



GCE

Geography

Advanced GCE **A2 H483**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H083**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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F761 Managing Physical Environments

General Comments

The paper provided appropriate opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their geographical knowledge and understanding. The format of the paper and the structure of the mark scheme were unchanged from previous series, although this was the first year without a January entry and so almost all candidates were sitting the paper for the first time.

There were some gaps in candidate knowledge and, despite their presence in the specification content, terms such as slope processes and meltwater were not universally known.

As ever, cause-effect linkages could be explained more fully and located examples used more effectively.

In all essays, whilst conclusions are now much more commonly included, it was disappointing to see many lacking an introduction. This can be helpful in setting the scene and putting the focus of the question in context. Many candidates simply launch straight into an example. It is also essential for achieving high AO2 marks that the question is explicitly addressed in the body of the answer. Comments highlighting the reasons for differences between the examples used are particularly useful.

There was little evidence of candidates having run out of time.

Some rubric errors were seen; typically when candidates answered both Questions 1 and 2.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

1 (a) (i) This question was generally well answered. The best responses located activities using four or six figure grid references but equally effective responses used other locational information from the map, such as place names, points of the compass and distances. Centres would be wise to continue to provide opportunities for candidates to practise basic map skills as a significant number of candidates could not use grid references accurately, whilst others did not locate the activities at all.

1 (a) (ii) Many answers referred to the obvious importance of transport links for the movement of goods and services. The best responses not only explained cause-effect, but also used the maps to good effect to aid the explanations; giving distances and directions or quoting road numbers, for example. Some weaker answers dubiously focused on the potential of the river for domestic water supply and for the disposal of industrial waste.

1 (b) This question was the least well answered on the whole paper. The majority of candidates who attempted this question did not seem to understand slope processes at all. Those who did tended to explain the processes without making effective links to the landforms. The best answers acknowledged slope processes as a source of sediment to be used in downstream fluvial erosion/depositional processes and their influence on landforms such as deltas. A number of answers erroneously referred to the influence of channel gradient on fluvial processes, ignoring slope processes altogether.

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1 (c) Most answers emphasised the role of flood defences by channel modification such as dredging or channelisation. Whilst a few answers referred to the role of warning and informing, as a means of preparing the population before and during flood events, this was not something most candidates clearly understood. In the UK, and many other developed countries, a great deal of money effort has gone into developing sophisticated flood forecasting and warning systems as well encouraging local community self-help through flood warden schemes. Much confusion was evident in the role of the Thames Barrier, which many suggested was a control on channel discharge.

Question 2

2 (a) (i) The comments for 1 (a) (i) also apply here.

2 (a) (ii) The comments for 1 (a) (ii) also apply here. A significant number of candidates suggested there was flat land for building, whilst the contour evidence suggests otherwise. There were also many incorrect references to salt marsh and sand dune ecosystems as a reason for conservation.

2 (b) Overall this was reasonably well answered but typically insufficient linkage was given between the weathering processes and specific coastal landforms. There was a tendency for candidates to include erosional processes in their description of weathering, indicating a lack of understanding of the difference between these two types of process. Very few examples were seen of weathering being related to depositional landforms such as beaches, with most answers limited to cliff/arch/stack/stump landforms. The word 'influence' within the question should have prompted candidates to think beyond processes such as freeze-thaw or biological weathering to consider where that sediment goes and what role it then plays in other coastal processes. Salt crystallisation was frequently regarded as a chemical process.

2 (c) While most answers did refer to relevant located examples, in many cases the actual relevance of the techniques described for that location was questionable. There was much confusion seen between absorption, reflection and dissipation of wave energy; the best answers revealed an understanding of how the protection strategy affected wave energy. Many regarded longshore drift as an erosional rather than transportational process. The role of a wider beach was seldom well explained. Some good answers were seen concerning the use of cliff drainage to prevent mass movement processes such as slumping. To effectively use the located examples, it is expected that candidates provide information about the positioning of defences, their scale and their material.

Question 3

3 (a) (i) This was usually well answered but some candidates incorrectly used examples that were not related to the physical environment e.g. indigenous population. Some also referred to challenges FOR rather than OF the physical environment.

3 (a) (ii) Candidates answering this question frequently implied, rather than fully explained, the linkage between the challenge and economic development. Many simply stated that it was "hard" or "difficult" for agriculture or industrial development. The best answers referred to the need for expensive imports, and the high cost of using technology to overcome the challenges.

3 (b) Many good quality answers were seen, although there was a general tendency to give more than the TWO influences required by the question. The best answers often made effective use of technical terminology, such as transpiration, photosynthesis and dwarfism. Although species examples were not required, they were sometimes used to good effect to support the answer with sufficient detail.

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3 (c) Many candidates seemed less than prepared for this question. Many tenuously tried to show the role of meltwater in the formation of cirques or ribbon lakes, suggesting that the water seen in them today is meltwater from the end of previous glacial periods. Some explanations were either invalid or did not sufficiently concentrate on the role of meltwater. If the answer uses processes such as plucking or freeze-thaw, the role of liquid water must be emphasised. Otherwise, more successful answers explained the erosion caused by meltwater to form overflow channels or the loss of energy resulting in deposition and the formation of features such as outwash plains and eskers. However, the cause of energy reduction was seldom given. Effective use of located examples could include references to scale and shape of the landforms as well as specific, rather than regional, locations.

