

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

GEOGRAPHY

OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in Geography

H081

For first teaching in 2016

H081/02 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 2 series overview

Candidate responses from the Summer 2025 series followed previous years' preferences in favour of three topics, Disease Dilemmas, Hazardous Earth, and Climate Change. An increasing number of centres focused on Climate Change. No candidates offered responses for Exploring Oceans and Future of Food; therefore, as a result commentary has not been provided for these questions.

Candidates had 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete the examination paper. The total maximum mark for the paper was 68 marks. The examination appeared to differentiate well between candidates of different aptitudes and levels of preparation. Across the optional units, candidates did perform comparably.

Section B required candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding from relevant topics to answer the synoptic questions. It is important for candidates to use the resource booklet, as this is a valuable source of information, which should be used to assist candidates when answering sub-part (a) questions. Candidates who achieved higher levels showed well-developed ideas linking resource evidence (AO1) to a particular theme. There was clear evidence of a holistic geographical perspective to stimulus data. Candidates who did not perform well within Section B often missed opportunities to use the data from the resource booklet to prove a particular viewpoint.

Section C offered a choice of two essay questions for each topic and candidates were required to select one. In the 20-mark essay questions candidates tended to focus more time on knowledge and understanding (AO1). Greater focus should be given to the importance of analysis and evaluation (AO2). Candidates should remember that place specific detail, case studies and examples are needed throughout the response, rather than just at the start of the response. Candidates who achieved Level 3 for their AO2 marks tended to decide whether they felt the statement was true or false. Candidates who performed well with their extended responses considered the statements and then reached a conclusion regarding the success, failure, or impact of the strategies.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• satisfied the specific requirements of any given question • wrote well-developed ideas linking resource evidence to a particular theme • gave clear evidence of a holistic geographical perspective to stimulus data • gave place specific detail, case studies and examples throughout the response • focused on the command words within the examination question • used accurate and clear geographical evidence throughout their responses • provided evaluative comments across the response in essays • were able to make clear links from different parts of the specification.	• struggled to apply their knowledge and understanding to the examination question • did not use the resources provided to their fullest extent • did not include exemplar support where it was a pre-requisite of the question • provided generalised discussions rather than place specific detail • did not use geographical evidence to support their conclusions • did not include necessary geographical terms or concepts.

Section A overview

Candidates could select one topic within Section A from a choice of five topics. There were no rubric errors indicating that candidates have a good awareness of the structure of the exam paper. The most popular topics were Climate Change and Disease Dilemmas followed by Hazardous Earth. No one answered the Future of Food or Exploring Oceans questions.

Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Explain how **two** geoengineering strategies might reduce the risks of climate change. [4]

A range of geoengineering strategies were referred to within this answer. Most common were the use of mirrors to reflect and aerosols. Good reference to the albedo effect and explanation of how these methods reduced the risk of climate change were given full marks.

Where candidates were not able to fully explain the strategies, marks were awarded accordingly.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Examine how past climate reveals periods of icehouse Earth. [6]

This required an understanding of icehouse Earth. The Earth's climate is dynamic and during icehouse conditions atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration is low, there are low global temperatures and large parts of continents are submerged by ice.

Candidates approached this differently. Some described the conditions and changes which occurred over time, others provided evidence for the conditions. A combination of the two provided the most successful approach.

Misconception



Tree rings (dendrochronology) is a method of dating past events of climate change, but not evidence that they occurred.

Question 1 (c) (ii)

- (ii) Using evidence from **Fig. 1**, suggest possible reasons for changes in the extent of Arctic sea ice. [6]

Within this question was an expectation to use evidence from Fig. 1. This evidence mainly included the reference to the warm currents present on the image.

The most effective answers were able not just to refer to the ocean currents but also referenced the thickness of the ice and subsequent effect on both the albedo effect and salinity of the water.

Those who discussed 'general causes' of climate change and how this impacts the Arctic were awarded a maximum of Level 2.

Question 1 (d)

- (d) 'The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provides the most significant human response to climate change.'

Discuss.

[12]

This was answered comprehensively. Candidates understood the aims of the IPCC and their role regarding climate change. In addition to this, the most effective responses contrasted the role of the IPCC with other international directives or schemes to respond to climate change, as well as using named examples to explain national and sub-national policies.

Question 2 (a)

2

- (a) Explain how nature has provided conditions for **two** different medicines used to treat disease. [4]

Candidates were successfully able to name different medicines from nature and often the use of this medicine. To be successful with this question, there was a need to explain the conditions required for the plants to grow.

