



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

GEOGRAPHY A

SUMMER 2014

Grade Boundaries

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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GEOGRAPHY A

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Summer 2014

4231/01 Unit 1 Foundation Tier

Principal Examiner: Allan Carter

General comments

The general feeling was that the paper was accessible to all candidates and was comprehensive in its coverage of the specification. The paper offered sufficient differentiation so that the majority of candidates were able to attempt most parts of the paper, although there were obviously some sections in which they performed better than others. The very minor changes to content as a result of 'strengthening' the specification have had very little impact on the quality of work produced by candidates. However, candidates did not show as much knowledge and understanding of meanders (in question 1) as might have been expected when one considers that this landform is specifically named in the strengthened specification.

Assessment Objective 1

One aspect that is showing clear and sustained improvement year on year is the ability and willingness of candidates at this level to relate their answers to specific examples of real places when asked and thus gain entry to the top level in questions which require extended prose. Good examples this year included question 2 (c) where many candidates were able to provide some quite detailed information relating to the impact of climate change on a named country. Even where, as in the majority of cases, candidates chose to write about the UK, the better answers distinguished between different regions such as increased flood and erosion risk in the south and east and the potential impact on winter sports in Scotland. There were also some very good answers, obviously based on text book material, which described the increased incidence of drought and its associated problems in Sub-Saharan Africa and the melting of glaciers in Iceland. A second question where the use of case study material clearly enhanced the quality of answers was in question 3 (c) where specific strategies in Japan and USA, for example, are used to reduce the impact of earthquakes. Question 4 (c) also enabled good candidates to explain quite effectively why some parts of the world are sparsely populated and relate these explanations to named places.

There were inevitably some parts of the paper that candidates found more difficult and will have contributed to weaker outcomes for many. A particular concern was question 1 (a) (iv) and (v) which tended to discriminate in a number of cases between centres rather than between candidates. A requirement to cover meanders was included in the amendments to the specification which were examined this year for the first time and it became very clear during the marking that entire groups of candidates from a number of centres were unable firstly, to identify a slip-off slope and mark it on the photograph and secondly, to give a brief explanation of how a slip-off slope was formed. This is a key geographical term and obviously forms part of the structure of a meander so is now required content within the specification.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that there has been an improvement in candidates ability to describe patterns of development within a country as in question 6 (c). Many were able to give some relevant information, usually related to Ghana or Brazil. However, the general standard was still patchy and this clearly discriminates between centres. Furthermore, too many candidates at this level regard Africa as a country and those who do so were unable to rise out of the very lowest level. Ghana is usually the example chosen although there were some good responses relating to Brazil.

Many resourceful candidates were clearly caught out by not having a case study to turn to tried to redraw the map of India but did not have the depth of knowledge about the country to give any meaningful description to raise themselves out of level 1. Teachers are reminded that the 2012 strengthening of the specification has given them greater flexibility in choosing exemplar countries that are not necessarily less developed. Candidates should be encouraged to think of development as a continuum rather than as a bi-polar model of MEDC/LEDC.

Assessment Objective 2

The ability of candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar contexts and achieve AO2 marks is improving at the foundation level and this was evident in questions 5 (a) and 5 (b) where many were able to score some marks in applying their knowledge of the drivers of globalisation and the impact of TNCS to the contexts of global tourism and call centres respectively and these questions proved to be effective discriminators in the paper. Candidates need to be better prepared to confront unfamiliar subject content or resources in examination questions and feel comfortable in applying this to the context of the key idea from the specification being examined.

It is reasonable to expect a candidate at the C grade to be able to consider different viewpoints but a great many responses in question 1 (c) did little more than repeat the content of the resource or go far beyond making fairly simple statements in relation to the views expressed. Very few even attempted to evaluate all three viewpoints, given that the question asked for at least two to be considered.