Question 4

4 (a) (i) The comments for 3 (a) (i) also apply here.

4 (a) (ii) The comments for 3 (a) (ii) also apply here.

4 (b) The comments for 3 (b) also apply here. Links could have been made more effectively to the deep water table. The presence of spines on plants needs to be related to the climate, not just considered as a defence against herbivore consumption.

4 (c) Pedestal rocks were a common example and often reasonably well explained, but often lacking in detail relating to why abrasion is focused on the lower portion of the rock and also why the upper half of the rock may be more resistant to erosion. Key processes such as saltation and suspension, deflation and abrasion were often mentioned but inadequately applied. The formation of yardangs appeared quite difficult to explain and often the importance of differing rock types and their resistance to abrasion was not recognised. Many candidates referred to sand dunes, but there was much uncertainty about the initial cause of energy loss. The best answers suggested saltating particles not rebounding on a soft patch of ground and some even linked this to a positive feedback mechanism. Some candidates made effective use of diagrams and this is to be encouraged in such questions. As in 3 (c), shape, scale and accurate location all help ensure effective use of examples.

Question 5

Using examples such as Boscastle, the Thames, Severn and Ganges rivers, most candidates managed to achieve Level 2 responses for AO1. However, too many answers used words such as 'destroyed' and 'damaged' without qualifying how flood water was the cause e.g. flood water causing erosion of bridge supports leading to structural failure. Better candidates recognised the word 'varied' in the title of the essay and made regular references to different types of impact throughout the answer: social, economic, environmental, negative, positive, short-term and long-term. Candidates who did this and recognised that these impacts varied over time and place were well rewarded with AO2 marks.

One impact that was lacking consideration was the longer term socio-economic impacts of flooding e.g. social unrest, legislative change. Weaker answers tended to become side-tracked onto the causes of flooding, rather than the impacts.

Question 6

As with question 5, the best answers focused upon the word 'varied' in the question and identified a range of reasons why coastlines need protection. Again, many candidates could

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make valid statements about this but few could thoroughly explain, for example, why it is important to protect a tourist resort, a major piece of infrastructure or a rare habitat. Evidence from a located example should be used to help illustrate such explanations. Similarly, points about different geology or exposure to high wave energy need explanations of the erosional or sub-aerial processes which affect the coastline. It was common to see answers that purely catalogued a range of coastal protection methods.

Typical examples were drawn from Holderness, Dorset and the Isle of Wight. Little reference was seen to sea level rise and climate change as drivers for long-term coastal protection.

Question 7

Those candidates who attempted this question generally performed well, particularly those who recognised the multiple requirements. Not only did responses need to explain the 'gain' resulting from the human activities, such as exports, employment and increases in GDP, but they also needed to show that these gains were 'short-term' which means they are finite or unsustainable. If candidates merely explained environmental damage, resulting from the activities, they will not have fully responded to that key part of the question. Those who concentrated on the unsustainable nature of the gain tended to focus on the negative impacts on the environment, although the weakest answers tend to deal in vague generalisations such as the "environment is damaged" or the "ecosystem is destroyed". The best answers were more explicit, such as dealing with the contamination of food chains caused by oil spills. Answers of high quality also addressed the negative social impacts as well, particularly on indigenous populations. Typical examples included Alaska, Antarctica, the Alps and Siberia.

Question 8

Many of the comments about Question 7 also apply here. The examples chosen often had fewer obvious economic gains, as they typically referred to subsistence farming, for example. Agricultural resources are less obviously finite and so the unsustainable nature of the practices needed to be explicitly addressed. Desertification provided an opportunity for explicit detail of environmental impacts, whilst nomadic tribes in places like the Sahel provided evidence of social impacts. Other commonly used examples included Dubai, Draa Valley and Khushab.

F762 Managing Change in Human Environments

General Comments

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

The use of the resources was not always consistent, errors in basic skills costing a number of candidates marks. The follow on question, part (ii), was often answered effectively, although it did not always reference part (i) effectively. This pattern suggests a basic lack of practice in relation to the use of resources, whilst, at the same time sound understanding of the key ideas being examined.

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

A significant number of candidates used appropriate and well developed examples in the nine mark questions, at times to great effect.

Responses to the essay questions were generally sound but frequently lacked the depth and detail required to achieve the higher marks. Some candidates showed a good level of understanding and in considerable global or locational detail. It was evident that the majority of candidates had been well prepared for the essay and a significant proportion of candidates drew up a clear plan which was then used to produce an effectively structured essay, often with a sound conclusion.

Two general concerns were identified from a number of scripts. Firstly, it was evident that a number of candidates did not understand some of the basic specification terminology. Terms such as environmental quality, commercial functions, services (in terms of urban management), rural functions, urban dereliction, energy exploitation and community development were not always understood, resulting in a failure to address fully particular aspects of certain questions. A second concern was the use of examples which were somewhat generic or not entirely appropriate, at times lacking in any real depth. While general examples (which give ideas about the topic rather than consider the specific aspect of the topic under discussion) can give some insight into the question they often lead to answers which are rather vague or superficial and can be rather descriptive. This can be a significant factor in showing depth of understanding. The choice of example(s) often dictates the overall quality of the response; this is very noticeable at the higher mark levels.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1 Managing Urban Change

(a) (i) The majority of candidates used Figure 1 effectively to identify the key contrasts in housing and environmental quality. In most cases, the initial focus was an appreciation of one part of the area as a “slum” area and the other an area of relative wealth, either in residential or business terms. The level of detail did not always get very much beyond this, although a number of candidates did offer some detailed description which picked up points about building density and quality. The environmental quality aspect of the question was often treated quite superficially, with many candidates not getting far beyond offering simple points about one part of the area having some “green space” while the other part of the area did not.

