OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCSE

Geography A

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J382**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Geography A (J382)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

A731/01 Contemporary themes in geography (Foundation Tier)

General Comments:

The level of challenge in the exam was difficult with a wide spread of marks, and many questions differentiated between high quality and low quality answers effectively. Candidates who scored highly were able to write fluently and coherently about a range of topics using specific details from case studies that they had learnt.

They were very clear about their own energy issue, earthquake, local area and non-UK area and this allowed them to access higher marks in the levelled questions. The best answers were those that identified the command words in the questions, especially the difference between describe and explain, and then linked their answer to those words. Weaker answers tended to be generic, and could be any earthquake, local place or energy issue.

These candidates were unclear about which case studies they had covered and were unable to write consistently and coherently about them.

Levelled questions were particularly poorly answered with many candidates struggling to get more than 2 marks. Reasons for this included a lack of specific detail, and that they struggled to develop an answer and changed topic too quickly. To reach Level 3 it is best to take 1 idea and explain it as fully as possible rather than try to explain 3 or 4 ideas in a more basic fashion, ending up with a list like answer. The exam was long and some candidates did not finish, appearing to give up towards the end of the paper.

Some students seemed to struggle to comprehend geographic terminology either as a direct question, such as birth rate, or in the context of a question, such as non-renewable. The need for students to come up with more ideas or extend the ideas that they have identified limited a lot of answers given to 3 and 4 mark questions.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1 (a)   This question was answered well with most candidates showing that they know what the climate and landscape of mountain and desert environments are like. Where candidates did not score marks this was due to misunderstanding the word climate or landscape. There is a significant proportion of candidates that consider oxygen levels to be related to the climate.

1 (b)   It was pleasing to see that candidates were able to pick out phrases from Figure 2 in the Insert that related to the environment that the writer was describing. Most students referred to the desolation or silence that can be found in this area or the use of words like fiery and rosy. Fewer candidates were able to explain why this meant that the environment was extreme, limiting their answer to 1 mark. A small minority of candidates did not use the resource booklet and could not be awarded any marks.

1 (ci)   The most popular answer was Sahara with very few alternatives provided. It was important that candidates only circled one desert with some circles including both the Sahara and the Arabian desert. The most successful answer was the Australian desert.

1 (cii)   The command word in this question asked candidates to explain why their named desert was found in its specific location. The most common mark that was awarded was one. This was for stating that the desert was on the correct tropic, any further explanations did not go beyond the idea that this made it hot. There were very few references to ideas such as concentrated sun's rays, few clouds or areas of high pressure. The most common wrong answers focused on describing where the desert was, such as in the North of Africa, covering countries such as Mali and Algeria or on the Equator. A few candidates placed their desert on the wrong Tropic despite it being on the map in the previous question.

1 (d)   This was well answered with candidates able to use the resource booklet to answer the question successfully.

2 (a)   This question was not well answered. The name of the range was expanded to include answers such as Mount Everest on the Foundation Tier exam to differentiate between candidates that had some locational knowledge and candidates who were guessing.

2 (b)   The description of fold mountains creation needed three points related to action of the plates and the subsequent orogeny that follows. The creation of fold mountains at both subductive and collision plate boundaries were acceptable answers. A diagram was not required or essential but most of the correct answers relied on diagrams that showed what was happening, as the written descriptions were often quite weak. The best answers were laid out in chronological order, so it is clear what was being described using correct and accurate geographical terminology.

2 (c)   The first levelled question asked candidates to identify the named mountain region that they have been studying so that the use of place specific detail can be judged and marks awarded. Most candidates were able to name an appropriate area, the Andes being the most popular, but this was the only time place specific information was used in the answer. The question also asked for a description of how different groups of people used the mountain and the best candidates used more than one explicitly named groups such as tourists, farmers or residents. To score highly candidates needed to take one group of people, such as tourists, develop the answer more fully describing the activities that they might undertake and then link to place specific detail that only applies to the area that they have studied. Some of the more original answers referred to the growing of quinoa, tourists visiting Machu Picchu or the Aymara people of the Altiplano region of Bolivia. The worst, and most common, answers were generic lists of extreme sports with no development that could take place in any mountain range.

2 (di)   Avalanches are an area of the specification that most candidates seemed to be familiar with. Most candidates were able to write about avalanches with some coherence but the word challenges seemed problematic. There were some excellent answers about the causes of avalanches which were awarded 0 marks as they did not answer the question set. The other reason that some candidates were not awarded full marks was due to not writing enough. As a three-mark question, candidates need to make sure that they are giving three ideas to get all the marks, not feel they have fully answered the question in one sentence.

2 (dii)   Using the resource booklet allowed candidates to gain one mark by referring to the warning sign that was in the picture. The best candidates then used their own knowledge to describe other strategies that could help manage avalanches such as using explosives, evacuation routes, correct equipment or small group sizes. The poorer answers stopped after they had identified the sign without offering any further ideas.

3 (ai)   This question was answered well and it was clear that candidates were able to use the resource booklet accurately.

3 (aii)   The Richter Scale was not well understood. A small minority of candidates thought that it was the instrument used to measure the magnitude of the earthquake. Other candidates mixed up the Richter Scale with the Mercalli Scale and referred to the amount of damage that was done or the impact of the earthquake. The best answers referred to the magnitude of the earthquake and then added extra detail to ensure that they received the second mark available in the question.

3 (aiii)   This was well answered with most candidates being awarded two marks.

3 (bi)   The question asked candidates to name their earthquake so it is possible to judge the accuracy of their answer to this question. The most common answer was Haiti, but some candidates then described the plates hitting or crashing into other each rather than describing a conservative plate boundary. Answers that described the friction between the plates and the subsequent slip were scarce limiting most candidates to 1 mark.

3 (bii)   The hope was that candidates would refer to the earthquake that they had studied giving specific long and short term impacts from the example that they have studied. The answers that were given were very general and so marks were awarded for generic long and short term impacts. In many cases the candidate's answers made it hard to distinguish between long and short term and to award marks as they had not clearly shown that they understood the difference. An example of this is the short term impact of your house falling down and the longer term impact of homelessness.

