energy Issue

Question 7

It was clear that the majority of candidates had a sound understanding of the key idea expressed in this question, many using considerable locational detail to express their thoughts. It was encouraging to see that in most cases candidates responded to the instruction “socio-economic” expressed in the question rather than simply observing points about increases in revenue and employment. Candidates generally selected very good examples to express their ideas, among the more commonly used were Norway, Iceland, Alaska and the Three Gorges Dam in China. Of these examples Norway was perhaps used most effectively, with many candidates offering a detailed appreciation of how oil and gas revenues had been used to improve social and community facilities and also how Norway had developed the renewable energy sector to ensure the sustainability of energy supplies. A number of candidates developed this theme further by showing an awareness of the Norwegian energy fund and also linking this to socio-economic indicators such as HDI. A small number of candidates attempted a wider discussion by expressing how energy exploitation can bring both opportunities and problems, with Nigeria often being used as an example. This discussion produced interesting answers, but at times they tended to drift away from the key idea expressed in the question.

The Growth of Tourism

Question 8

It was clear that the majority of candidates had a sound understanding of the key idea expressed in this question, many using considerable locational detail to express their thoughts. It was encouraging to see that in most cases candidates responded effectively to the demand to show an understanding of “economic development” expressed in the question rather than simply observing points about bringing in money and creating employment. A wide range of examples from across the world were chosen, the more commonly used being Jamaica, Spain, China and the United Kingdom (frequently with a very specific locational focus such as Blackpool or The Lake District). In many cases candidates made effective links between increasing tourist revenue and the development of infrastructure and social facilities, showing a clear appreciation of key reference to “economic development” expressed in the question. The idea of the “significance” of tourism to the economic development of particular places was largely considered in relation to total revenues or visitor numbers and not always considered in relative terms.

F763 Global Issues

General Comments:

As with previous sessions, there was a wide range in the quality of scripts submitted for this unit. Substantial knowledge and authoritative understanding of geography was clearly evident amongst the upper quartile candidates and their prose fluent and focused on the question set. The lower quartile candidates tended to rely on pre-learned material, much of which was partial in its knowledge and understanding. Often they adopted a narrative style, especially when deploying a case study, which diverted them away from analysis and evaluation.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Examiners still read far too many scripts containing responses in this section that are either pre-learned or rambling. Offering more than one issue is a too common approach and often accompanied by strategies which are neither related to a stated issue nor appropriate given the context. The wording of the question is clear, 'Outline a geographical issue indicated and suggest appropriate strategies for its management.' Those that obeyed the rubric were usually well rewarded for their ability to write in a precise and concise manner.

Question 1

The fact file on flooding in Pakistan was answered by the vast majority of candidates. Too many respondents simply selected one or more statements from the fact file and offered no more than repeating it almost verbatim. Much more convincing were those who took one of the statements and analysed its implications. For example, use was made of the fact about the quantity of farmland flooded in relation to the economic status of an LEDC, in this example Pakistan, and the issue this would create as regards food supplies for families who are largely subsistence farmers.

In regards to strategies, examiners reported reading far too many responses which seemingly ignored the geographical context and offered accounts of floods they had studied such as Boscastle or Cumbria. Far more convincing were those who acknowledged the concerns arising in an LEDC as regards flood management but nevertheless suggested suitable strategies, such as raising river banks, adopting a warning system similar to that deployed in Bangladesh or the use of international aid.

Question 2

There were many effective responses focused on the map showing the global distribution of plant and animal species at risk of local extinction. Issues arising from the loss of biodiversity such as reduction in genetic pools and the potential loss of plants which might have a use for humans were often suggested. Strategies tended to be appropriate such as the creation of reserves or national parks, captive breeding and seed banks or debt for nature arrangements.

Question 3

Students answering this question using an extract from a text on climatic hazards tended to fall into one of two camps. There were those who focused on the issues of either acid rain or photochemical smog and those who took this as an opportunity to deal with the production of CO₂ and global warming. Issues arising from the former tended to be various health issues, the enhanced weathering effect on buildings or the acidification of lakes, rivers and soils. Suitable

strategies included dealing with the causes, primarily fossil fuel combustion and the effects, liming of water and soils for example.

Question 4

Answers dealing with the issues raised by the graphs of resource production (wheat yields) and population change in the European Union (EU) and sub-Saharan Africa were usually quick to see the contrast in experience of the two regions. However, the more successful responses analysed the data to raise issues such as under-nutrition, malnutrition and in the worst case scenario famine in sub-Saharan Africa. When offering strategies many candidates wrote effectively about the role technology might play, for example in the form of crop breeding to produce drought or pest resistant plants. Many also mentioned how small-scale irrigation schemes can raise production such as the stone walls now found in parts of the Sahel. Strategies focused on reducing the rate of increase in population in sub-Saharan Africa were also prominent amongst the answers.