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Those candidates who did respond effectively to this part of the question brought in a broader range of points which included observations about water pollution on the streets, general waste, litter and visual pollution in the poorer area.

While candidates did not need a great deal of detail to address this question effectively, it is worth considering that the question does form the background for the following question so, as a “package”, it is worth ten marks.

(a) (ii) The majority of candidates identified the differences in wealth as a possible reason for the differences identified in part (i). This was a useful starting point and many candidates went on to develop this theme by considering that the poor area might be an area of rapid and uncontrolled growth or that it might not have any official status resulting in a lack of general or government services. This approach often produced excellent responses.

A number of candidates appeared to get stuck after suggesting their initial idea about relative wealth and drifted into very vague or inappropriate ideas, many of which had more of a developed world focus (the poor area as an area of industrial decline, the higher quality area a part of an urban regeneration scheme).

(b) It was clear that a number of candidates did not fully understand the term “commercial function”. Consequently, they were only able to score marks if they mentioned some appropriate observation, almost by chance. Those candidates who did understand the terminology often produced thoughtful responses, many bringing in ideas about “bid rent” and the “pull” of the Central Business District (CBD) or points about edge of town commercial development linked to cheaper land or communications. A small number of candidates brought in points about the influence of government policy, at times linked to regeneration strategies. In some cases, answers were very historical, focusing on locational points about rivers or mining areas. This was largely self limiting.

(c) Responses to this question did not always focus on the key idea of the question, which was a consideration of the challenges of a growing demand for services in urban areas. Many candidates addressed the question in relation to a lack of services which is slightly different. However, those candidates who did use this approach were generally able to score marks because, throughout their response, they often touched on the challenge of growing demand. In most cases, the example used was from a developing country and, in many cases, answers showed a considerable level of locational knowledge. At the highest level, the idea of “growing demand” was picked up very effectively, often linked to population growth or the growth of informal residential areas in rapidly growing cities.

It was evident that a small number of candidates did not understand the word “services” in the context of urban growth. Clearly this proved to be rather self-limiting.

Question 2 Managing Rural Change

a) (i) The majority of candidates used Figure 2 effectively to identify the key contrasts in housing and environmental quality. In most cases, the initial focus was that one area was “run down” while the other was “affluent”. The level of detail did not always get very much beyond this, although a number of candidates did offer some detailed description which picked up points about building density, general state of repair and the relative amount of green space. Those candidates who picked up both the housing and environmental quality aspects of the question, often brought in a broader range of points which included observations about housing quality and state of care, size and potential value of property and points about gardens and open space. While candidates did not need a great deal of detail to address this question effectively, it is worth considering that the question does form the background for the following question so as a “package”, it is worth ten marks.

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(a) (ii) The majority of candidates identified the differences in wealth as a possible reason for the differences identified in part (i). This theme was often expanded by suggesting that one area was a declining area while the other was an area of growth. This was a useful starting point and many candidates went on to develop this theme by suggesting that industrial change and out migration might be associated with the poorer quality area, while counter urbanisation or the growth of tourism, might be a reason for general quality being higher in the second photograph. This approach often produced excellent responses.

A number of candidates appeared to get stuck after suggesting their initial idea about relative wealth and drifted into very vague ideas, often showing only tentative links to the question.

(b) In many cases there appeared to be some confusion about the word "function". A significant number of candidates appeared to consider "rural" simply in relation to farming and then developed this theme by considering farming as the only function. To a lesser extent, this was also true of mining. While this approach could at times gain some credit, it was not really a useful way to consider the idea of reasons for "a range of functions". Those candidates who clearly understood the idea of "function" often produced excellent answers, many bringing in points about services linked to population structure or tourism or observations about services linked to dormitory settlements.

A number of candidates ignored the rubric and identified more than two reasons. This was rather self-limiting and resulted in marks being lost in some cases.

(c) The quality of responses to this question were generally dictated by the depth and detail of the case studies used. Where candidates had a sound knowledge of an appropriate case study, they often produced thoughtful and effectively documented responses. The "problems" considered often focused on environmental issues, however, a number of candidates brought in wider socio-economic issues, often to great effect.

There were two major concerns about some of the responses. Firstly, a number of candidates totally or partially ignored the reference to "recreational demands" and focused on industrial or agricultural factors. Clearly this did not address the demands of the question. Secondly, a number of candidates focused on urban fringe areas and the consequent answer was not clearly referencing rural problems. A common example of this was the use of Park and Ride in Oxford, where the car parking area was seen as rural. While there may be some value in this idea, it is clearly not a well chosen example.

Question 3 The Energy Issue

(a) (i) The majority of candidates used the information in Figure 3 effectively in order to describe the relationship between energy use and GNI. In most cases, specific data was used to express a more detailed understanding of the relationship. A number of candidates went on to identify possible anomalies to the general relationship.