3 (biii)   Identifying what constituted management of a hazard was an issue for a number of candidates as quite a large minority wrote about the causes of the earthquake which did not answer the question. A lot of the candidates that understood that they needed to write about management of their hazard then described what aid was received with no attempt to evaluate how well they were managed, this limited their mark to Level 1. The best candidates used the stem of the question at the start of their answer almost guiding them straight into Level 2. The best answers considered both one positive and one negative of the management, showing that candidates knew specific details about the hazard that they had been studying.

4 (a)   This question was answered well.

4 (bi)   Candidates were comfortable using the resource booklet to determine the reasons for China companies making clothes in Bangladesh and there were a lot of well written, high scoring answers. Candidates need to be careful as there were a few who wrote about the benefits for the Bangladeshi exporters which was not what the question asked.

4 (bii)   The conditions that face Bangladeshi workers in sweat shops were well known and understood but this did not translate into candidates scoring highly in this question. Many candidates used the idea at the bottom of the resource concerning low pay and felt that this was enough to be awarded three marks.

4 (ci)   Many candidates were able to name their product and make general statements about the way that the product was moved from its manufacturing location to the location where it was sold. Long lists of transport types were only awarded one mark while candidates that linked to their specific product were awarded more marks.

4 (cii)   There was one mark for stating whether demand was rising and falling and this was a straight forward mark that many candidates did not achieve. The ideas that an increasing population, available upgrades to technology or ethical concerns were the most popular resources but even when candidates had good answers they often did not write enough to be awarded all three marks.

5 (ai)   The command words in this question asked candidates to suggest a reason but many candidates decided to describe so instead of applying their knowledge to an unknown situation they used data from the resource booklet. The best answer used their knowledge of China to suggest reasons such as the population size or the amount of manufacturing sector.

5 (aii)   It was disappointing that many candidates did not know that geothermal energy needed a specific tectonic setting to generate energy and this was reflected in the low number of candidates that answered this question successfully.

5 (aiii)   Very few candidates were able to suggest that wind turbines can generate energy 24 hours a day or that they could be located offshore.

5 (bi)   This was a very open question that allowed candidates to show their knowledge of the energy supply issue. In keeping with last year there were a number of candidates that didn't know what their issue was or could only define it in a broad, non-specific way. In general, the more specific the issue the easier it was for candidates to gain full marks. Any relevant statement was worthy of a mark as long as it wasn't too vague such as damages the environment but many candidates stopped after making one point even though it was a three-mark question.

5 (bii)   The concept of management was a difficult term for many candidates to grasp successfully in the context of energy supply. The third levelled question in the paper required a two-part answer. The ability to make a statement that dealt with how their energy issue is managed now and how it might change in the future was difficult for many candidates and they were limited to Level 1, scoring a maximum of 2 marks. To reach beyond Level 2 candidates needed to develop their answers beyond one simple statement about how or where it is managed. This required candidates to know their energy supply issue in detail and be able to define it clearly. The best answers usually focused on fracking or nuclear power.

5 (ci)   There was a large minority of candidates that provided a non-renewable source or gave the answer fossils fuels or petroleum.

5 (cii)   The best answers in this question focussed on the non-renewable nature of fuels and the environmental problems caused by their burning. Candidates that correctly identified a non-renewable fuel in 5 (ci) were at an advantage although error was carried forward. There were many answers that did not write enough to gain all the marks available with some candidates content to finish their answers in one sentence.

5 (ciii)   This question asked candidates to identify different groups of people and those that were able to suggest groups such as residents, governments, environmentalists or energy companies scored most highly. The dreaded phrase, some people think, was all to prevalent especially from weaker candidates. Answers with no defined groups made it harder for candidates to avoid generalisations and led to shorter paragraphs gaining less marks. There was also the misapprehension that conflict meant war so many answers outlined the potential for conflict in the Middle East due to the reduction in the availability of oil rather than considering issues closer to home.

6 (ai)   Very few candidates were able to correctly define this term including the idea that it is in a given population, in a given timeframe, usually per 1000 per year.

6 (aii)   More candidates were able to define this term than in question 6 (ai). From the amount of crossing out it was clear that some candidates were able to work out the definition from the table that was included in the next question.

6 (bi and ii)   Candidates who were able to identify the pattern from the table got the answer correct. There were a few candidates who knew what was required but made errors in their calculations. The most common wrong answer to 6 (bii) was 2 which showed candidates did not fully appreciate the way that the figures related to each other.

6 (ci)   There were three marks available for candidates that approached this question in a logical order, either taking each line on the graph and describing how it changed or taking each stage and describing what happened. The most common marks were either one or three. Too many candidates were content to make one general comment about the graph without going into detail. This approach allowed candidates to be awarded one mark.

6 (cii)   Recognising that a wide base and narrow top shows an LEDC and a more rectangular structure shows an MEDC was the key to a successful answer. Candidates that referred to the birth rate or the death rate or the triangular or rectangular shape of the graph scored highly. Poor answers misidentified the stage and could not be awarded any marks. Some candidates decided to try and describe the stage rather than ascribe a numeric value to it.

6 (d)   The idea of population structure was not well understood and this had a limiting impact on the quality of the answers that were seen. Some candidates decided to write everything they know about the two locations that they had studied including linkages between the two, contrasting the population density and comparing the quality of housing. The most successful candidates were able to identify how the number of older or younger people varied in their UK location and how it contrasted in their non-UK location. Valid reasons such as the quality of health care were offered to help explain why this contrast exists.

A731/02 Contemporary themes in geography (Higher Tier)

General Comments

Overall the paper was at an appropriate standard and assessed a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. The more able candidates were provided with the opportunity to write extended and detailed answers about places or processes they had studied. Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and developed their reasoning producing at least level 2 responses. Most work seen was of a good standard and candidates demonstrated engagement with the questions. Candidates seemed well prepared. High marks were certainly available to more able candidates and the general level of achievement seemed higher than in previous years. Most candidates were able to cope, though, as in previous years, a minority should not have been entered for a paper at this level. There was little evidence that candidates struggled to finish the paper in time and incomplete papers were not as prevalent as in previous years. There were very few questions omitted.