There was however a tendency on the part of some candidates to offer suggestions without thinking about what they were saying. For example, stating that ‘...the famers in Africa should be taught how to use fertilisers.’ overlooks the point that for thousands of years, farmers in this region have been using what fertiliser they can obtain. The implication that farming methods from the developed world are inherently superior is inappropriate and ignores the expertise of sub-Saharan farmers in the particular environments in which they operate.

Question 5

There was a wide range of answers analysing the photograph of a modern aeroplane showing where many of its components parts are manufactured. Many candidates identified the dominance of MEDCs in the production of the aeroplane linking this with issues of inequality brought about by globalisation. There were also a significant number of candidates who suggested that it was ‘inefficient’ to have production separated across the globe or that transporting the parts was a major cause of global warming. Those focused on inequality offered sensible strategies concerning the role of Foreign Direct Investment, the encouragement of industry to locate in LEDCs and NICs and the need to invest in education in LEDCs and NICs. Examiners found it interesting that candidates assumed that the executive decision makers running trans-national corporations (TNCs) would devise an ‘inefficient’ production system.

Question 6

The bar graph showing the percentage of households with access to piped water drew many effective responses. One often repeated omission by candidates though was ignoring the urban context as stated in the title to the graph. Thus many candidates wrote about difficulties of constructing piped water supplies in rural areas, especially remote ones. There were, however, many who identified issues of poor health and rates of infant mortality associated with poor access to piped water. Suitable strategies included the role of aid of various types and the need for governments in the countries to set appropriate priorities in their spending. In addition, the positive knock-on effects that raising standards of education could have on earnings and therefore the ability to purchase piped water were well explained by some.

Section B

The second section in this paper generated a very wide range in quality of answers. The mark scheme makes clear that AO2 ‘Analysis, interpretation and evaluation.’ is by far the most significant element in this section. The requirement to construct fully evaluative and analytical essays was very well met by many candidates, some outstandingly so. Those who relied on the regurgitation of pre-learned material offered material which did not answer the question set and

often slipped into an extended narrative style that while occasionally interesting, did not directly address the issue.

Earth Hazards

Question 7

Candidates discussing whether the most serious impacts of earth hazards are short term or not (generally) offered wide ranging discussions drawing on their knowledge and understanding of several earth hazards. Some candidates wrote only about one type of earth hazard, earthquakes for example and so tended to offer much less convincing discussions.

Some of the most effective responses made use of the contrast in impacts between LEDCs and MEDCs. Frequently a comparison was made using the Haiti earthquake of 2010 with others striking MEDCs such as Kobe, Japan of 1995. Discussions pointed to the resources available to MEDCs both in terms of preparations in advance of a hazard and once an event has occurred. It was good to read in a few essays acknowledgement of the efforts of some LEDCs to prepare for hazard events, however limited in comparison to the investments available in MEDCs. The Nepal earthquake of 2015, serious as it was, might have had even more impacts had it not been for actions taken previously such as in training of inhabitants. The impacts of volcanic eruptions such as Mount St Helens were often cited although many candidates seemed unaware of the boost to tourism the region experienced in the aftermath of the eruption as visitors came to see the mountain and the surrounding devastation. Also the recovery of the forestry industry was poorly known by many.

One issue that too few picked up on was that of fatalities. For most candidates death was seen as a short term impact. The long term effects on a family of losing the principal source of income, or the making of orphans, widows and widowers was hardly ever mentioned. It was encouraging when an essay considered the impacts on the physical environment, positive and negative of earth hazards such as mass movements or lava flows.

Question 8

Evaluations of the relative contributions of physical and human factors in causing mass movements tended to build their arguments around case studies. This was an effective approach, especially when the essay ended with a genuine conclusion drawing together the lessons from the examples. Many of the most effective answers clearly demonstrated a secure grasp of the main physical factors such as the balance between the forces of shear strength and shear stress acting upon a slope. The role of factors such as geology and precipitation (intensity and duration for example) was well understood by many. Likewise human factors were comprehensively discussed with some thoughtful comments read about the roles of decision makers such as local government and colliery managers. More perhaps could have been made about the impacts of deforestation of slopes, especially in humid climates and the relationship with mass movements.

Frequently quoted examples were Aberfan, Vargas state, Vajont Dam, Hong Kong and Armero. These were all helpful to candidates although there was quite some variation in the accuracy of their knowledge and the facts and figures of each event. Assessments of the relative roles of physical and human factors were usually balanced with many candidates able to offer high level evaluations.