Question 2 (b)

- (b) Examine how international organisations respond to the diffusion of disease. [6]

There are a range of organisations who respond to diseases including the WHO and a variety of NGOs. Reference to specific organisation(s) helped to support candidates with their responses to this question.

Candidates were required to focus the response on the diffusion of disease and as such needed to consider how disease spreads and therefore how organisations can predict and monitor as well as research movement. There were frequent references to COVID 19, and many were able to use this successfully. Answers focussing on what disease diffusion is, were less successful.

Question 2 (c) (ii)

- (ii) Using evidence from **Fig. 2**, suggest possible reasons for the variation in diabetes prevalence in Africa. [6]

Candidates were able to identify areas within Africa with high and low levels of diabetes prevalence. Reference to the names of countries were the main source of 'evidence' linking this to countries levels of development and subsequent impact on diabetes – a disease of affluence.

Question 2 (d)

- (d) 'Human factors affect the spread of disease following a natural hazard more than environmental factors.'

Discuss in the context of **one** country.

[12]

This question lent itself to using Haiti although any example was acceptable. Many described human factors being the aid workers bringing disease to Haiti. Broader consideration of human factors such as access to doctors/healthcare and medication for treatment or education for disease prevention would have really aided their evaluation.

Environmental factors were mainly linked to clean water availability. It would have been good to see reference to the extent and nature to the area covered.

While cholera was the primary example candidates referenced, this question could have been well-developed using an example such as malaria.

Question 5 (b)

- (b) Examine how fossil records provide evidence for theories of continental drift and plate tectonics. [6]

Candidates were clear on the meaning of continental drift, and many discussed the idea of 'continental fit' to back up the points they were making. They referenced evidence primarily including plants and animals being found on different continents- most referring to Africa and South America. Candidates would benefit from having greater understanding of the names of species such as *Lystrosaurus* to back this up.

Question 5 (c) (ii)

- (ii) Using evidence from **Fig. 5**, suggest possible reasons for features and processes associated with the **convergent** plate boundaries shown.

[6]

This question had two elements for consideration – features and processes and as such required both elements to reach full marks. Many answers were descriptive in terms of what happens at a convergent plate boundary. Some lacked precision of vocabulary slab pull, dense, subduction which would have benefitted their answer. Many were able to discuss the movement on the boundary but were unclear on the features – oceanic trenches, fold mountains, earthquakes and volcanicity.

Question 5 (d)

- (d) 'Mitigation against vulnerability is the only effective strategy to manage hazards from volcanic activity.'

Discuss.

[12]

Overall candidates showed a good understanding of mitigation strategies. The best answers had clear reference to place/examples to back up arguments.

To reach full marks it was necessary to make sure that there was clear evaluation of mitigation against vulnerability, managing the event and effective management after the event had taken place.

Section B overview

Candidates are expected to use Section B as their opportunity to provide synoptic geography within their examination responses. Synoptic assessment allows geography candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the connections between different aspects of the subject and topic content. It involves the explicit drawing together of knowledge, skills and understanding from different parts of the AS Level course. The synoptic questions will link each Geographical Debate to another topic within the AS content (Physical Systems or Human Interactions) but not another Geographical Debate.

Question 6 (a)

6

- (a) With reference to **Fig. 6**, suggest how the importance of the carbon cycle to climate change might influence players that drive economic change. [8]

There needed to be clear reference to the figure within candidates' responses and there were lots of options which could be chosen. To reach full marks the key component was consideration of 'players'. The best responses explored how players adapted what they did in response to climate change. This could be governments who consider emissions, or farmers and the impact of agriculture. There were some thoughtful ideas which came through in terms of application.

Question 6 (b)

- (b) Examine how the shrinking of valley glaciers and ice sheets might affect people's perception of places. [8]

Candidates were clear on the idea of place perception – most considering positive versus negative. Many drew on the negative with reference to ideas such as sea level rise and loss of ski resorts.

Reference to place examples such as the Alps would have aided candidate explanation and given context to their arguments.

Question 7 (a)

7

- (a) With reference to **Fig. 7**, suggest how the global distribution of tuberculosis can be linked to spatial patterns of social inequalities. [8]

Overall candidates were able to describe how tuberculosis is spread and as such linked this to high and low levels of development within a country.

Some candidates were able to draw in the idea of specific places and areas of deprivation where TB would be more likely or link this to issues with prevention. Those who linked to place generally performed at the top end.

Question 7 (b)

- (b) Examine how the socio-economic impacts of communicable diseases can influence characteristics of place profiles.