SPAG marks were mainly 3/2. The spelling of subject specific words was very accurate.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Extreme Environments

1 a) (i) Candidates gave this question a mixed response. Those candidates who answered correctly offered feelings such as 'nervous', perceptions such as 'dangerous' or physical reactions such as 'hyperthermia'. However, a significant number of candidates gave incorrect responses and most of these centred on the uses of deserts such as 'tourism'.

(ii) Candidates gave a mixed response to this question. Those students who answered correctly generally went along the lines of 'extreme temperatures', 'lack of vegetation' or 'remoteness' Those who answered incorrectly gave vague answers such as 'hard to survive', without explaining why.

b) Candidates generally understood what this question was asking. However, many candidates gained 1 and not 2 marks. They often gave quotations from the text or just descriptions but did not combine the two. Candidates who responded well to this question demonstrated good literacy skills and the use of English subject specific vocabulary such as 'adjectives'. In addition, several candidates looked at the wrong resource for this and commented on 1b with the cyclist.

c) A minority of candidates appeared not to have studied salt pans at all. Most candidates were able to achieve 2 or 3 marks writing about evaporation and minerals being left behind, however only the most able extended the answer sufficiently for full marks.

d) Generally candidates responded to this question using a rock pedestal as their landform, with a few using yardangs, sand dunes or mesas. Many candidates chose to draw a diagram, although this often complemented their written response. On the whole this question was well answered, with very few candidates responding lower than a Level 2. Almost all the candidates discussed the process of abrasion. Many students mentioned soft and hard rock, although often they failed to describe the relevance of this. The biggest omission in this question was the reasons for differential erosion rates – i.e. different rock resistance and the maximum height of abrasion.

2 a) Candidates found this harder than it may have appeared. Many incorrect answers and naming of deserts, the majority could identify the Himalayas but were not able to identify the Rockies. Of the answers that were incorrect the main misconception was that A was the Andes. The other issue was some candidates getting their answers the wrong way round and mixing A with B.

b) It was clear that most candidates understood the relevance of plate movements in terms of the formation of Fold Mountains. Most candidates mentioned the idea of plate boundaries and used words such as crumpling or buckling. Several failed to use the map to name directions or provide specific plate boundaries. Some did identify mountain ranges or specific countries – but this gained them no additional marks.

c) Candidates clearly knew the uses of mountains. Some candidates provided extensive responses as to how mountains are used and the benefits these uses bring to the locals. However, many candidates failed to tackle the 'why' part of the question and therefore were unable to access any more than 3 marks. The other issue with this question was the lack of place specific content. Candidates may use one word such as 'Altiplano' or 'Machu Picchu' to show they have some place specific knowledge but they do not embed this into the rest of their answer. Many candidates used the Andes or the Himalayas as their case study. Some candidates referred to a specific mountain such as Mount Everest or wrote about a specific location such as Machu Picchu which limited their response.

d) (i) Candidates gave a mixed response to this question. The candidates that answered the question well used the resource as a prompt and then extended it using their own knowledge. Candidates needed to use something from the resource to gain the marks. Some candidates did not do this. Other candidates lifted words straight off the resource and listed them but did not use them to explain why they increased the risk to people from an avalanche. For example, 'size of group' but they did not go on to say the larger the group the greater the risk. Some candidates did not develop their answers to achieve the full 4 marks.

(ii) This question resulted in some of the weaker responses for the 6 marks questions. Candidates seemed to lack depth of understanding in one of the specific events. Most candidates opted to discuss avalanches with very few selecting volcanoes and landslides. Some candidates made the mistake of discussing more than one event which limited their ability to access marks. Many candidates lacked the explanation of how the management strategies work and therefore their response did not reach Level 3. Several candidates discussed in length the use of avalanche warnings and how this would save lives but did not seem to understand the idea that the danger is often immediate.

3 a) (i) Candidates performed well on this question with very few wrong answers.

(ii) Candidates' responses generally quoted data from the resource and therefore gained 1 mark. However, very few candidates went one step further to develop their response. Some candidates mentioned the idea of there being 'no correlation' and some mentioned 'anomalies', but the majority repeated the wording of the question stating that there was 'no clear relationship'.

(iii) Candidates generally responded well to this question and it was clear they were aware of the reasons why different earthquakes resulted in differing amounts of deaths. Some candidates failed to develop their responses and explain how these reasons resulted in differing amounts of deaths. Many candidates mentioned magnitude despite the question's clear instructions, while too many candidates think that earthquakes can be predicted to the extent of making an evacuation possible.

b) (i) Candidates responded to this question using different earthquakes. The majority used Haiti or Japan. The students who gave a correct response to this question clearly knew the causes of an earthquake in general, with many being able to be specific about the type of plate boundaries involved and the name of plate boundaries. However, some candidates did not read the question correctly and gave the effects or the responses to this earthquake instead of the causes.

(ii) Candidates clearly knew the management strategies for earthquakes. In addition many knew the management strategies used as a response to specific earthquakes. They were able to provide place specific detail and also explain how the strategies worked. The main problem with this question was that candidates did not assess, nor did they discuss the future, this limited their ability to reach level 3. Many candidates did not consider the realistic possibilities of earthquake management particularly for locations such as Nepal and Haiti and wrote generic strategies; many of which require high technology and expenditure. There were very few responses which evaluated the possible success of strategies. Candidates did not seem to be able to visualise the future impacts of strategies. There were some Level 3 responses where the candidates answered from the viewpoint that the countries would not be able to manage if there was another earthquake.

The Global Citizen

4 a) Candidates gave a mixture of responses to this question. Those that answered correctly generally got full marks. There were a few which mentioned the idea of interconnectedness but did not then back it up with the ideas of trade and cultural exchange. Many candidates had clearly confused the term 'globalisation' with 'TNC's' and had therefore discussed the idea of products and services.

b) (i) Candidates generally answered this question well. Weaker candidates guessed at ideas as opposed to using the resource.