Only a small minority of very good candidates referred to the issue of increased building on floodplains due to housing demand or the impact of climate change which is making extreme rainfall events more common. Many referred to the cost of hard engineering schemes balanced against the impact of flooding on householders but responses tended to stop there and lack sufficient depth to move out of the middle level.

Question 5 (c) also tended to be answered in very general terms which described how countries have increased their levels of development, referring to little more than increased jobs and higher incomes achieved through globalisation and there was generally very little reference to specific detail on named countries such as India and China. As such, there was considerable bunching of responses in level 2 scoring 2/3 marks although a few able candidates were able to refer to named industries and TNCS operating in NICS leading to description of multiplier effects and greater competitiveness in world trade. However, these were in the minority.

Assessment Objective 3

As in the previous year, candidates are demonstrating good graph skills within AO3 and in most cases, when asked to describe trends patterns from a graph they are comfortable with using evidence from the resource to quantify their answers.

In question 6 (c) any candidates were able to write some descriptive points about a named country (most often Ghana) but the quality of sketch maps is still very weak and, in the majority of cases, adds little to positively enhance the answer.

Areas for Improvement:

- Drawing and labelling/annotating sketch maps;
- Detailed knowledge of meanders;
- Specific examples of globalisation / NICS.

GEOGRAPHY A

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Summer 2014

4231/02 Unit 1 Higher Tier

Principal Examiner: Dirk Sykes

General comments

The examination proved an effective test of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. The examination produced a good range of responses, challenged the most able students whilst remaining accessible to all candidates. There was a consistency in candidate performance across the paper. In general there was a higher quality of response to questions demanding extended writing than in previous years, although the range of case studies used in these answers was limited. There was no evidence that candidates had insufficient time to complete the paper. Changes to the specification following the strengthening process were examined for the first time in this examination. The revision has not had a significant impact on candidate performance although the response to questions that asked for examples from countries at different levels of development produced somewhat varied outcomes with some excellent responses in question 2 but less competent responses in question 4.

Assessment Objective 1

In general, particularly in questions demanding extended writing as a response, candidates demonstrated a more detailed knowledge of topics studied than in previous years, with some excellent use of case studies over a range of questions.

In question 2 (b) (ii), for example, many candidates gave a good comparison of the impact of climate change in countries at different levels of development using case studies such as drought in Mali and flooding in the Netherlands/Bangladesh. This reflects a positive response to the 'strengthening' of content by centres and candidates. In 6 (b) (ii) high quality answers named a specific NGO and gave a detailed example of ways in which infant mortality was reduced e.g. bed nets reducing malaria infection.

In question 4 (b) responses demonstrated less secure knowledge. Many candidates gave a good explanation of migration to cities in what would traditionally be considered less developed countries but often failed to add to this with a consideration of migration to cities in a country at a different level of development.

Assessment Objective 2

There were some excellent responses which applied specific knowledge and understanding to exemplify an answer. Candidates need, however, to ensure that case study knowledge is used appropriately to exemplify an answer and not merely recounted without application. Candidates need to read questions carefully and plan their answer in response to the appropriate command word.

In question 3 (c), for example, there were many detailed responses explaining why, not merely describing, the effects of earthquakes varied in countries at different levels of development. In question 5 (b) (iii) many candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of reasons for globalisation e.g. the development of the internet.

However, in question 1 (c), for example, many candidates gave a detailed account of hard engineering approaches to river flood management although most failed to achieve a level 3 answer to the question by discussing the success of these schemes in named locations. In 5 (c) there were some good examples of the benefits of globalisation but often answers were of a general nature and few used examples of NICS other than India or China.

Assessment Objective 3

Candidates were secure in many of the skill areas assessed. Responses showed a good understanding of OS maps, annotation of a meander bend, completion of the bar graph and understanding of line graphs. There is a need though for candidates to be familiar with a wider range of diagrams, maps and graphs. Candidates must also use geographical terminology correctly e.g. use of “north” instead of “above” and to give accurate detail from resources, such as quantification to develop a description.

