



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE
GEOGRAPHY**

SUMMER 2022

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UNIT 1: CHANGING PHYSICAL AND HUMAN LANDSCAPES

General Comments

The general performance of candidates in this paper suggests that it was of appropriate standard and a fair test in which the full range of candidates were able to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do. Differentiation was effectively achieved through a balance of shorter questions and more challenging extended writing sections and there were no individual items evident where large numbers of candidates either performed badly or chose not to attempt. It was pleasing to see that most items in questions 1 and 2 had attempt rates in excess of 95% with none below 90%. Overall, the mean mark for the Unit 1 paper was 39.7/83 which was 2.3 marks below the mean in 2019. Given the challenges faced by candidates and their teachers over the past two years, this represents a fairly pleasing outcome although it is likely that this reduction was largely due to a disappointing response to the two AO2 items in question 1, described below.

As required by the specification, the questions were driven by the assessment objectives with each item assessing a single objective. Candidates continue, in the main, to find AO1.1 and AO3 questions more accessible and AO2 questions generally more challenging although the latter tends to be characterised by a greater requirement for extended writing which accounts for part of this difference. However, the general standard of AO2 responses was felt to have improved slightly and there were many examples of responses entering higher bands in the three questions where candidates were required to justify their agreement or otherwise of a statement in relation to retailing, volcanic lava flows and coastal management.

As in previous years, there was approximately a 60:40 split in response to the optional themes, in favour of Theme 3. Outcomes were similar in both options.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Theme 1: Landscapes and Physical Processes

- Q1** **(a)** **(i)** This was a high scoring question, and most candidates were able to choose the correct four figure grid reference for the confluence of the two rivers.
- (ii)** Most candidates were able to demonstrate basic map skills by giving the correct direction of flow of the Afon Dulais.

- (iii)** Although most candidates understood that relief was linked to contour patterns, many responses tended to be fairly simplistic and superficial, often lacking direct reference to the map to provide evidence for the description of relief across the whole of box A. For example, a common response was that the relief was 'hilly' or 'mountainous' as denoted by the closely packed contours. However, many candidates were able to identify that the key relief feature in the box was a V shaped valley but then failed to adequately describe it as in the command for the question. This could have been done by referencing the evidence of contour lines increasing in value either side of the river. Although many candidates identified that there were variations in relief in different parts of box A with some parts steeper and others flatter, only a minority accurately described these using compass directions or grid references to accurately locate the variations. As such, the mean mark for this question remained in band 1 and it is clear that the application of OS map skills is an area where candidates' responses can improve.
- (iv)** This was a generally high scoring question with the mean mark of 1.3 showing that the majority of candidates were able to accurately demonstrate their knowledge of river processes by identifying abrasion as an erosion process where the agent of erosion is the river's load. A minority of responses lacked sufficient detail by describing the link between the river load and the wearing away of the river channel.
- (b)**
- (i)** This question required candidates to demonstrate their understanding of ratios by converting the scale ratio of the map into the correct distance between two points. Although only worth 2 marks, the question proved to be a good discriminator with a mean mark of 0.9 as although many candidates gave the correct answer of 6km, presumably by using the scale line measurement, only a minority were able to demonstrate how this could be derived from the 1:50 000 scale and thus achieve the second mark for the working out. However, a significant number found the whole concept a challenge and this stresses the importance of full coverage of Appendix A in the specification where application of a range mathematical skills in a geographical context is required.
- (ii)** This 3-mark AO2 question required candidates to apply their OS map interpretation skills to draw inference from the map. The low facility factor of 32.9 shows that most candidates found this challenging. There were a many creditworthy responses which described in simple terms how the railway line must avoid the river and the higher land to the north and south. However, there were few responses which were able to link the south-west to north-east route of the railway to the floodplain as the dominant landform in this part of the map area which provides the flat land on which it could be built. Where they did make this link, some were able to develop their answer, making reference to the embankments and bridges as means to avoid potential impact from flooding on the railway but responses with this level of sophistication were few and far between.