(ii) Many candidates achieved 1 mark for their response to this question by only making one point. Responses often included repetition from their response to (i). The better answers reworded their response to (i) and then developed it. Candidates who chose to write about 'skilled workforce' developed their response by stating that the product would be quality or a greater volume of product could be manufactured and linked this then to sales and consequently profit.

(iii) This question was poorly answered. Many candidates were able to achieve 1 or 2 marks but few managed 3 or 4. Responses were often focused on what a trade barrier is as opposed to how they can affect international trade. Many candidates mentioned the idea of trade becoming expensive and therefore country's opting out of trade but did not take their response any further. Weaker candidates thought that import taxes affected the country receiving the goods. Few candidates wrote about alternative trade barriers such as quotas.

c) This question received a mixed response. The quality of the answer very much depended on the product the candidate had chosen. Many candidates chose to discuss mobile phones and this led to some good responses. Most candidates identifying affordability of mobile phones for people with limited income as an issue. Some candidates made the mistake of discussing signal and others discussed the extraction of raw materials which did not provide an effective response to the question. Some candidates suggested there were no mobile phones available at all in LEDCs. Several opted for 'produce' as opposed to products, such as 'bananas'.

d) The quality of response to this question was dependent on what service the candidates had chosen. Some candidates had chosen the manufacture of goods which could not be credited. Some had tried to use mobile phones as a service by naming their service 'Apple' or 'Car Phone Warehouse' but inevitably this had led them to discuss extraction of raw materials and manufacturing. Many responses were focused on tourism and/or package holidays. These were

well answered, particularly where the candidate had chosen to link their response to a particular tourist destination which they had studied. Candidates clearly understood the impacts of these types of holidays. Some candidates focused on the benefits of package holidays for the family purchasing the holiday as opposed to the workers involved. These tended to lack the geographical detail required for the response. Overall candidates needed to add detail and explanation to their responses. For example, they needed to state the benefits of locals having jobs in tourism. There were also a few candidates that failed to offer the impacts on the environment or people, therefore limiting them to Level 1.

5 a) (i) Candidates generally gave a correct response to this question.

(ii) Candidates generally gave a correct response to this question, although some opted for China.

(iii) Many responses were based around the availability of natural resources such as wind, sun and geothermal activity. These were generally well written, although some candidates failed to explain the relevance of countries having a lack of wind or sun. Another popular response revolved around the level of development of a country and these answers often allowed the candidates to get the mark for development. Many candidates wrongly discussed that the idea of the size of a country as a whole and their available space were significant to the development of renewable energy.

b) Most candidates opted for fracking when giving their response to this question. This allowed candidates to be able to develop their answers better than some of the other options such as the 'UK Energy Mix' and 'Blackouts'. Candidates were clear on what the challenges were for all issues studied. The difference between responses came through the level of explanation and depth. Many candidates were able to discuss ideas such as water contamination and earth tremors but failed to take it any further to offer any implications of these. Some candidates did not think in terms of the future and the majority of responses failed to give any specific detail.

6. a) (i) Candidates generally gave a correct response to this question.

(ii) Candidates generally gave a correct response to this question.

b) The responses to this question were mixed. Many of the correct answers stated that it was birth rate minus death rate or that it was the difference between the birth and death rate. Incorrect responses tended to focus on the term 'natural' and the idea that it is something that happens due to natural reasons such as births and deaths.

c) This question was generally well answered with many responses identifying the correct stage. Many candidates were able to provide reasons with most gaining 3 or 4 marks. Those that gained 3 tended to state that either the birth rate was high or that there was a significant difference between the birth rate and the death rate, but failed to make both points.

d) Most candidates managed to look at the future in terms of the demographic transition model. However, some students misunderstood the question and discussed the consequences of Chad being in stage 2 or 3. Some candidates stopped short of explaining and just merely described the changes limiting themselves to Level 1- 2 marks. Many students discussed the use of contraception leading to less birth rates and better healthcare leading to fewer deaths. There were fewer answers that explored these in more detail and therefore accessing level 3. Another issue was candidates suggesting the population would decrease, although this was more common in the weaker answers which lacked explanation.

A732/01 Geographical skills (Foundation Tier)

General Comments:

The third skills paper for this specification, the first one to use a 1:25 000 Ordnance Survey map extract, was favourably received by the bulk of centres and examiners. It achieved widespread differentiation across all questions and was considered to be a fair assessment for the ability range of foundation tier candidates, testing a range of appropriate skills and techniques necessary for the interpretation and analysis of data at this level. Few, if any, scripts were seen from candidates who appeared to show sufficient ability to have been entered for the higher tier. Whilst this suggested that most were correctly entered for this tier there were also surprisingly large numbers, much increased on previous years, who did not attempt many questions, leaving many parts of their papers blank. In addition many seemed unable to perform some of the most simple skills accurately, or to read the questions carefully enough to respond to keywords. Large numbers could not write with sufficient clarity to convey their meaning and demonstrate even the basic understanding required at this level.

It was clear that higher performing candidates spent time and thought reading the questions and studying the resources with care, however where questions offer an opportunity to do so such candidates need to be prepared to develop their answers more fully. As brief, simplistic responses gain little credit, candidates should extend their answers if possible, using evidence from the resources where appropriate. The space available and mark allocations provide clear guidance as to the amount of detail required. There is plenty of time to complete the paper so there is no need to rush to complete it, and as a result lose marks through careless errors and inaccuracy.

Whilst it is clear that some centres appear to be covering most of the skills required, others need to ensure that they are systematically incorporated into schemes of work, taught, practised and reinforced regularly. This is particularly important for foundation tier candidates. Ordnance Survey maps at 1:25 000 and 1:50 000 scales should be used whenever possible, in order to increase familiarity with these resources.