In a small number of cases, candidates expressed the idea of an anomaly but did not quantify the idea by using comparative data.

(a) (ii) The majority of candidates identified basic economic development as a reason for the link between GNI and energy use. In most cases, this was considered in relation to people having more money so therefore being able to afford more energy using goods. This provided a useful starting point as an answer but was often expressed quite simplistically and not always effectively developed. Those candidates who did develop this theme were able to, quite easily, offer two reasons. The more commonly used ideas included observations about industrial growth, the development of infrastructure, links to recreation and leisure and the ability to exploit or import energy resources.

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(b) The majority of candidates produced sound answers to this question, many bringing in examples (Norway and Nigeria were commonly used) to develop their ideas. A common theme was about jobs and how subsequent income could be used (by individuals and government) to improve community facilities. A significant number of candidates brought in points about how energy companies had put in place community facilities such as schools, health centres and water supply schemes.

(c) It was clear that most candidates had a very good understanding of this question and the topic had been taught by using a range of appropriate examples. Consequently, most candidates produced sound answers and there were a considerable number of excellent responses. The most commonly used examples were based on the exploitation of the Niger delta area and issues associated with the movement of oil in Alaska. However, it was encouraging to see a number of more contemporary examples including the environmental problems associated with the exploitation of oil sands/tars, shale gas and different renewable sources of energy.

Question 4 The Growth of Tourism

(a) (i) The majority of candidates used the information in Figure 4 effectively to describe the relationship between revenue from international tourism and GNI. In most cases, specific data was used to express a more detailed understanding of the relationship. A number of candidates went on to identify possible anomalies to the general relationship.

In a small number of cases, candidates expressed the idea of an anomaly but did not quantify the idea by using comparative data.

(a) (ii) Candidates did not always find this question easy and many misinterpreted the basic idea writing about how rising income allowed more people to go on holiday, rather than considering the national revenue impact of development. While this avenue of discussion did, at times, allow for some appropriate reference to the question it tended to limit the quality of responses. Those candidates who did pick up the key concept of the question, generally produced sound answers. The more common ideas expressed centred around the basic link between economic development and level of infrastructure, which in turn would encourage further developments in tourism. This theme was often expanded to take in socio-political points with suggestions that more developed countries may be more attractive because of better social conditions (healthcare) and political stability. A small number of candidates offered reasons for anomalies in the general pattern, often making appropriate and interesting points.

(b) A significant proportion of candidates produced very sound answers to this question. Candidates considered the idea of population displacement from the perspective of both leaving and receiving areas. A significant proportion of answers brought in observations about political or economic pressure forcing people away from areas of tourism development. These ideas were often effectively supported by examples. The message here is clear, if an example helps to express understanding of a point then use one (even if it not requested).

It was evident that a small number of candidates did not understand the term “population displacement”.

(c) “Community development” was often interpreted as “jobs and money”. Those candidates who used this interpretation to provide an opportunity to suggest how increasing income can improve community facilities generally produced sound answers. However, a number of candidates failed to make this link and consequently focused largely on economic opportunities, which was not really the key objective of the question.

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Candidates who did focus totally on the idea of community development often brought in a wide range of ideas, in most cases based on examples from the developing world and picking up points about the development of hard and soft infrastructure. The most successful answers were built around a detailed example rather than offering a range of generic points and then “bolting” an example(s) on towards the end of the answer.

Question 5 Managing Urban Change

The majority of candidates showed a good general understanding of the question and an awareness of the idea of sustainable management. A wide range of largely appropriate examples was used, suggesting that candidates had generally been effectively prepared for this unit of study. There were two main approaches to this question, both of which provided a good opportunity to show a sound appreciation of the question. The first approach was to use examples where urban areas were clearly under stress, because there may have been a lack of balanced management, and consider how managing socio-economic and environmental needs more effectively might allow these areas to be more sustainable. The second approach used examples where sustainable management practices were being used, and considered how these management practices were allowing the urban areas to operate more successfully.

Candidates using this approach drew from a range of examples at different scales, including newly planned eco-cities, strategies in rapidly developing cities (Curitiba was a popular option), smaller eco-towns and small scale developments such as BedZed. Those candidates who had a wide range of locational detail generally produced a sound answer to the question. A number of candidates focused on only one aspect of urban management (usually traffic management). In relation to the question this was rather self-limiting unless the answer had considerable detail and brought in related ideas.

Question 6 Managing Rural Change

The majority of candidates showed some general understanding of the idea of “sustainability” and, in many cases, applied their understanding effectively through the use of appropriate case studies. At the higher mark levels, candidates developed their answers around a specific example(s), with clear reference to a range of socio-economic and environmental factors which might allow rural area(s) to become increasingly sustainable. Ideas about countryside stewardship, the development of rural businesses and services and community projects were commonly used. When considered in relation to the sustainability of rural areas, these ideas provided the basis for thoughtful and perceptive responses. It was evident that a small number of candidates did not fully understand what is meant by “sustainable” in the context of rural areas. These candidates generally considered simple ideas about environmental management or used examples based on rural economic development strategies. While these ideas offered some appreciation of socio-economic and environmental planning and management, they did not always fully address the question and were consequently rather self-limiting.