- (iii)** Again, this question required an analysis of the OS map and focused attention specifically on the landforms in Box B. Coupled with the clear command to use evidence from the map in the answer, this made the question clearly an AO2 application rather than AO1.2 understanding question and the majority of candidates again found this a challenge with a low facility factor of 34.1 and a mean mark in band 1 of the mark scheme. The key landforms in box B are the floodplain of the River Tywi, its meanders and their associated features. Many candidates focussed attention on the meanders and provided creditworthy analysis of the processes involved in their formation and change over time but were unable to link this to the development of the floodplain as the meanders change their position and migrate across the floodplain. Furthermore, only very few candidates effectively supported their answers with map evidence. As such, answers which may have scored higher as an AO1.2 question requiring pure explanation, lacked application to the context provided and were unable to enter the top band of the mark scheme. However, a minority of candidates were able to provide very good responses at the top band that focused clearly on the landforms in the box, well supported by map evidence, such as the ox-bow lakes which mark former positions of the river channel. However, it should be noted that many weaker candidates were able to access the lower band marks by providing worthwhile descriptions of relevant landforms in the box.
- (c)**
- (i)&(ii)** Most candidates were able to recall knowledge of the stores and flows in the drainage basin.
- (iii)** Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least some understanding of the changing balance between stores and flows in relation to weather and climate and the mean mark for this item was firmly in band 2 of the mark scheme. There were many examples where candidates provided good explanation of the linkages through several different scenarios, and many were able to relate the increase in overland flow, once infiltration capacity, has been reached to the risk of flooding. Where candidates scored fewer marks, responses tended simply to lack depth and/or detail or were more descriptive in nature, failing to provide chains of reasoning.
- Q2**
- (a)**
- (i)** This map skills question proved to be a good discriminator as most candidates achieved the two easier marks but failed to correctly estimate the percentage of urban/rural areas in Wales by not observing the map key, which would have clearly signposted them to the darkest tone only.
- (ii)** This was a very high scoring question showing that candidates were able to recall correct characteristics of rural areas.
- (iii)** An accessible AO1.2 question and most candidates provided a valid and elaborated reason. The most common route to both marks was to explain why the relief of mid-Wales inhibits building or the development of transport and communications. A significant minority failed to achieve both marks through either not elaborating the initial reason or by providing two separate points that were not connected by a simple chain of reasoning.

- (b)**
- (i)** The majority of candidates were able to adequately describe the pattern shown on the map. Most candidates achieving full marks supported their descriptive points with quantification from the map.
 - (ii)** Most candidates were able to identify relevant challenges facing rural communities and a wide range of challenges were offered, including lack of services, limited public transport, limited/low paid work, and school closures. The mean mark of 2 for this response demonstrates that many candidates are able to identify the challenges but where they failed to achieve full marks, it was often through a lack of development or elaboration in their points although the mark scheme did allow for 3 marks to be awarded where one point was well developed compared to the other.
 - (iii)** This AO1.2 question examined understanding of the impact of urban spheres of influence on rural poverty and deprivation in KQ 2.1.2 of the specification. On the whole, candidates performed fairly well and the mean mark in band 2 shows that even weaker candidates were able to access marks through demonstrating some understanding of the impact of urban areas on service provision in rural areas with many able to offer sophisticated chains of reasoning to elaborate on the cycle of rural deprivation. There were many very good responses relating the concentration of services in urban areas to service decline and lack of investment in rural areas. Where answers did not access the upper bands, there was often a tendency to refer to the physical migration of people to urban areas as the cause of rural decline and deprivation rather than declining service provision. There was also a common tendency to describe the challenges of living in rural areas and thus repeat answers provided in the previous question rather than explain those challenges in terms of urban expansion as required in the question.
- (c)** There was a pleasing general improvement in the quality of responses to this AO2 question evidenced in that candidates were, in the main, comfortable with the subject matter of the question. The mean mark of 3.7 shows this to be towards the top of band 2 of the mark scheme. There were many examples of very good answers in bands 3 and 4 which demonstrated good analysis of all the resources and a balanced argument with chains of reasoning leading to a conclusion. Indeed, very few candidates failed to provide a conclusion which demonstrates that they, and their teachers are becoming more comfortable with this style of question. It was also pleasing to see additional exemplar material on other town centre strategies, often in named areas, used to supplement the resources and support judgements. There was also consideration of other factors which may impact on the success of town centre strategies such as online shopping and the covid-19 pandemic, although references to the latter were less common than may have been expected. Where candidates scored less well, they tended to either provide an unbalanced assessment, failed to argue both sides of the statement, did not consider the resources or their final judgement was not directly related to the analysis presented. It is worth pointing out here that by far the most common approach is for candidates to state their level of agreement in the first sentence, which although perfectly acceptable, can constrain their answer where their assessment of the evidence leads them down a different path.