Key Points:
* practise all the different skills listed in the Specification using of a variety of geographical resources. In particular practise Ordnance Survey map skills using various different extracts, showing both rural and urban areas at different scales.
* where the completion and/or interpretation of graphs, maps and other diagrams is required do this with care and accuracy.
* take care to write fluently and with care so that the ideas being expressed are always clear.
* read the questions carefully and ensure that the instructions are clearly followed. Candidates need to be familiar with how to respond to the command words commonly used and develop answers in an appropriate way wherever possible.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

(a) The vast majority correctly answered '5' though some errors were seen.

(b) (i) Generally this was answered correctly though some candidates put the three named National Parks in the wrong order, whilst others incorrectly listed other national parks.

(ii) Candidates should have noticed the use of the key word **'more'** in this question, as this indicated that comparisons were essential. Many candidates wrote about only one of the parks, however the best answers focussed on ideas such as the more centrally located Peak District, which covered a greater area, having greater accessibility to motorways and large centres of population.

Question No. 2

(a) (i) The correct answer, 'Brough', was the most common one, however some candidates incorrectly selected 'Bradwell', showing a lack of understanding of simple four figure grid references.

(ii) Most, but not all, candidates correctly identified the symbol for a station.

(iii) 'South East' was correctly answered by many candidates but there were many other incorrect responses and a significant number which left the answer space blank. All points of the compass were seen in answers, including ones which do not exist such as 'East South'. Some candidates gave road numbers and some resorted to `right` or `left`.

(iv) The correct answer, 1.4 kilometres, was the one selected by most candidates, showing that they were able to use the map scale and select the answer from those given.

(b) i) Many candidates missed out this task, and many of those who attempted to shade the land appeared to have little idea of how a cross section represents relief.

(ii) As with the previous question many candidates either missed out this task or appeared to place letters randomly. Many letters were floating in the sky or buried deep underground. Some candidates attempted to draw on the river and the railway across the section or elsewhere. Some mixed up `east facing` with `west facing` and even though a large tolerance was allowed for measuring and labelling the 'N' & 'R' many candidates were not accurate enough. Indeed many had clearly not read the instructions as they did not mark `**with an arrow'** and just simply wrote the letter somewhere.

(c) (i) It was clear that most candidates had correctly located the relevant grid squares for this exercise and some scored both marks. However, many did not draw the route of the railway correctly. Some drew several lines, some did not join the railway to the existing lines and some simply got the wrong shape and position. Some drew railways going all over the grid and beyond the grid lines. Others labelled on settlement names and other features.

(ii) Only a small proportion of candidates chose the correct information to write in the spaces, many seemed to be guessing rather than looking carefully at the map. Many wrote 'steep` or `flat' and some even made up their own height ranges rather than selecting from those they were given. Some candidates circled words in the word box but did not write them in the gaps.

(iii) This differentiated well with more perceptive candidates making appropriate comments about the relief, proximity of water or access via the road. Many weaker candidates thought the settlement was located there because of the proximity of farms, campsites or horse riding as they were present on the map.

(iv) Surprisingly few scored the mark for this simple task. Many candidates appeared to be unaware of where they should have been looking on the map to count the number of farms as they had not clearly read the instructions. Some numbers given were so high they must have counted all the farms on the Ordnance Survey extract or simply selected a number at random. Some wrote down the names of the farms rather than just the number which the question asked for – wasting their time and not gaining a mark.

(v) There were a number of good answers referring particularly to the steepness of the slope and/or the inaccessibility of the land but many answers were vague or simplistic. Relatively few candidates who identified a relevant idea developed it for further credit. There were many references to settlements, roads and other features which were not in the area shown in the grid squares which candidates were instructed to use.

Question No. 3

(a) (i) It was very unusual for a candidate to get all three correct, however most did tend to score something. Typically candidates interpreted the choropleth map of precipitation more accurately then they did the ones with isotherms where many candidates inserted figures directly from the isotherms rather than giving a range of figures for the area between where the Peak District was located on the map.

(b) This was generally well answered with many candidates correctly suggesting that the higher, more exposed location would be cooler, wetter or windier. A significant minority either had difficulty expressing their ideas and/or thought that the more northerly location of Lose Hill would make it cooler because of its higher latitude, whilst others thought that it would be warmer as it would be nearer to the sun.

Question No. 4

(a) Whilst many candidates scored the mark for this simple task others did not read the question properly, not ticking the box to indicate their choice, or they gave a six figure reference rather than a four figure reference as instructed. Others reversed the figures for the eastings and northings in their references.

(b) (i) Many, but not all, candidates recognised that the photograph showed a reservoir, Ladybower Reservoir in the north eastern part of the Ordnance Survey map extract. Whilst fishing and boating may take place there that is not the main purpose, which is water storage.

(ii) This question discriminated well with the more perceptive candidates who had identified the reservoir in (i) remembering the high rainfall received in the region from Question 3 (a) (i) which makes it ideal for water storage. Such candidates also referred to the valley location in an area with lots of surface drainage making it ideal for that use. Some candidates scored a mark for referring to the lack of settlement, however it was apparent that many were simply guessing as they had not identified the reservoir in (i) so they were explaining why it was ideal for fishing or boating or tourism which was not relevant.

(c) (i) Generally this was well answered with most candidates being able to identify that the land was used for farming.

(ii) Candidates needed to explain why the land use shown (i.e. farming, particularly pastoral farming) does not create much employment, not explain the disadvantages of farm work as some did. Some candidates wrote correctly about the lack of work on farms, in some cases explaining by developing their idea, however many referred to ideas which were irrelevant such as the lack of roads and the low population density, rather than linking their answers to farming.

Question No. 5

(a) (i) This was generally well answered with most candidates gaining at least 2 or 3 marks, though a significant number made errors such as selecting features which were not evidence of tourism (e.g. `roads`, `railway` and `farms`).

(ii) Some candidates simply repeated their answer from (i), listing tourist activities rather than suggesting how they would be likely to create employment. Nevertheless many scored at least one mark, typically for referring to work in an establishment providing tourist accommodation. Others went on to suggest other types of work generated by tourism, including transportation of tourists (e.g. taxi driver, car park attendant), retailing or jobs at named attractions shown on the map.