The choice of example(s) generally dictated the overall quality of the response. Those candidates who used urban fringe areas generally found it difficult to express a thorough appreciation of the question.

Question 7 The Energy Issue

It was clear that virtually all candidates understood the term “energy mix” and were able to express a clear definition of the idea, either directly or indirectly within their response. In many cases, candidates tended to ignore the “global” context of the question and focused their answers on specific examples, generally a highly developed and a developing country. This approach usually gave sufficient scope to produce a very sound response, as long as there was

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enough accurate detail. It was this aspect of the answer which tended to differentiate. At the highest level, candidates often had a considerable amount of detail at their command and were able to express an appreciation of differences between countries at different levels of economic development, as well as discussing changes to the energy mix within each of their chosen examples over time. This approach generally offered the opportunity to have a real discussion about influences on the energy mix and consequently produced impressive answers. At the lower level, candidates tended to lack the detail to fully “Examine the influences on energy mix” as expressed in the question and generally produced largely descriptive answers.

Question 8 The Growth of Tourism

This question had a global focus and many candidates found this challenging. Consequently responses were variable. In general terms, there were three main approaches to the question. One approach took a very generic view to the question and discussed, often in quite basic terms, how factors such as rising incomes, increasing holiday time and availability had widened the tourism market. Where candidates offered a wide range of appropriately documented reasons, responses clearly had some merit. However, in some cases, observations were very generic and lacked both accuracy and detail. The second approach taken was essentially a “I have learned this case study so I am going to use it ” approach. In this instance, candidates simply described examples of areas of tourism, at times considering the idea of growth, at other times drifting into other areas of discussion which were not appropriate to the question (for example; problems resulting from the growth of tourism). This approach, when focused on the key idea of “growth” produced some sound answers but, at times, lacked a full appreciation of “global”. The third approach was essentially a combination of the first two approaches where candidates highlighted the driving influences of change, and then developed this theme by bringing in examples to support their ideas. This approach often produced excellent responses which showed a very sound understanding of the question and brought in a detailed level of locational knowledge.

F763 Global Issues

General Comments

Candidates generated a wide range of responses in terms of quality, both as regards geographical knowledge and understanding, and also the prose written. Candidates in the upper quartile were distinguished by the substance and authority of geographical content. This was set in the context of clear structures to their responses whose organisation allowed convincing arguments to be put forward which were well supported by suitable real world examples. The absence of the latter hampered a discussion's ability to convince as it lacked application to the real world. The critical use of models and theories by many of these candidates added depth to responses. Examiners reported reading too many scripts whose authors had clearly engaged with the course with energy and resolve, but who simply replicated pre-learned material, especially in narrative form, which did not directly address the question set.

An issue raised by examiners is that the quality of hand writing continues to decline. That this matters in terms of assessment is that words and phrases are illegible and so the flow of argument and meaning can be hidden.

Section A

The format of this Section is well known to candidates with the majority taking the structure of the question across into their responses. There remain those who offer multiple issues which can potentially lead to confusion when trying to link up 'issue' and 'appropriate strategy'. Examiners noted that in this session, significant numbers of candidates dwelt on description of the resource instead of identifying clearly one particular issue.

Question 1 Earth Hazards

This was a well answered question with candidates identifying issues such as threat to property as a key concern. Appropriate strategies, such as hard and soft engineering, were discussed with the more convincing responses relating the strategy to some element of the forces operating on a slope, namely either sheer stress or strength. Some candidates offered lengthy and detailed accounts of examples of mass movement events which tended to lead to an imbalance in their response.

Question 2 Ecosystems and environments under threat

Frequently, candidates interpreted the cartoon in ways relevant to the topic and particular question. Threats to ecosystems and environments were linked to the message of the cartoon such as habitat loss and reduction in bio-diversity. The range of strategies suggested was generally appropriate, such as establishing protected locations.

Question 3 Climatic hazards

The best answers to this question understood the implications of the length of time snow was lying compared to the average and identified spatial variations in the pattern. Economic and social dislocation were the two most common issues discussed. The range of strategies

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suggested focused on transport infrastructure and caring for the most vulnerable members of society.

Question 4 Population and resources

Many excellent responses picked up on the issue of dependency, either youthful (sub-Saharan Africa) or elderly (Western Europe) and contained explicit references to the map through names of countries and actual figures. Others needed to develop their answer to go beyond simply stating that ‘... region A has lots of young/elderly people.’ Strategies were generally appropriate and focused on family planning, enhancing the role and status of women and raising the retirement age.

Question 5 Globalisation

It was encouraging that so many candidates identified the trade groupings in the Americas as raising various issues emerging from globalisation. Most common were those concerned with winners and losers from globalisation. The strategies proposed dealt mainly with matters of trade although candidates also recognised the potential for development of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It was also pleasing to read many responses which identified the particular difficulties faced by land-locked countries in accessing trade and international investment.

Question 6 Development and inequalities

Most candidates recognised the positive relationship between income per person and life expectancy with the more convincing responses linking this with aspects such as quality and quantity of food consumption, access to clean water and quality of housing. Some developed their interrogation of the resource to include the locational information the graph contained. Strategies tended to be concentrated on actions of governments, both donors and receivers of aid as well as the roles non-governmental organisations could play in raising living standards.