- Q3**
- (a)**
- (i)&(ii)** The majority of candidates scored highly and were able to read the correct information from the histogram.
 - (iii)** Many candidates either tended to score both marks or zero depending on whether they knew the difference between a bar chart and a histogram. However, it was pleasing to see that many candidates were able to refer to the facts that continuous data presented in ranges and in the form of a frequency make the histogram more suitable for the data presented in the question. However, this question provided the lowest facility factor along with the equivalent in Qu4 and it serves to reinforce the point made above that all aspects of Appendix A in the specification need to be covered and that these include more evaluative skills in relation to mathematical techniques as well as the ability to simply read them and describe what they show.
 - (iv)** Most candidates understood that lower magnitude earthquakes emit less energy, but many failed to develop the answer with more detail to earn the second mark, by for example linking energy to the volume of water that could be displaced, and thus the size of the wave.
- (b)**
- (i)** This question was generally well done and there was a wide range of creditworthy responses that candidates were able to give for just two marks. Although most gave specific locational points such as Big Island, it was pleasing to see many candidates provide accurate distance and direction from other volcanoes or features on the map.
 - (ii)** The low facility factor and mean mark of only 1.3/4 for this AO1.1 question shows that the majority of those who had studied Theme 3 found this question a challenge. However, many were able to demonstrate good recall of the features of a shield volcano and achieved 3 or 4 marks with the most common responses referring to the shape of the volcano and the nature of the lava emitted.
 - (iii)** This was generally a low scoring question, again with a very low facility factor and a mean of only 0.9/4 with a many candidates unable to demonstrate understanding of why hot spots create chains of volcanoes. Many responses were too simplistic, describing volcanoes in general terms with reference to no more than magma reaching the surface. The key point of understanding here was that they needed to show that a hot-spot remains stationary whilst a plate moves over it, creating the chain of volcanoes which increase in age away from the hot-spot. Once this level of understanding had been given, there was little further sophistication required and it was possible to achieve full marks with a fairly brief answer. Unfortunately, only a minority of candidates were able to do this. Some of the higher scoring responses made good use of a diagram to support the answer but this was not a requirement.

(c) There was a pleasing response to this AO2 question which required justification of an opinion in relation to an assertion that lava flows present the most serious danger to people and the economy. The mean of 3.9/8 is at the top of band 2 and there were very many good responses in bands 3 and 4 which picked up on a number of nuances in the question and suggested that lava flows may have a greater impact on the economy than on people, using the range of resources to good effect to illustrate this point. Many then went on to compare lava flows with other volcanic hazards such as pyroclastic flows and lahars which were recognised as having a much greater impacts such as loss of life. A few high-quality responses provided evidence in the form of other examples that they had studied. As in question 2(c), where candidates scored less well, their responses lacked detailed consideration of the range of resources and/or were unbalanced and not exploring both sides of the argument. Again, however, it was pleasing to see that nearly all candidates attempted to provide a conclusion or judgement and that in most cases, this was based on the resources.

- Q4 (a)**
- (i)&(ii)** The majority of candidates scored highly and were able to read the correct information from the histogram.
 - (iii)** Many candidates either tended to score both marks or zero depending on whether they knew the difference between a bar chart and a histogram. However, it was pleasing to see that many candidates were able to refer to the facts that continuous data presented in ranges and in the form of a frequency make the histogram more suitable for the data presented in the question. However, this question provided the lowest facility factor along with the equivalent in Qu3 and it serves to reinforce the point made above that all aspects of Appendix A in the specification need to be covered and that these include more evaluative skills in relation to mathematical techniques as well as the ability to simply read them and describe what they show.
 - (iv)** Most candidates were able to explain why wind strength is a concern to coastal communities. Many referred to the increased risk of flooding from storms in coastal areas and received credit for this, but it should be noted that this was not credited in the sizable minority of cases where the flooding was not related to wind strength, for example in generating more destructive waves.
- (b)**
- (i)** This question was generally well done and there was a wide range of creditworthy responses that candidates were able to give for just two marks.