Ecosystems and environments under threat

Question 9

Candidates assessing the extent environmental change is the result of physical factors tended to use a structure based on case studies. This was an appropriate approach with the end result tending to rely on the quality and quantity of knowledge of the respective examples. The Specification explicitly mentions microclimate, soil, relief and drainage so it was disappointing that few discussions mentioned these in the context of environmental change, the more so as all candidates are expected to have studied a local ecosystem or environment. The role of human factors was sometimes well used to balance the effects of physical ones. For example the elimination and then re-introduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park is well known by many. A few candidates are aware of similar schemes using beavers in Scotland and Devon.

Question 10

Discussions of how severe unintended consequences of human activities are for physical environments were generally well balanced but varied in their command of the knowledge and understanding of the examples chosen. Examiners felt that more could have been made of examples such as the Dust Bowl of the mid-west of the USA in the earlier part of the 20th century or the impacts on fishing (North Sea and Grand Banks for example). There were some interesting and effective evaluations of the threats posed by intensive agriculture to elements of the physical environment such as soils and water courses.

Climatic Hazards

Question 11

Analysis of the impacts of climatic hazards as regards the time they last were generally thoughtful and well supported by real world examples. Candidates drew on a range of climatic hazards, tropical storms, depressions, tornadoes, heat waves to exemplify how varied climatic hazards are in their impacts. There were some very effective analyses of the influences of where a location is on the development continuum. For example convincing evaluations were made of the impacts a hurricane has on different places around the Caribbean. It was good to read many candidates appreciating that even within the USA the impacts of hurricanes fall differently on people with contrasting levels of resources to fall back on. Thus the impacts of Katrina were particularly well analysed and evidence presented of the long-lasting impacts on certain groups of people. Responses also considered the short-term impacts of tornadoes but also presented the case for some people being affected for a long period of time, when for example their home and or business was physically destroyed. There is also the point that while death is often considered a short term impact, for the families left behind, the loss of the principal breadwinner, spouse, parent, or child is a long term impact.

Question 12

There were far fewer responses in this option to the request to assess the extent to which extreme weather resulting from depressions only has economic impacts. Amongst these responses, it was disappointing for examiners to read essays focused entirely on the impacts of hurricanes / cyclones or typhoons. These tended to read as pre-learned essays and represented candidates who were determined to write about these climatic hazards despite the question. Those who did try to keep to the question set gave responses rather dominated by economic impacts and their evaluations lacked the counter-point that knowledge of social impacts would offer.

Population and resources

Question 13

This question demanded an analysis of the extent to which population increase threatens the sustainable management of resources. Many candidates were secure in their knowledge and understanding of theories such as those put forward by Malthus and Boserup. It was particularly encouraging to encounter scripts where clear communication of these ideas was achieved through the use of diagrams, some very well annotated. Most candidates used fossil fuel consumption as an example of a non-renewable resource threatened by population increase and then discussed the possible implications of a move towards renewable energies. There was also some effective discussion on the sustainable or otherwise management of food resources. One distinguishing feature of some of the upper quartile candidates was their assertion that it is not simply population increase which has the potential to threaten resources but also the rise in living standards and aspirations of people around the globe. Changes in diet and the growth in demand for consumer goods such as fridges and cars were often cited in this context.

Question 14

Evaluations of the relative significance of social factors in population change were equally common as the previous question in this option. Much secure knowledge and understanding was evident in discussions of the influences on birth rates. The role and status of women in different locations around the world was often considered as was the role of religion. By and large candidates tended to avoid the kind of sweeping statements that are difficult to justify given the evidence but the lower quartile essays tend to employ such a device. For example, too few of these respondents mentioned the example of Italy, an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country with a very low fertility rate.

There was much very convincing analysis of the role of economic factors, mainly in the context of migration, and political factors referencing both anti- and pro-natalist government policies. It was encouraging to read in the majority of cases that students were aware of the relatively recent changes to China's one child policy.

Globalisation

Question 15

Candidates discussing whether economic advantages are the main effect of globalisation were generally confident in their allocation of places as either winners or losers from the process of globalisation. The widely acknowledged role of TNCs in the process and their spatial pattern which brings various degrees of economic benefits to places was well known with candidates offering exemplification based on corporations such as Nike, Coke Cola, Toyota and Apple. The economic disadvantages due to globalisation; such as closure of mines and factories in regions; such as the Ruhr, Great Lakes and South Wales was successfully incorporated into responses.