Section B

When writing their two essay style responses in Section B, those candidates who take some time to plan, nearly always end up generating more effective discussions. Focused introduction and conclusion can lift a response as they tend to reflect the work of an ordered mind. While the depth and detail of many of the examples used to support argument was encouraging, there were also too many examples of incomplete or simply inaccurate case studies. Place knowledge is important in making a convincing evaluation.

As ever, the crucial aspect for success in this Section is to keep a sharp eye on the actual question set and not to become carried away in reproducing pre-learned material. The tendency to write separate accounts of two sides of an argument without explicitly evaluating leads to less convincing analysis.

Earth Hazards**Question 7**

Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate regarding the role of physical and human factors in generating flood risk. There were some thoughtful analyses of the enhanced risk in which humans place themselves through development of

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activities on floodplains. In this context, candidates who adopted a systems approach and stressed the inter-action of factors, wrote with authority. It was also encouraging to encounter exemplification based on the recent floods of the 2013-4 winter. It is always good to read synoptic links based on AS studies into hydrology which many candidates successfully incorporated into their essays.

Question 8

Good discussions of the significance of the level of economic development of an area in determining the impacts of earth hazards tended to consider a range of such hazards. This allowed a wide variety of exemplification to be offered. Frequent use was made of the impacts of earthquake (Haiti /Chile/Japan), volcanoes (Mt St Helens/Pinatubo/Etna) and flooding (Bangladesh/Netherlands/China). All these offered a wealth of suitable material with the best responses impressing with their command of detail. Subtleties emerged in some responses, for example, when discussing the eruption and impact of Pinatubo, the role of the USA via its military presence on Luxon. Candidates understood the relevance of different levels of economic development in terms of preparation and prediction as well as in recovery after a hazard struck, but many also discussed the role of factors other than the economic.

Ecosystems and environments under threat**Question 9**

Convincing responses to this question had a sharp focus on the phrase in the question ‘...rarely anticipated.’ They showed good levels of knowledge and understanding set firmly in the context of the real world. The deforestation of tropical rainforests figured in most answers but only occasionally were ‘...consequences..’ securely dealt with, such as habitat loss linked with reduction in bio-diversity. Consequences such as increased sediment run-off into rivers and climate change were only mentioned by the more convincing essays. There were some very detailed descriptions of changes brought about in ecosystems such as Epping Forest or the Amazon or Indonesian rain-forest.

Question 10

It was encouraging to read discussions which displayed candidates’ authoritative knowledge and understanding of how ecosystems function as a set of interconnected elements. This allowed such answers to latch onto the direct comparison of the importance of physical and human components. The more successful responses tended to employ an example of a plagioclimax with various examples of sand-dune complexes such as Braunton Burrows being quoted. Those who chose to use a local or small scale example often wrote with a real conviction as to how their chosen location functioned as a set of interconnected components.

Climatic hazards**Question 11**

Many encouraging responses dealt directly with the role physical geography can play in influencing the impact of climatic hazards. The majority of these focused on tropical storms, their specific requirements as regards conditions for formation and the ways in which they alter as they track inland. The role altitude plays was well exemplified by the use of Bangladesh in the context of storm surges associated with cyclones. The Netherlands was also successfully

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deployed as a MEDC example of a low-lying country affected by storm surges. The most convincing essays tended to be those which roamed widely in their consideration of physical geography including hazards such as heat waves and snowfall.

Question 12

Candidates choosing to discuss the degree of predictability of climatic hazards were at their most convincing when basing their discussion on a combination of real world examples and secure understanding of the processes leading to the formation of such hazards. For example, a helpful comparison could be made between tropical storm and tornado in this context. There was also much to be made of contrasting abilities to predict from countries at different places along the development continuum. Some of the most discerning discussions arose from candidates who appreciated the ability of countries such as India and Bangladesh to predict the onset of a cyclone. Evaluation then focused on how vulnerable communities were even with advanced warning.

Population and resources**Question 13**

There were many discussions as to the degree of difficulty of the sustainable management of resources that headed off in the right direction but did not manage to stay on course. Those who did keep a sharp focus on the actual question, tended to use the example of the Finish forestry industry as evidence that it is possible to sustainably manage a resource such as trees. Often quoted as an example of a resource where such management has proved difficult was the fishing industry in European waters. An interesting debate was seen in some scripts concerning the trend towards greater meat consumption and the impact on cereal production to feed the rising numbers of livestock. A feature of more convincing essays was a secure understanding of the idea of the 'Tragedy of the Commons'.

Question 14

Most answers to the question as to whether over- or under-population was the more challenging began appropriately with definitions. These were of widely differing authority. References to Malthusian ideas of population–resource balance were relevant but too many candidates seemed unaware of when and where Malthus formulated his ideas. This is important if analysis and evaluation were to be prominent in the answer, as assumptions about food production for example have altered considerably since the eighteenth century. This was also a question where an answer organised along the lines of assessing social, economic, political and environmental challenges usually rose to the highest level.

Globalisation**Question 15**

Many candidates are able to write persuasively of the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation. The key aspect for this particular question was whether the response focused on social impacts. Thus, those discussions which articulated the social benefits of wages received as a result of employment in a TNC's factory in a NIC or LEDC were convincing. It is also good when candidates go beyond simply stating a social benefit as '...an improved standard of living...' to identify such things as improved access to health care, clean water and education for example. It was encouraging that the majority of answers picked up the evaluation of globalisations social impacts in the form of disadvantages. Primary among these were working

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conditions in TNC branch plants and the loss of local culture. Comments about the social impacts of international migration varied considerably in their quality of analysis of advantages and disadvantages.