- (b) (ii) As in the equivalent in Q3, many candidates found this a challenge but the main reason here was that many struggled with providing a social factor. By far the most common economic factor referred to was poverty or the level of development which affects the quality of coastal defences in place but many candidates either did not understand the term 'social' or simply could not recall a social factor that affects vulnerability, such as population density at the coast or the quality of housing, although this latter point could have been used as economic also. Another reason for candidates failing to score marks in the question was the tendency to write about the actual consequences or impact of flooding on coastal communities rather than the factors affecting vulnerability to the impact.
- (iii) This AO1.2 question was generally well answered with most candidates relating the risk of flooding to increased temperatures, melting ice and rising sea levels as a simple chain of reasoning. As such, many answers reached the top band but where they failed to achieve full marks it tended to be due to a lack of depth/detail in explanation. The better responses went on to explain increased flood risk in terms of thermal expansion of the sea as well as melting ice or in relation to increased intensity and frequency of storms resulting from increased heat energy in the atmosphere.
- (c) There was a pleasing response to this AO2 question which required justification of an opinion in relation to an assertion that all coastal communities should be protected from coastal flooding. The level of demand of the question was very similar to Qu3c as shown by the almost identical mean mark at 3.7/8, again near to the top of band 2. There were many good responses in bands 3 and 4 which gave balanced arguments both in favour and against the statement, making good use of the range of resources provided. However, although many candidates agreed with statement, citing the impact on the community and economy of Fairbourne from entering into managed retreat by using the information in the resources, very picked up on the wider UK implication in the question where the argument may have been made in relation to the sustainability of coastal protection in the light of climate change produced rise in sea levels. As in question 2(c), where candidates scored less well, their responses lacked detailed consideration of the range of resources and/or were unbalanced and not exploring both sides of the argument. Again, however, it was pleasing to see that nearly all candidates attempted to provide a conclusion or judgement and that in most cases, this was based on the resources.

Summary of key points

1. Candidates need to be encouraged to develop their OS map interpretation skills to more sophisticated levels so that features referenced and identified in the map can be related to various human and physical contexts. Candidates should be able to use maps to illustrate and account for geographical patterns and processes. Candidates should also ensure that they are more objective in their use of map evidence to back up points made when this requirement is contained in the command for a question in which a map resource is used. Map evidence can come in the form of place names, grid references, features from the key and accurate use of distance and compass direction.

2. Many candidates continue to limit the marks they achieve in the extended writing sections because they do not extend their initial statement with detailed elaborations and chains of reasoning. These need to be specific and more sophisticated to reach Bands 3 and 4. This is particularly the case when evaluating or expressing an opinion in AO2 questions where the chain of reasoning needs to lead the answer towards the conclusion or opinion. The majority of candidates express their opinion in the first sentence which, whilst acceptable, can constrain more able candidates where their discussion of the evidence leads them in a different direction.
3. It is important to recognise that skills questions based on Appendix A of the specification require candidates to do more than read and interpret graphs and other resources. Candidates should be able to identify weaknesses in data presentation as well as being able to select appropriate methods. There is a wide range of mathematical skills included in Appendix A and it should be anticipated that questions will, over time, examine them all.

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UNIT 2: ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

General Comments

The overall performance demonstrated by candidates in this paper indicates that it was of appropriate standard. The variety of question styles, together with a balance of short and more challenging extended writing questions enabled differentiation to be effectively achieved for the full ability range of candidates to illustrate their geographical knowledge, understanding and skill. All questions were attempted by most candidates indicating the language used in the question and the time allowance given were accessible and appropriate. As required by the specification, all 4 assessment objectives (AOs) were examined across the paper with each item assessing a single objective.

As in previous series, there was approximately a 55:45 split in response to the optional these, in favour of Theme 7. Outcomes were similar in both options.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Theme 5: Weather, Climate and Ecosystems

- Q1**
- (a)**
- (i)** This was an accessible and high scoring question in which most candidates were able to select the correct definition of the term biome.
 - (ii)** The majority of candidates were able to make good use of the resource and reference key lines of latitude when describing global distribution of rainforests. Many candidates were able to achieve full marks for this question, however a few gave locational references as opposed to distribution.
 - (iii)** The majority of candidates were able to access this question and explained the rainfall and temperature requirements for the growth of tropical rainforests. However, few candidates were able to extend their answers to explain how the lack of seasonality provides extended growing seasons to gain full marks. Most candidates achieved band 1 for this question.
- (b)**
- (i)** A very accessible question in which the vast majority of candidates gained full marks.
 - (ii)** Most candidates were able to show their graphical interpretation skills by correctly identifying the trend shown in the graph. However, when using quantification to elaborate their answer, despite the grid lines a number gave inaccurate readings.