In question 3 (a) (ii), for example, there were many excellent clear diagrams of plate margins with some excellent annotation. Annotation skills seemed to have improved significantly in recent years. There were however, also a significant number of responses that were confused between destructive and constructive plate margins or that failed to clearly identify a landform.

In question 4 (a) (iii), for example, few candidates made 3 clear points about the distribution of countries with a growth rate of more than 3%, some used terms such as “below” the Tropic of Cancer rather than south. Few candidates were able to interpret a compound line graph as in question 2 (a). In question 5 (a) (ii), many candidates failed to gain the second mark in the description of the trend either by quantifying the trend, or identifying a more rapid increase after 2003. In question 6 (c) the quality of response was generally pleasing although there were few clear, accurate and detailed sketch maps to complement the description of regional patterns.

Areas for Improvement:

There is a clear need for candidates:

- To have a more detailed knowledge of basic geographical terminology such as trend and distribution.
- To use the information provided in resources more effectively in their answers.
- To understand and respond to a wide range of different command words.
- To understand and use a wider range of graph and mapping skills.
- To continue to improve the recall and application of case study knowledge.

GEOGRAPHY A

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Summer 2014

4232/01 Unit 2 Foundation Tier

Principal Examiner: Glyn Owen

General comments

Our changing Coastline and Tourism remain the most popular option choices for study. However, it is still a concern that there are still a sizeable number of candidates who attempt to answer questions from more than the required 3 themes.

Candidates continue to be assessed on spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar and many candidates were able to reach the intermediate level. However, those candidates who do not attempt the final part of each question do not gain any marks for SPAG at all. Similarly, those who give irrelevant or wrong answers to the extended writing question cannot be credited with any SPAG marks. This means that some students run the risk of failing to score a substantial amount of marks. Candidates should be advised to attempt these questions and to ensure that their answer is relevant to the question that has been set.

This was the first year of the 'strengthened' specification but as there were only minor changes within Unit 2 the overall performance is much on par with previous years. As always there are areas for improvement but once again there was evidence of very good work at this Foundation Level.

Assessment Objective 1

Unfortunately answers to the 6 mark questions often lacked the detailed knowledge necessary to achieve level 3 marks. There is still reluctance or an inability on the part of some candidates to relate their answers to specific examples or case study material. In Question 4 (c), for example, most answers tended to be generalised, lacking in precision and not related to specific named locations.

Part (c) of the Weather and Climate option was this year clearly focused on enquiry question 1.1 of the specification. However, many answers were at best basic and many lacked any real depth of knowledge. Likewise, in part (c) of the Living Things option candidates demonstrated limited understanding of how the physical environment interacts with living things in a specified biome.

In Question 1 (c) some candidates answered the question without any reference to landforms and others simply resorted to describing a flood event. The better answers first identified the landforms and then focused clearly on the affects on people. The consequences of cliff retreat in eastern England and tourism along the Welsh coastline were the most common case studies used.

Areas for Improvement:

Candidates must focus on the command words and also need to have a more secure grasp of key geographical terms such as process or sustainability which are used in the specification.

Assessment Objective 2

Some questions require candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding to different or unfamiliar contexts through various resource materials. For example, photographs and maps of places such as Norfolk, the Canary Islands, Brazil and New York were used to assess application. In question 6 (b), for example, most candidates were able to recognise the problems of noise pollution and the proximity of the houses which could be affected by dust and congestion on local roads.

Areas for Improvement:

Teachers could make candidates more aware of the mark scheme and note in particular the AO2 column for all the questions. An important key command word in questions which test application is 'suggest'.

Assessment Objective 3

In Question 1 (b) (i) the Nature Reserve was often labelled as the salt marshes even though the arrow was clearly pointing at the blue symbol. Otherwise, candidates scored well on most of the skills based questions such as 2 (a) and 5 (a) (i) (ii). Those who study Theme 10 made very good use of the map of Brazil. Likewise, in Question 3 candidates were able to identify at least two of the negative effects of deforestation. The compound graph in Question 4 did pose a major problem, however, with most candidates failing to identify Europe as the region with most tourists.