The more convincing essays included material on effects other than economic such as social (spread of western style attitudes such as consumerism) and environmental (costs in areas such as parts of China and gains in former industrial regions such as some dockland areas in MEDCs).

Question 16

Examiners reported reading many thoughtful and well informed responses about the role aid might play in LEDCs. Students offered secure knowledge of the different types of aid and were able to exemplify them. In their discussions, most scripts contained considerations of how aid can be effective and they tended to be especially positive towards the role of non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and Water Aid. While there are all too many examples of government aid that has either not had the positive effect on lives it was intended or was designed from the outset to favour the donor, few candidates were able to acknowledge the help that government aid can be. The role of various military forces in relief operations for example deserves greater prominence.

Development and inequalities

Question 17

There were some impressive evaluations of the role historical factors can play in the development process. The legacy colonialism can leave was widely discussed, leading to both positive and negative impacts. Intra-national tensions and indeed violence such as has occurred in Rwanda and South Africa was frequently mentioned in the context of historical factors causing a lack of development. But in the case of Rhodesia / Zimbabwe, not only was its colonial past analysed but also the current situation under the Zanu PF party. The roles of non-historical factors were discussed such as the effect of being a land-locked country and the difficulties this spatial situation can create in gaining access to international trade. Economic factors play a major part in the development process and these were frequently included, especially as regards the influence TNCs can play. Social factors were also mentioned, in particular the role and status of women and these were sometimes effectively linked to historical factors such as the part women have or have not played in decision making within a country.

Question 18

Evaluations of the effectiveness of strategies aimed at reducing inequalities in a named country were not as common as the other question in this option. For some candidates, this was an opportunity to craft truly discursive and well documented accounts of the various strategies a country such as the UK has employed. For others, it tended to be a ramble of generalisation which offered little by way of analysis. The former made use of the various regional aid packages that have appeared in the UK both from regional and national government but also from the EU. Additionally comments were made about measures designed to reduce inequalities such as are found to do with race, sex or gender. It was also encouraging to read in a few essays, comments about measures designed to improve the access of disabled people in areas such as education, employment and public transport.

F764 Geographical Skills

General Comments:

The key factor in answering both sections is the ability to write in a well-structured and focused way that responded to the wording of the question. Those that did this achieved well.

Candidates generally performed well and demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of their investigations which tended to lift responses in Section B.

Section A was more variable and candidates do need to read questions carefully and identify the key demands of the question. All too often one of these key terms was missed or misunderstood which reduced the effectiveness of answers.

The quality of handwriting remains an issue.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1 a) What would be the most appropriate strategy for their investigation? Justify your choice of strategy.

Most Candidates offered logical combinations from the resource. Most chose linear systematic but virtually any combination of units and sample type would have been possible as the assessment lay in their justification of their choice. Both unit and type had to be justified in the context of the investigation of vegetation changes on a beach. Effective answers resembled:

A linear unit was chosen as the sampling could be laid out using a tape measure from the high tide mark inland to measure changes up the beach.

A number of candidates still confuse systematic and stratified so gave incorrect answers.

b) Evaluate the factors influencing the choice of techniques used to represent data collected in an investigation.

The key instruction here was to evaluate. Most candidates suggested a range of appropriate factors, such as type of data, often with examples but many did not go on to evaluate their relative importance. Some offered weak evaluation such as:

'The most important factor is ...' without saying why it was.

c) Why is it important to identify anomalies in the data collected in an investigation?

This was generally well answered with a clear appreciation of the causes of anomalies and their impact on the analysis of an investigation, especially on statistical tests. It was a little alarming to see so many candidates dismissing anomalies out of hand rather than seeking to find their origin:

Anomalies should always be removed from data sets otherwise correlations will not be accurate.

2 ai) Using photograph A suggest the risks that the students should take into consideration when planning their investigation.

Many candidates ignored the need to use the photograph so offered generic risks. Compare:
There is a risk of being run over on the roads.

With

The blind hairpin bend in the middle of the photograph offers a real risk of an accident as students would struggle to see oncoming traffic.

Others decided to give risk reduction strategies rather than keep to the question set. The question asked for risks plural so the single risk posed by traffic would not suffice. Others correctly identified a hazard but not what the resulting risk might be. Typical of these was:

The boats high up on the beach show there is a great tidal range here.

aii) How would you ensure the effectiveness of risk reduction strategies for this tourism survey?

The need to 'ensure' seemed to puzzle most candidates who largely ignored it so limiting their access to the top level. 'Ensure' is about making sure risk reduction strategies are followed. The most obvious way is to monitor the students as they apply their risk assessment. The use of a pilot or secondary data sources might also help 'ensure' by making sure the risks in the area have been appreciated.