- (c) As a 4-mark AO3 skills question the candidates were required to draw conclusions from the data shown in the graph. The majority of candidates were able to access this question by describing the trend lines and identifying that the two factors have a negative correlation. However only a minority of candidates demonstrated the ability to use this information, identify a link and draw conclusions from the data. The specification identifies the ability to 'draw informed conclusions' from new data as a skill and therefore candidates should be encouraged to do this.
- (d) (i) Many candidates were unable to access the band 2 marks for this AO2 focused question. Often candidates did not use the resource effectively and by not recognising the question was about small-scale food production, they limited themselves to band 1. Where candidates did use the resource, they were able to confidently apply their own knowledge and suggest reasons such as food for their family or community and being able to sell any remaining food.
- (ii) As a straightforward knowledge question, it was clear to see whether candidates knew this term. Those that did, easily gained full marks. However, nearly 20% of candidates did not attempt this question indicating that candidates were unfamiliar with the term. Candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions.
- (iii) The majority of candidates were able to suggest a reason for the reduction of biodiversity, but the elaboration to gain the second mark was weak. For example, a common answer was 'destruction of the habitat' but there was no extension to this to explain why this reduced biodiversity. Many candidates simply added 'which reduces biodiversity' which was a repeat of the question.
- (iv) The focus of this question was to look at challenges at different scales. Most candidates made use of the resources provided, whilst others brought in their own knowledge of challenges created by food production, which was equally acceptable. Some candidates did not recognise that they needed to look at the challenges at different scales – many mentioned large and small scale in their opening sentence and then illustrated the challenges with no further reference to scale. With a mean mark of 2.5 this shows a significant number of candidates were limited to band 1 due to not addressing the scale aspect of the question. Most candidates did refer to more than one challenge which was pleasing to see. Where candidates referred to more than one challenge at both scales, the vast majority gained band 3 marks.

Theme 6: Development and Resource Issues

- Q2**
- (a)**
 - (i)** An accessible question where the majority of candidates were able to select the correct terms.
 - (ii)** The majority of candidates were able to provide a reason, whether that be a limiting factor of an economic measure or that social/environmental factors may show a different level of development to economic. It was good to see a variety of approaches in how candidates tackled this question, although the elaboration was often weak. Those that did elaborate effectively often brought in examples of their own knowledge which was pleasing to see.
 - (b)**
 - (i)** It was clear that many candidates did not know how to calculate a percentage as the facility factor for this question was below 30%. However, for those that did it was good to see the vast majority including their workings so that they could gain access to the full range of marks.
 - (ii)** This question is another example of an AO3 skill question which tested the candidates extended writing skills. For this question, the focus was on comparing sets of data and it was good to see that the majority of candidates used comparative language. A significant number provided the two comparisons that the data showed with a minority of these providing data from the table to substantiate their observations.
 - (c)** Candidates generally performed well in this question. The majority addressed the 'to what extent' element at the beginning of their answer and then justified their choice through the remainder of their response, whilst others discussed the debate first and then gave a conclusion with their view. Either approach is acceptable. Good use was made of the resources provided and many candidates were able to provide the advantages of how Fair Trade helps with development with a lesser amount also suggesting some disadvantages. Many candidates suggested other methods of boosting development in LICs, the majority of which used the suggestion of aid from the resource, but it was great to see other candidates applying their own knowledge to this situation and suggesting other ideas such as debt-for-nature swaps. Many candidates were therefore able to access the higher bands 3 and 4 due to the quality of their answer and the elaborated chains of reasoning they provided.
 - (d)**
 - (i)** This question was a straightforward knowledge question where candidates could have gained full marks in several ways – either through unrelated points or through one factor followed by a cycle of events that it creates. However, it was disappointing to see that 22% of candidates did not attempt the question and only a small number of candidates gained full marks. Many were able to give one or two factors e.g., the closure of a factory, but could not then describe the chain of events that this may cause. A significant minority of candidates did not remain focused on the question asked but instead talked about the north/south divide and why the south is more prosperous.

- (d) (ii) This question was an AO1.2 question, testing the candidates understanding. Again, many candidates were able to suggest the initial reasons as to why investment may create growth, but the chains of reasoning were limited, and candidates did not explore the full chain of events. As such most candidates were able to gain band 2 marks but were unable to explain in sufficient detail to access band 3.