Question 16

There were some candidates who were very secure in their knowledge and understanding of the structure and direction of trade of a range of countries, usually one from each of MEDC, NIC and LEDC. The key factor determining the quality of a response was how well these trading patterns were analysed in terms of benefit. It was good to read comments about wealth creation and added value from different economic activities. The stability or otherwise of world prices for different goods was quite well incorporated into answers. Less prominent were comments about the role services can play, although some discussions made valuable comments about tourism in LEDCs and financial services in MEDCs.

Development and inequalities**Question 17**

Many excellent responses contained detailed knowledge and understanding about a variety of core areas which were successfully assessed in terms of being either advantageous or disadvantageous. Many responses included secure material from various theoretical ideas, such as the role cumulative causation and spread and backwash effects can play. There were those who were able to use the Friedmann model to give a degree of structure to their essays which was often very successful. In this model, the relationship between cores and peripheries is fundamental to its operation. Appropriate real world exemplification frequently came from Brazil, China and the UK.

Question 18

Good responses clearly identified inequalities within either a named region or a city. However, many candidates wrote about more than one region or city or indeed a combination of the two types of location. Their marks came from whichever one achieved the best score. There were some splendid discussions of inequalities within cities such as New York and London. Frequent and successful use was made of inequalities within China and Brazil and to a lesser extent the UK. The weaknesses in the use of the UK lay with the lack of substance to the portrayal of regions such as Wales, the Midlands or the North-East.

F764 Geographical Skills

General Comments

Candidates produced, as usual, a wide range of performance. The group that achieved the top grade did so by directly answering the question, using detailed examples taken from their own investigations and keeping tightly focused on the requirements of the question. Those more marginal candidates had two or more of these essential elements missing. There were relatively few at the highest level as candidates struggled to evaluate effectively or seemed unclear of the concepts being examined especially the notion of sampling:

Q4 I used Stratified sampling by setting out points 25m equally apart.

Many candidates missed the key demands to justify and evaluate in many of the questions. Too many candidates still failed to recognize that this was a geography examination which, as such, expected some linkage to spatial or locational dimensions. This is what distinguishes geographical investigations from those of other subjects. Centres should remember this when devising investigations and appropriate titles.

It is **vital** that centres read and follow the specification. The examination is based on the topics and the structure spelled out in the specification. Essay questions will be set which come from different **stages** of the investigation and candidates are expected to know what constitutes each of the six stages. It was clear that some centres do not give equal weight to all of the stages in terms of depth of coverage.

At times, the poor level of English (especially in reading the exact meaning of questions) and lack of geographical knowledge left the candidates very exposed, but generally there was evidence of candidates carrying out quality and realistic fieldwork.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

This section is testing the candidates' basic understanding of the 'tools' of a geographer. Overall, and as usual, this was answered less effectively than section B and it was disturbing how many scored 0 especially for sub section Question 3a)ii). Sadly many know the tools but not when, how and why to use them. There was little evidence of careful reading of the question or of critical thinking in so many answers.

Question No.

1a) Most candidates responded well to this question offering both positives and negatives to comment on the figure's effectiveness. Most saw the positives but ignored the very basic generic points such as the lack of a north on the map and the lack of any detail over the date/time of the results.

It should be noted that a totally negative or totally positive one sided evaluation would not get into Level 2.

b) This is one of those classic questions where very few candidates read the question carefully enough, so missed a crucial element. A vast range of sensible factors were explained and exemplified including:

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Cost, type of investigation, time available, availability of equipment, portability, safety, robustness, accuracy, scale of investigation and level of skill needed to use it.

Although what differentiated the candidates was the ability to **evaluate** these factors. Which is the most important factor and why?

- c) Clearly some candidates did not read to the end of the sentence and gave answers based on the reasons for repeating data collection. Those who focused on the ‘times of the year’ usually linked this to climate differences or vegetation growth cycles. Many candidates offered supportive exemplification from both human and physical investigations.
- 2a) i) This question revealed a lot about candidates’ views of what constitutes an effective title for a geographical (i.e. spatial) investigation. Some bordered on the trite:

During school holidays the population occupying the caravan park is greater than usual.

Or were impossible to do in an A level investigation:

What is the rate of cliff erosion and what impact does this have on tourism?

Where such questions are then followed up by data collection questions, candidates would be well advised to think how a known data collection method would produce a sensible question in the landscape shown. Again, a clear reason for reading the whole of the question before undertaking the first part.

Candidates could not get into Level 2 unless their justification made some linkage to evidence in the photograph. This does not have to be complex:

A car park and road are shown so access to the site would be suitable for a school minibus.

ii) This was very revealing and demonstrated a lack of forethought by candidates. Too many had set themselves impossible or inappropriate data collection tasks:

We would visit each year to see how far the cliff had retreated along our transect.

Many applied their own fieldwork strategies, which was sensible, but then their justification was often weak. The expectation is that candidates should explain why that method would answer that question in that location.