(b) (i) Whilst a significant number of candidates found it difficult to express their answers clearly many were proficient in their ability to analyse bar graphs so generally this was quite well answered. Most candidates referred to appropriate activities such a short walks when identifying similarities and a wide range of differences was seen. Some weaker candidates did not compare, simply listing activities graphed (e.g. hiking) therefore did not gain marks for differences.

(ii) Many candidates did even attempt this question, however those who did produced the whole range of marks. Most valid answers were at level 1 as few candidates developed their answers in any way (level 2) and even less referred to map evidence (level 3).

Reading the question and recognising that the requirement was to write about problems caused by tourism was the critical requirement. Whilst many made use of the resources, such as the conflict matrix, their answers were not well targeted as they wrote about irrelevant issues such as the conflicts between quarrying, farming and the military rather than focussing on problems caused by tourism. Good answers concentrated on the problems caused by of tourists who drive on local roads, and/or use local services and then backed this up with reference to the photos and the Ordnance Survey map extract. Ideas such as pressure on local cafes, pubs and parking areas were valid as were those which focussed on the behaviour of tourists in the pubs, however these were frequently over exaggerated. Some candidates wrote about the problems caused by tourists for farmers, however these were not often developed beyond a simplistic statement.

A732/02 Geographical skills (Higher Tier)

General Comments:

The third skills paper for this specification, the first one to use a 1:25 000 Ordnance Survey map extract, was favourably received by the bulk of centres and examiners. It achieved widespread differentiation across all questions and was considered to be a fair assessment for the ability range of higher tier candidates, testing a range of appropriate skills and techniques necessary for the interpretation and analysis of data.

Most candidates attempted all questions and, as always, the most perceptive and well prepared candidates performed well, demonstrating skills and application of understanding consistently across the paper, extending their answers where appropriate and using evidence from resource materials where required. However it was noticeable this year that many were ill-equipped to meet the demands of a Higher Tier paper of this type. They struggled to effectively answer a large number of questions, indeed many struggled throughout the paper, providing little or no evidence that they were genuine Higher Tier candidates. This was demonstrated by an inability to perform some of the most basic skills accurately, to read the questions carefully in order to respond to command words and to write with sufficient clarity to demonstrate understanding. Whilst it is clear that some centres appear to be covering the skills required, others need to ensure that they are systematically incorporated into schemes of work, taught, practised and reinforced regularly. Ordnance Survey maps at 1:25 000 and 1:50 000 scales should be used whenever possible, in order to increase familiarity with these resources.

Key Points:
*   practise all the different skills listed in the Specification using of a variety of geographical resources. In particular practise Ordnance Survey map skills using various different extracts, showing both rural and urban areas at different scales.
*   where the completion and/or interpretation of graphs, maps and other diagrams is required do this with care and accuracy.
*   read the questions carefully and ensure that the instructions are clearly followed. Candidates need to be familiar with how to respond to the command words commonly used and develop answers in an appropriate way wherever possible.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

(a) This involved the correct reading of the bar located adjacent to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Many correctly answered `13 million`, however large numbers omitted the units i.e. `13` (no millions) or inaccurately read off the scale – even with a cursory glance it is obvious that the bar does not reach 15 (million).

(b) Candidates should have noticed the use of the key word **'more'** in this question, as this immediately indicated that comparisons were essential. Common errors included writing about only one of the parks, not using the key to see the use of the word conurbation (which was also defined for them) and thinking that London was crucial to the answer. The best answers focussed on the more centrally located Peak District, covering a greater area, with greater accessibility through its more numerous motorway links and its closer proximity to large centres of population.

Question No. 2

(a) (i) The majority were able to score a mark here for identifying Brough, though some lost it through writing `Brough Lee` which is in the wrong grid square or selecting the village of Bradwell.

(ii) A large percentage of candidates scored the mark here for `Spring House Farm`, though a small minority either selected a different farm (e.g. Field`s Farm) or did not write the full name of the farm (e.g. `Spring Farm`).

(iii) Surprisingly few candidates answered this correctly, typically `North West` instead of `North North West`, whilst others reversed the direction measuring from the hill to the farm. Candidates should be familiar with the 16 point compass and be able to answer with accuracy.

(iv) Again it was surprising that large numbers of candidates were unable to perform this basic skill with sufficient accuracy within the tolerance provided in the mark scheme. Some did not even attempt this question and others made wild guesses, which typically were far too high. Many others got close to the answer, showing that they knew how to measure distances and convert the answer to kilometres, but they were not accurate enough, many possibly measuring a straight line distance rather than along the road or rounding their figure up or down at the expense of accuracy. Some candidates arrived at their answers mathematically, many making errors and arriving at answers with too many zeros. Candidates are far more likely to arrive at the correct answer if they use the linear scale below the map.

(v) Despite the very wide tolerance allowed only a minority of candidates scored the mark here, usually, but not exclusively, the higher scoring ones. Answers ranged from sensible estimations to wildly inaccurate guesses. Given that a grid square is 1 square kilometre in area, it is much more effective to make an estimate rather than perform another mathematical calculation.

(b) (i) Whilst a number of very accurate cross sections were drawn significant numbers of candidates did not even attempt it, whilst others did so even though it was clear that they didn't really know what to do. Some worked out the height at Win Hill and then simply drew a straight line joining the line provided to the height at the end. The most common reasons for loss of marks included inaccurately marking the end height (usually too high), drawing the wrong overall shape and incorrectly positioning the break of slope.

(ii) Only a small number of candidates accurately marked the features within the wide tolerance allowed. Some lost the marks, even thought they had correctly positioned the letters for the railway and the river, because they failed to mark them accurately onto the section ***with an arrow*** as instructed. Others were grossly inaccurate in their measuring of the position of the two features, so they were placed in the wrong places on the cross sections, or the features were placed under the ground or in the sky, showing that the candidates were unfamiliar with the use of a cross section to show the relief of the land.