Theme 7: Social Development Issues

- Q.3** (a) (i) A straightforward accessible question where the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct statements.
- (ii) Whilst a few candidates gave an economic factor, most were able to provide two factors that influence death rates. It was interesting to see some candidates bringing recent global events into their answers by referencing Covid 19.
- (iii) A significant minority of candidates struggled to understand this question. Either they did not realise that the death rates had increased in the late years in the graph, or they talked about factors affecting birth rates. However, those that did understand the resource and the focus of the question were able to gain full marks.
- (iv) Candidates appeared to respond well to this question. The vast majority recognised the need to talk about social factors and birth rates, and many were able to provide detailed chains of reasoning to gain band 3 marks. However, some candidates, whilst discussing social factors were talking about how they affect death rates which was not the focus of the question. Whilst others provided social factors that would increase the birth rate which was not in the resource.
- (b) (i) Most candidates were able to access some marks for this ‘describe the pattern’ question. Good use was made of the information provided on the map – reference to the cities shown, the coastline and neighbouring regions, together with direction. However, a significant number of candidates made assumptions that were not shown on the map which were incorrect. E.g., if the area on the map was not labelled a city, then they thought it was a rural area which is not the case. Centres should encourage candidates to use the resources shown on the map only in these type of questions as there will always be more than enough information provided for them to gain full marks.
- (ii) The majority of candidates were able to give a challenge created by HIV, but less were able to elaborate this reason for the second mark. However, many gave another reason which could not be credited as the question only asked for one or gave a factor which was a cause of high HIV rates rather than the challenge they create.

- (c) Candidates responded well to this question and the vast majority made good use of the resources provided to form the basis of the answers. However, a significant minority also brought in their own knowledge of strategies to tackle HIV which was pleasing to see and equally creditworthy. Most candidates considered two strategies, but many gave only the positives of each and made their judgment on which they thought was the best. An 'evaluate' question requires the candidates to consider both the positives and negatives, and those that did were able to gain band 3 marks.

Theme 8: Environmental Challenges

- Q.4**
- (a)
- (i) A straightforward accessible question where the vast majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct statements.
- (ii) Many candidates were able to explain that the graph showed that ecological footprint had overtaken the natural resources per hectare, but only 25% candidates were able to elaborate this to gain the second mark. They could not suggest any implications of this relationship.
- (iii) An accessible question which the vast majority of candidates attempted and gained some marks. Most were able to give two factors although on occasion the suggestions were too generic and needed greater clarification. The more able candidates were able to elaborate their descriptions to gain full marks.
- (iv) Candidates seemed to respond well to this question and knew the advantages of monitoring ecological footprints. However, few were able to provide the chain of reasoning and link the monitoring to informing planning in enough detail to gain a band 3 mark. The majority of candidates provided band 1 & 2 answers. The depth of reasoning and hence understanding needed to be improved.
- (b)
- (i) Most candidates were able to access some marks for this 'describe the pattern' question. Some candidates made good use of the lines of latitude and reference to existing deserts on the map to describe the pattern they could see. However, many were imprecise with their descriptions which led to them not gaining credit. Some candidates were able to give names of the existing deserts (which are not labelled on the map) and also recognised the trend of risk decreasing the further away from the existing deserts you go. Both of which are pleasing to see and show a greater level of skill.
- (c) Candidates responded well to this question and the vast majority made good use of the resources provided to form the basis of the answers. However, a significant minority also brought in their own knowledge of strategies to tackle climate which was pleasing to see and equally creditworthy (however sometimes this was focused on a local level rather than an international level.) Most candidates considered two strategies, but many gave only the positives of each and made their judgment on which they thought was the best. An 'evaluate' question requires the candidates to consider both the positives and negatives, and those that did were able to gain band 3 marks.

Summary of key points

1. For AO2 application of knowledge questions it is important that candidates are aware of the demands of the question. All 6 mark and higher questions will use a command words/phrases such as 'evaluate' or 'to what extent do you agree'. As such each has a different requirement of the candidate and what they need to include in their answer in order to access full marks.
2. Ensure candidates know their specialist terms. Throughout the specification, under the depth of study column there are key terms which can be used within the exam paper. If candidates know and understand these specialist geographical terms then they will not only have a greater understanding of the subject, but also understand the questions more easily and access the more straightforward 'define a term' questions. Additionally, the use of specialist terms is considered within the 3 marks awarded for accuracy of writing in question 2.
3. Candidates need to practice elaborating their answers. There were several questions within this paper that required candidates to give one reason/ factor and the question was worth 2/3 marks. As only one reason/factor is required the remaining marks are for elaboration. For example, if a question asked a candidate to describe one challenge, then the candidate's elaboration cannot be an explanation of why it is a challenge but an enhancement of the description. The elaboration must be within the same AO.