- b) This was generally well answered and clearly this statistical test is well known although candidates should not see its inability to explain the relationship as a weakness – that surely is their job!
- 3) i) Most candidates simply stated the percentage figures and compared the two areas. This was sufficient for the top of Level 1 but some notion of the variation within each area was expected for Level 2. No credit was given for explanation or speculation as to the location of the two areas.
- ii) Too many candidates ignored the instruction to describe, so could not get into Level 3. Very few offered diagrams which would have eased the descriptive part of the answer. Evaluation was often sound with an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of usually pie charts and bar charts.

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A number of candidates ignored 'such data' – i.e. percentage data, so offered spatial ways such as kite diagrams or dot maps. These gained no credit.

- b) This was usually well answered with wide ranging and appropriate answers which did produce an increase in accuracy. Although not required, exemplification often did clarify the point linking the 'way' to real investigations. Most answers focused on improvement in the measuring equipment used, taking larger samples and/or repeating measurements.

Section B

Both questions are compulsory and must show evidence of candidates carrying out real investigations. Generally this was very effective with some good reference to their real experiences but, at times, weaker candidates made it all too obvious that they were quoting all of their own practical experiences rather than selecting the appropriate sections needed by the question.

Answers had to be relevant to the title of the investigation. There is no need to use the same title for both question although about 90% did.

Titles were much more effective and clearly geographical this session but candidates should still be encouraged to state a place in the title:

To investigate if longshore drift is operating on the beach.

Would be better worded:

Does longshore drift occur on Chesil beach, Dorset.

There are a number of worrying aspects that suggest candidates (and centres) are unaware of some of the basics of an investigation:

- Carrying out an investigation using only three sites
- Doing a Spearman's then drawing the scatter graph
- Confusing stratified and systematic sampling (as so many did) or pragmatic and stratified
- Thinking a result that agreed with a model made it ipso facto representative of the area.

Those candidates who achieved the highest grades:

- Demonstrated consistently good evaluation – not just the problems
- Showed detailed locational knowledge– there was a clear sense of place and a sense of a real investigation
- Gave good evidence of their investigation
- Used appropriate and accurate geographical vocabulary
- Showed they understood cause-effect relationships – they knew why they were doing a particular activity (especially the notion of sampling)
- Wrote in a coherent style
- Used diagrams to illustrate their points/methods of sampling (a crucial point to aid clarity)

And above all:

- Answered the question set

It is not expected that answers will be of equal length in section B. In this case it was quite possible to evaluate the sampling strategy in Question 4 in a relatively tightly focused and

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concise way. It is the depth of **evaluation** that is critical in determining the level of the responses. The direction to evaluate (or assess the relative value of) was very clearly flagged up and candidates, this summer, rarely offered no such evaluation.

In section B, answers gain little or no credit for suggesting what could have been done. Answers should demonstrate some sense of the real investigation in a particular location to achieve at the highest level.

- 4) Few candidates appreciated the two part nature of this question – design and application, and some even struggled with the concept of representative:

... therefore the data collected was easily put into graphs etc to be clearly represented.

Candidates do need reminding that sampling involves three distinct aspects: its form e.g. systematic, its units e.g. line and its size. Moreover, better candidates pointed out the series of stages in the sampling process – the overall initial location choice, individual site choice and finally the actual site measurement of the variables.

Candidates mostly understood sampling although too many confused systematic and stratified and some clearly muddled pragmatic with stratified. Many also demonstrated a basic misunderstanding of the term ‘sampling strategies’ and gave lengthy accounts of methodology and/or results. These gained no credit.

The chief problem was that often candidates did not explain the actual sampling process or what was actually being measured. Some clearly have a poor understanding of the application of random sampling:

Students had to choose a pebble without looking.

Or

We chose where to place it randomly.

The key discriminator tended to be the level of clarity over what was being sampled and why plus how this made (or not) it representative of the larger whole. Some of the best answers recognised the challenge this presented and the trade off against practicality.

- 5) Clearly all candidates were aware of risk assessments and subsequent strategies to reduce risks in the field. The challenge was to evaluate them. Many did it in a simplistic way:

No one drowned so it must have been effective.

Or stated the obvious (or not):

As we were all 17-18 year old students we had the advantage of common sense.

Many risks were simplistic but some more perceptive candidates pointed out that there were **generic risks** e.g. getting lost, **specific risks** to that location and/or that investigation e.g. unexploded bombs on Studland dunes and risks to the collection of accurate or representative data. Others classified types of risk under headings such as environmental, social and weather. There was little difference between physical and human investigations although more chose physical where the risks are perhaps a little

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more interesting. However, some candidates found the urban environment equally exciting:

There was the danger of being in a city from cars, stabbings and terrorists.

Many pointed out that there was a string of strategies with a definite order. So first secondary data, e.g. maps, were used, then a generic risk assessment compiled, then a reconnaissance (or pilot) visit to check the actual site and then a dynamic risk assessment that continues as the actual investigation is underway, such as responding to changes in the weather.

The highest levels of response looked at the perception of risks (likelihood and severity are very subjective) and suggested strategies could be pro-active/preventive and reactive/remedial. Stronger answers pointed out that precautions did not make the risk vanish but served to reduce likelihood and/or severity should it happen. Exemplification was usually sound and there does seem to have been a crop of minor injuries in the past year.

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