(c) (i) It was clear that most candidates had correctly located the relevant grid squares for this exercise and large numbers scored both marks. However surprisingly, many did not draw the route of the railway correctly. Some drew several lines, some didn't join the railway to the existing lines and some simply got the wrong shape and position.

(ii) Whilst there were a number of answers here which made good use of the map evidence, many candidates did not use the contours to guide their reasoning, instead looking at irrelevant features such as villages, roads and farms, attempting to explain the route of the railway in relation to these. Given such obvious variation in relief, it was clearly the key main factor involved and significant numbers correctly noted that the railway followed the lower, flatter land, avoiding steeper slopes. Whilst a few were also able to spot that it would also need to be above the flood level of the river, many mentioned the river but failed to develop the reasoning behind how it would have affected the route chosen.

(iii) The word `relief` was not understood by all candidates as they referred to irrelevant information about Nether Booth or the surrounding land. It was possible to write about the height, the angle of slope and the aspect, however rarely did candidates make accurate observations about at least two of these relevant features. Where they stated the height it was sometimes without units or was an invalid (but easier to read off) figure from just above or below the village. Most thought Nether Booth was on either very steep or perfectly flat land whilst map evidence suggests that it is on a relatively gentle slope.

(iv) This question required comparisons to be made about the area to the north and south of the River Noe `***shown on the map opposite***`. Many candidates did not compare and some referred to the whole of the Ordnance Survey Map extract. Some mixed up north and south whilst others referred to irrelevant human features such as the reservoir, the railway or the built up areas. Despite a significant number of candidates remarking on the obvious height and gradient differences their explanations needed to be more specific than `this would make farming difficult' and only a few went on to earn full marks by explicitly referring to difficulties planting/harvesting crops, using farm machinery or grazing animals such as cattle.

Question No. 3

(a) This required the candidates to use two different maps and to **compare** two different locations. Most were able to use the choropleth map of precipitation and could spot that the Peak District was wetter than London, however they were less skilled in using the maps of isotherms. Those who scored well on this question tended to interpret the data and use comparative words such as higher/lower, wetter/drier, cooler/warmer because once they started to use actual figures, they inevitably tended to make errors such as quoting the numbers on the isotherms nearest to the two locations rather than estimating the actual temperatures in the two areas, which both lie between them.

(b) This was generally well answered by many of the candidates although a minority thought that the more northerly location of Lose Hill would make it cooler because of its higher latitude whilst others thought that it would be warmer as, being higher up, it would be nearer to the sun.

Question No. 4

(a) This discriminated well with successful candidates being able to identify the land uses in their chosen photographs accurately (i.e. quarry, coniferous forest, reservoir and farmland) and suggest appropriate 4 figure grid references for each.

(b) (i) Most candidates were able to choose three different examples from the numerous tourist features identified both on the map and in the key and many were able to give accurate 6 figure references. A few made errors such as selecting features which were not evidence of tourism (e.g. `roads`, `farms`) and some made errors such as reversing the third and sixth figures of their references.

(ii) This question successfully differentiated between the candidates, most were at least able to score a mark for correctly identifying that this was a sparsely populated rural area with few job opportunities. The more able candidates often developed this idea with reference for example to the primary activities (such as farming) being mechanised and/or having low labour requirements. Some candidates incorrectly thought that the reason for the lack of job opportunities was that the quarry had been abandoned.

(c) (i) Whilst a significant number of candidates found it difficult to express their answers clearly many were proficient in their ability to analyse pie graphs using the titles, scale and key provided so generally this was well answered.

(ii) This was a good discriminator although many candidates did not keep their answers relevant to the question throughout as they wrote about conflicts which did not involve tourists or they wrote about the negative impacts of other activities on tourists. Good answers concentrated on the effects of tourists on local roads, services, facilities and then backed this up with reference to the photos and the Ordnance Survey map extract. There were a small number of excellent answers where candidates had correctly spotted the limited number of roads coming into Castleton and the narrowness of these roads, discussing how this would create congestion and inconvenience for locals as well as endangering pedestrians. Ideas such as pressure on local cafes, pubs and parking areas were also explored as were the impact of tourists who venture onto farmland without due regard for animals and crops.

Many candidates described their perceived behaviour of tourists who they envisage will spend all day in the pubs, getting drunk and starting fights with locals. Such answers tended to be simplistic. Another frequent, but extreme and speculative idea was that there would be a major expansion in tourist facilities, such as hotels, and this would take all the other users' land. Surprisingly there were relatively few answers about how tourism can impact on farming or water storage or how it can lead to conflict due to its impacts on the natural environment.

A733 Local geographical investigation

General Comments

The third series of this specification again gave candidates the opportunity to focus their controlled assessment efforts into one sustained piece of work chosen from four investigation titles. Once again, Centres were able to choose a suitable and accessible location for their fieldwork, with the titles enabling both rural and more urban environments to be used for data collection.

Administration

Administratively there were few problems with many Centres submitting their marks well in advance of the May 15th deadline. Centres' increasing familiarity with the best-fit mark scheme resulted in it being used very effectively by the vast majority of Centres. This year a larger number of Centres unfortunately made errors on the MS1 forms but nearly all sent the CCS160 form promptly. The majority of Centres completed the URS668 assessment grids fully and included appropriate annotation on the form, and also sometimes on the candidates' work, indicating where and why credit had been given. This proves most helpful to the moderating team as only the inclusion of a single mark for each of the sections – with no ticks or highlighting - does not help the moderator appreciate why marks have been given. A number of Centres included their instruction sheet for candidates and data recording sheets. This is to be recommended, along with candidates clearly indicating their word count.

Moderation

Investigations 1B and 2B, which gave candidates the opportunity to carry out some detailed surveys about fairly traded goods or to analyse recent changes to a CBD, were the most popular choices in 2016, with each attracting just over a third of all Centres. Investigation 1A – shoppers' perceptions of a local retail area – was chosen by around 12% of Centres, with Investigation 2A – an evaluation of the provision of cyclist facilities in an area – was the focus in around 17% of Centres. All the Investigation titles proved accessible to the full range of candidates. The candidates used their knowledge and skills to respond to the Investigation titles and the submitted marks once again spanned the full mark range.