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UNIT 3: FIELDWORK ENQUIRY

General Comments

This Unit 3 NEA assessment was adapted in line with the whole examination series and in this context, each centre, and their respective candidates, were required to cover either the methodological approach on 'changes over time' (question 1) or the conceptual framework on 'sustainability' (question 2). Therefore, this Unit 3 effectively examined 50% of that expected in previous assessments. The questions set for both question 1 and question 2 were the same and covered identical assessment criteria.

Overall, a majority (64%) candidates answered question 1 on 'changes over time', with the remaining candidates (36%) answering question 2 on sustainability. There was a similar, well distributed, range of marks on both questions. There are general findings that need to be considered:

- Candidates tended to be aware of the context to their answer whether that be 'change over time' or 'sustainability.'
- Nearly all were able to use the allocated space in the answer booklet for question 1bi/2bi.
- There were only a very few examples of candidates answering both questions which was not required.
- There remain too many cases where candidates do not fully understand key command words in different questions. This particularly applies to the term analyse in 1bii/2bii.
- The reference to, and use of actual evidence from, their own investigation remains poorly developed by too many candidates. It is by adding such specific details that answers can be credited at the higher bands.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q1/Q2(a) – AO1.2: 4 marks

The mean mark for those who attempted either Q1 or Q2 was at the top of Band 1. There were however good examples of answers that were able to attain Band 2 with more detailed and specific references to data collection methods for changes over time or sustainability.

At Band 1 candidates could describe the data collection methods, but not many could give reasons for their choice. Some wrote more generally about the primary and/or secondary data collection methods they had worked with. Whilst they were able to give more than one reason for their choice of data collection method(s), but these were not always related specifically enough to either changes over time or sustainability. This may highlight the fact that they had some understanding of what a questionnaire or pedestrian / traffic count was, but they were not so clear of the reason why they were using these techniques as part of their investigation.

In addition, there were examples where candidates wrote in detail about sampling techniques. This has some relevance but again this is more about how the data will be collected rather than the method itself. As such the top of Band 1 was often the limit for more general explanations.

Advice:

- Candidates must learn more about why they are undertaking certain methods of data collection if they are to access the higher bands. Too few are able to be very detailed and specific about what they are doing.
- Candidates should use and reference their own study/investigation.

Q1/Q2(b)(i) – AO3: 6 marks

This question has established itself over successive NEA assessments. It should be an opportunity for most candidates to excel and this year standards have improved slightly with fewer Band 1 responses. Overall, the mean mark for those that attempted either Q1 or Q2 was at the top of Band 2.

The initial significant factor for consideration is for candidates to draw a table and include relevant data. In addition to this, candidates must use this information to complete their choice of graph or map.

Nearly all candidates did draw their choice of graph in the allocated space in their answer booklet (graphs must not be drawn on separate paper). Very few candidates drew more than one graph.

In some cases, candidates were not able to access Band 3 because the graph or map they chose to draw did not provide clear reference to changes over time or sustainability.

There were particularly good examples which included well executed bar, line and scatter graphs which successfully addressed all of the SAC components (S – suitability; A – accuracy; C – completeness). Other examples such as radial graphs were not well executed in terms of the diagonal scale not being the same as the horizontal/vertical scale. Some graphs were incomplete (lacked titles/labelled axis, etc).

Some centres appear to have taught their candidates graphing techniques that were not wholly correct or suitable for the data collected and the context of sustainability/change over time.

Certain graphs did not show change over time because they were simply a representation of data at one site or location. For example, the velocity of a river at one site or the traffic counted at one location, at one time. In doing so any visual impression of change was not evident.

Advice:

The drawing of graphs is an important aspect of any investigative study, and it is important to note the following points in improving standards further.

- There were still cases where a table of data was not included and therefore it was not possible to assess accuracy as part of the SAC criteria.
- Candidates should produce a table of data that is easily read by the examiner and only include data which is specific to the graph they are going to produce.