The other limiting factor was the need to relate the risk reduction strategies to the tourism survey and area as set out in part ai). Too many gave rather generic answers:

I would make sure they all brought waterproofs in case it rained and wear stout shoes to prevent falls and sprained ankles.

b) Give two reasons why it is important to base an investigation on a geographical concept or model.

Again this was well appreciated. It would help clarity if candidates numbered or bullet pointed their answers as it was often not easy to see where one reason ended and another began. Should candidates give three reasons the first two are always taken. In some cases the two reasons were in effect the same:

Models give us a focus for the investigation so we can design a suitable question. In addition they enable us to set out a suitable hypothesis to test.

3a) Evaluate the effectiveness of using such a scale to measure environmental quality.

'Evaluate' was the key instruction, so indication of both pros and cons of such a scale was required. Most appreciated the limitations of such a scale usually focusing on its subjectivity, poor use of a scale and the error over the noise scale. Few saw any advantages of converting qualitative data to a quantitative scale.

b) Why is the use of questionnaires rarely effective in collecting primary data?

This was an invitation to look at the shortcomings of questionnaires – their format, content (types of question) and their delivery (sample size and structure). Few candidates considered more than two of these aspects. Some did pick up ‘rarely effective’ and quoted a case where they were, or had proved, effective. Many applied their own experiences in their investigations to answer this question.

c) Evaluate the use of the Mann-Whitney test in the analysis of data.

This was answered surprisingly well, although a small minority saw it as another version of Spearman’s Rank so focused on testing for correlations. It compares medians to test if two sets of data are significantly different. Again many candidates suggest its inability to explain the answer as a weakness. This demonstrates a very fundamental misunderstanding of statistical analysis.

Section B

Content was often excellent but was let down by an inability to focus material exactly on the question wording. Too often excessive detail of their investigation got in the way of answering the question. Candidates varied in their ability to organise their points into a coherent evaluation.

There remains an issue over titles. Many lack any location and too many, this round, were clearly not geographical. Centres must appreciate that a poorly worded title immediately puts their candidates at a disadvantage.

4) ‘Primary data is always more useful in an investigation than secondary data.’ Evaluate this statement for your investigation.

There was a wide range in the quality of answers for this question. Primary data has generally been evaluated well with candidates using their own field work to good effect. Some candidates have gone off the question and slipped into overly complex and detailed descriptions of their field work results, forgetting to then pull this back and relate the detail of their investigations to how useful it was. Others gave purely theoretical accounts comparing the pros and cons of secondary data.

The evaluation of secondary data was generally weaker with many candidates focusing only upon data from previous year’s fieldwork that they have used for comparison. Some candidates are neglecting to include other secondary data they must have used such as maps, theoretical models etc. that they will have used when designing their hypothesis and method.

Some candidates are still unclear on what constitutes Secondary data. For example, a candidate claimed they had not used any but then talked about using statistical formulae to prove the Bradshaw river model. Also candidates should take care over the tense they use – to use ‘could use’ implies they did not actually use it making the point irrelevant to their investigation. Most ended up in Level 2 though because they gave unspecific answers about their data sources. Secondary sources were particularly vague, with dates missing for the census or scales for maps and so on.

The most effective answers were those that focused on the use of the two types of data at different stages of their investigation. Hence Secondary was seen as vital at the initial stages to locate the investigation, provide context and aid risk assessment and again towards the end to identify patterns, anomalies and outcomes.

5) To what extent was your investigation successful and how would you improve it?

Again a large range of quality. The best answers were well organised and some candidates had again gone through their fieldwork stage by stage highlighting varying degrees of success and improvements. This ensured a good range of success was discussed and that improvements suggested were specific to the limitations they experienced.

Often candidates did not offer a balanced answer with equal attention to evaluating their investigation and offering appropriate improvements. Too many gave long descriptions of their data collection rather than focus on the question. Some merely stated successful elements of their investigation without giving specific evidence to prove statements such as:

The investigation was a great success.

Improvements were often generic with only vague relationship to the relative success of their investigation. Typical of these answers is:

We could have taken more time so we could take more measurements so increasing our data set.

This needed explaining in the context of their investigation. Others showed they were unaware of what constituted an improvement:

As the tennis ball proved an ineffective float I would use a ping pong ball instead.

and

I would use a digital depth measurer.

When suggesting improvements the best answers were precise; e.g. naming equipment that could have been used instead or suggesting better named methods and sample sizes (in figures) linking these to limitations in their investigations. Some candidates then justified these improvements very effectively.

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