[8]

Place profile can link to the demographic structure of a place as well as the economic status. Candidates were able to refer to the economic strain of disease on a place and the impact on the age and sex structure. Ideas at times lacked connection and the inclusion of cause and effect in terms of the multiple layers of impact but especially to the shifting flow of people and money.

Question 10 (a)

10

- (a) With reference to **Fig. 10**, suggest how tsunamis generated by earthquakes can influence flows of money and investment.

[8]

Candidates engaged well with the figure when completing this question. They were able to reference the figure in terms of the destruction/impact caused by the tsunami. Flow of money was often discussed in terms of the need for aid, investment or spending on rebuilding. There was some consideration of the possibility of money moving out of a community where businesses consider the risk to be high. Overall, this question was well answered.

Question 10 (b)

- (b) Examine how volcanic eruptions of tephra and ash can affect place identity.

[8]

Place identity can be shaped by a variety of factors. Candidates were clear on what ash and tephra are and how these can affect place, primarily the built environment.

Many were limited in their application, as they weren't always able to make comprehensive links to place identity. Named examples of countries or volcanoes could have aided candidates here.

Section C overview

Two essay questions worth 20 marks are available for each topic in Section C; candidates are required to respond to one. The 20 marks available are divided into, 10 marks for AO1 (Knowledge and Understanding) and 10 marks for AO2 (Analysis and Evaluation). AO1 marks are given for showing knowledge and understanding of content directly from the specification. This includes a case study focus within the question. For AO2 marks candidates need to apply their knowledge and understanding, for the purposes of analysis and evaluation and to come to a rational, well-evidenced conclusion based on their chosen geographical topic. Candidates may benefit from some support working on command words and phrases, such as 'To what extent ...,' 'Assess the success of ...,' or simply 'Discuss.'

Assessment for learning



Before candidates begin an extended response, it is always good to see a plan. This helps them to sequence their thoughts and ideas. Therefore, it supports them to create a more fluent answer.

Assessment for learning



It is always good to see candidates read beyond the requirements of the specification. Knowing a wide variety of examples shows clear evidence of good geography and a candidate who has really engaged with the course and developed their understanding of Geography.

Question 11*

11* 'The impacts of climate change differ according to a country's stage of economic development.'

To what extent do you agree?

[20]

Candidates had a good understanding of levels of development. They were able to make clear links to how climate change could impact but also a place's ability to mitigate against climate change.

Place reference was clear; Bangladesh being frequently drawn upon. What would have been beneficial was a deeper counter argument being used – such as adaptation strategies which are simple and low cost in Bangladesh, or the increasing impact in countries such as the UK and the challenges faced by an advanced country.

Question 12*

12* 'Adaptation strategies are the most effective ways of reducing and managing the risks of climate change.'

Discuss.

[20]

This question was well received and subsequently promoted good discussion. There was clear development of a range of methods to manage the risks of climate change – modelling versus mitigation versus adaptation. The ability to discuss this at different scales was beneficial but not compulsory. Again good place reference, supported candidates in developing their responses.

Question 13*

13* To what extent is the prevalence of disease influenced by seasonal variations in climate? [20]

Malaria was the key focus of answers with many arguing that seasonal variation wasn't the only influence on prevalence.

To develop their and strengthen arguments, candidates needed at least two examples of seasonal variation for example seasonal flu. This would have allowed for greater contrast with the diseases, which are less impacted by seasonality.

Question 14*

14* 'National solutions provide the best way of dealing with incidences of cancers.'

Discuss in the context of **one** country experiencing air pollution.

[20]

There are often large regional differences in incidence of cancers within a country and between countries. Candidates were able to discuss national solutions – primarily in India or the UK.

To support evaluation most candidates contrasted this to global strategies and their level of success. While the question asked for reference to one country, there was an acceptance of the need to widen the scale to strengthen the argument.

Question 19*

19* 'People only choose to live in tectonically active locations for economic reasons.'

Discuss.

[20]

Overall, there was a positive discussion of the wide variety of reasons people choose to live in tectonically active areas. The question provided a good opportunity to discuss all these factors.

What held some candidates back was a lack of clear place reference. It is vital to be able to draw on a range of examples to aid the point being made.

Question 20*

20* 'Ability to deal with the problems presented by tectonic hazards has never really changed.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

Fewer candidates completed this question. Those who did, were able to discuss points, such as monitoring over time and ability to deal with the aftermath. There were references at times to historical examples like Krakatoa. This is a question which leant itself to 'reading around the subject'. Those who candidates with a wider knowledge were able to show more thorough application.

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