- The choice of vertical scale on graphs was poorly executed in a number of examples, which made it very difficult for the candidates to gain accuracy marks.
- Centres would benefit from looking at specifics of graphical techniques using the SAC method (suitable, accurate and completed) and the SALT method (scale, axis, labels, and title).
- Some candidates failed to reach full marks because they chose to represent their data using a simple line or bar graph which limited the mark awarded.
- Candidates were better at using the designated page for drawing a graph, but this is still an important area for reminders.
- There were excellent examples of radial graphs being used but, in some cases, credit was reduced because the axis included different types and units of information.

Q1/Q2(b)(ii) – AO2: 4 marks

For answers in both Q1 and Q2, the mean mark was at the top of Band 1 reflecting the fact that overall answers provided a more basic analysis rather than a detailed one. The question required candidates to consider a number of different elements in order to meet Band 2 standards. Most significantly, the command word 'analyse' needs to be discussed more with students and this matter has already been highlighted in a previous report as an area for improvement.

As the mean mark suggests, candidates are now more versed in identifying basic, simple data patterns from the graph/map drawn. However, their ability to make links between different sets of data and more complex inter-relationships limits their responses to Band 1. Far too many candidates simply described the patterns/trends shown by their graph. Any links or connections were simple at best and answers in such cases were only able to offer a more general description of the data plotted on the graph.

The best answers at Band 2 were able to provide detailed analysis of trends and/or patterns such as the increasing rate of change, consideration for anomalous results and make links between different sets of data or application to geographical theory/concept.

Advice:

- Understanding of command words, in this case 'analyse' was a key differentiating factor in the outcomes for this question. For the second year this proved too much of a challenge for too many candidates.
- Similarly, 'patterns' and 'trends' were often applied loosely by candidates and without precise meaning. Literacy for describing, quantifying and qualifying trends or qualifying distribution patterns was generally weak.
- Candidates can be awarded more credit where they are able to structure answers more effectively and even where the overall knowledge may be limited, the use of some specialist terms in the right context will improve the overall standard and mark given.

Q1/Q2(c) – AO1.2: 6 marks

Most candidates understood what secondary data was and were able to identify simple strengths and weaknesses of secondary data collection. This was reflected in the overall mean mark for both Q1 and Q2 which was around half-marks, within Band 2.

At Band 1 the responses were often generalised, with vague references to online articles or photographs. In addition to these generic references the candidates offered very little if any connection to how secondary information applied to their study / investigation.

Candidates who produced very good answers at Band 3 were able to show a good understanding of the evaluative demands of this question. Writing with clear structure and purpose, candidates provided examples of secondary sources and essentially linked them to their study / investigation. This included the use of historical maps, reports, historical weather data and meaningful reference to websites. In the latter there were examples where candidates selected information correctly but also quoted data such as visitor numbers to support conclusions about distance travelled in comparison to their own primary information.

Overall, the mean mark for both questions showed that the accuracy of writing was in the intermediate band. There was some excellent examples of very effective communication and a wide use of specialist terms. In these cases, answers were structured well and knowledge and understanding was clear and relevant.

Advice:

- Knowledge and understanding of the different sources of secondary information can be improved and more specifically strengths and weaknesses.
- The best answers were able to discuss specifics regarding the use of secondary data. For example, velocity data was used to compare the changes in flow across sites and across different sources. A named website or the year of a previously published report was used and then identified specific strengths and weaknesses that had a bearing on their actual fieldwork. Another example was the use of the BBC weather website before the fieldtrip to check that a river or coastal environment would be safe.
- Other successful responses evaluated the use of data that had been collected previously, e.g., the use of secondary data of a pedestrian survey. Specific weaknesses could then be drawn, such as the fact that the exact location or time of the secondary data collection was unknown leading to issues of reliability.

Summary of key points

A summary of key points includes:

- Many candidates responses stay in the lower bands, as the mean marks for each question suggests, as these responses provided very limited reference to the candidate's own study / investigation. The higher bands credit more detailed and specific responses to candidate's own investigation.
- The graphical / map drawing question is well established. It starts with a well-presented table of data from which candidates are able to produce an accurate graph or map, using the information in their table. Knowledge and understanding of the most appropriate graph or map to represent such information is the next part of a response at the highest band.
- Understanding of command words, for example 'analyse' is a key differentiating factor and each year such terms are proving to be too much of a challenge for many candidates.



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