Candidates visited a wide range of interesting and appropriate fieldwork locations – both urban and rural - and deployed some effective fieldwork skills. In the best work seen it is very satisfying to report that more candidates this year clearly displayed and communicated their in-depth place knowledge of their fieldwork locations, mapped well often at local, regional and national scales. It was also very pleasing to once again see many Centres contextualising the published titles so that the tasks became more relevant to the candidates' own experiences; it remains critical, however, that candidates do clearly address the Investigation title without straying into unrelated and irrelevant discussion. For example, in Investigation 1A the focus was on shoppers' perceptions; it would have been beneficial to have a short definition to focus the analysis on that element of the work so that candidates could clearly grasp that 'perceptions' were the central focus of their work. Equally, quite a narrow focus of the term 'fairly traded products' was sometimes taken in Investigation 1B, limiting candidates' study to products only with the Fairtrade mark. To avoid this, an increasing number of candidates used the Investigation title as a heading at the beginning of their work, formulated two or three enquiry questions or hypotheses based upon the Investigation focus and then returned to the title when drawing their conclusions. This once again helped candidates maintain a clear and consistent focus on their aims so ensuring that the data collected was entirely relevant to, and consistent with the Investigation title. In the best work seen candidates clearly understood the rationale and purpose of their fieldwork activities, and were able to use their data in a discerning and effective manner.

Some candidates focused on 5/6 key questions which led to a lack of clarity in some areas. An increasing number of candidates included a contents page which helped them to show a clear structure and progression to their study.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate the need to establish an effective and logical sequence of enquiry, as identified in the specification. In the best work seen this was obvious from the outset, and the work maintained a rigour and clear sense of purpose with the issue under investigation being firmly rooted in geography. A few candidates unnecessarily included preparatory research notes with their submitted work or too much secondary data was used to back up their primary data. Please advise future candidates to only submit work for moderation that is directly relevant to the Investigation brief. Where secondary evidence was used very well, it was clearly highlighted and linked to the relevant internet source sites.

Most candidates used methodology tables which helped them give a clear picture of how they had planned their study. Candidates who used the table to clearly explain how each data set would contribute to their Investigation as a whole tended to produce work more deserving of the higher mark ranges. Such tables give candidates the opportunity to clearly consider, and then identify the techniques to be used, and also enabled many to justify, and reflect on the relative merits of the field techniques chosen. This then proved helpful when writing their evaluations, as they had clear evidence from which to draw when suggesting possible improvements to their work. Sadly this year, a significant minority of candidates did not use tables such as this, which meant that the purpose of some of their data collection was a little unclear.

As would be expected, a wide variety of presentation and analytical techniques were again seen by the moderating team. However, the moderating team were disappointed this year by some of the sample sizes that the candidates' based their findings on, and opportunities to collaborate on data collection were perhaps missed. Also, only collecting data from, for example, a particular group or age-range of individuals, will naturally lead to some skewing of the results gained; candidates' ability to understand the 'why' as well as the 'how' behind data collection is critical in this respect. Also, please note that there is no requirement to include questionnaires with the sample of work sent for moderation.

To solidly justify marks at Level 3 in AO3, candidates should be reminded of the need to try and demonstrate independence and initiative both in the choice, and their use of analytical techniques. Many candidates did achieve this through the careful selection of, at times, quite complex techniques such as overlays, located and proportional symbols, radar diagrams and statistical tests. This gave candidates the opportunity to display their own unique focus to their work. In one Centre, candidates' photographs and graphs with located arrows to maps showed very effectively their exact location within the study area, whilst in another scatter graphs to show the correlation between the numbers of cycling facilities with the number of cyclists was used most effectively to inform conclusions. In contrast, Investigations that were overly prescriptive and formulaic often led candidates to offer little originality in their work. These proved to be very repetitive to read and did not always give candidates sufficient opportunity to express themselves so suppressing the marks that they could ultimately be awarded.

The use of photographs was again a positive feature of much of the work seen, with most candidates adding detailed and thoughtful analytical annotations. In the best work seen candidates carefully selected the images that they used, so ensuring that they each were included with a particular purpose in mind. Some Centres used satellite images and maps very effectively and integrated them with graphs. This again helps candidates to provide evidence of their independence and initiative, affording them opportunities to offer a very personal perspective on their Investigation. There was further evidence of innovation – e.g. the calculation of a 'fairtrade preference score' – which again helps to supports marks given at Level 3. Another example related to interviews with some candidates clearly highlighting bias in the interviews that they conducted so helping then to critically evaluate their findings.

This year there was also some excellent use of figure numbers to clearly link them to the candidate's commentary. Written analysis once again proved most effective when it was included with the data presentation technique chosen. It proved more challenging for many candidates if they left their written analysis to the end. It would be helpful once again to remind candidates of the value in analysing each chart or graph as they appear in their work; this has the added benefit of ensuring that all data is analysed sufficiently and also helps candidates draw together some general conclusions.

One area that also was challenging for a significant number of candidates was in their ability to present a cohesive summary of their findings. While it may be related to the points made in the paragraph above, it is also perhaps seen as relatively unimportant by a small minority of the candidates themselves. The specification highlights the need for candidates to offer 'substantiated conclusions that address the key questions'. The ability to critically reflect upon the whole process of their Investigation – from planning, through to data collection and analysis and evaluation of findings - is not only essential if candidates are to justify marks at Level 3, but also if they are to successfully develop their ability to act and think like geographers . In the best work seen, some candidates reflected very honestly on their experiences, sometimes through the use of a dedicated Reflection section. The use of a bibliography has again increased, with the best being directly linked to, and clearly supporting, the aims of the study.

Overall this year has been successful with the vast majority of Centres responding to advice given by moderators last year. There were some very high quality enquiries, which reflect well upon the quality of teaching and hard work of candidates.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning
Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance
programme your call may be recorded or monitored