Areas for Improvement:

Candidates should have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with as many different types of graphs and stimulus material as possible.

GEOGRAPHY A

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Summer 2014

4232/02 Unit 2 Higher Tier

Principal Examiner: Huw Cripps

General comments

The minor changes to the content of the Optional Themes appear to have had no discernable impact on the outcome of this examination.

Assessment Objective 1

The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some relevant knowledge and understanding linked to each of the different themes and this was often supported by reference to place which added further clarification. In the best answers there was good or excellent use of specialist terms which were used in the correct context.

Area for Improvement:

Knowledge and understanding is often correct without being detailed. Candidates need to be more specific and extend points that develop answers into higher levels; e.g. identifying the concept of the 'multiplier effect' in question 4 (b) is not sufficient in itself and a more detailed understanding of the developing links within it should be elaborated.

Assessment Objective 2

The development of examples and named places is improving; e.g. in question 4 (c) when identifying the different physical and human factors in tourist development. However, expectations on the higher tier, particularly in part (c) of each question should be to develop examples more effectively. Candidates need to develop the ability to apply knowledge and understanding when annotating photographs or diagrams. Too many candidates provide simple labels which reflect basic knowledge and very little application of understanding. The response to question 3 (a) (ii), which used a satellite image, was particularly disappointing.

Where stimulus materials of unfamiliar places were provided many candidates were able to use the information well but for some this often restricted the answer to a simple description which did not then address the key words of the question in sufficient detail.

Area for Improvement:

Candidates need to focus on key words in the question. Examples where answers did not show the breadth in knowledge and understanding required for higher levels were:

- Knowledge and understanding related to **different** areas of the British Isles in question 2 (c);
- Advantages and disadvantages for people in question 5 (b);
- The impact on the environment of changes in retailing other than links to global warming in question 5 (c).

Assessment Objective 3

There was some excellent evidence of candidates using different skills. However, the level and quality of annotation is highly variable.

There are encouraging signs of higher level literacy skills. However, this is an area for continued emphasis, using a range of specialist terms with greater precision.

Area for Improvement:

Whilst patterns on graphs are better identified and described, simple skills such as completing a supporting diagram showing the link between longshore drift and the formation of spits were often basic suggesting a lack of familiarity and practise. As important is the need to practice annotating diagrams and photographs so that candidates can show an understanding that goes beyond simple descriptive labels. Candidates clearly need to have more experience in analysing aerial photographs/satellite images such as those used in questions 1(a) (ii) and 3 (a) (ii).

GEOGRAPHY A

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Summer 2014

4233 Unit 3: Controlled Assessment

Principal Moderator: Geraint Williams

General Comments

This was the first assessment of controlled assessment under the new 'strengthened' specification with a new mark scheme for the DME. It was pleasing to see that the majority of centres applied the new mark scheme effectively and fairly. Centres are now on the whole more confident when dealing with this part of the specification and some very good work is being produced.

Some of the following general points were also highlighted last year:

- Some of the work lacks a clear focus even though extensive teacher guidance notes are available on the WJEC website. Of particular concern is that some DMEs provide insufficient scope for candidates to make a decision. In these circumstances the report is very descriptive and marking is almost invariably generous.
- There was still evidence of a lack of internal moderation in a handful of centres. It is essential that all centres have a rigorous procedure for internally moderating portfolios before marks are entered on the WJEC website and the sample is generated.
- Annotation within the body of the candidates' work is excellent in some cases, but insufficient in many. When using the mark grid, there is a tendency to highlight all areas of a level in the mark scheme, rather than highlighting specific phrases to fine tune within a level. This makes it difficult for a moderator to ascertain how a centre has arrived at a particular mark. Annotation of either the candidates' work or the mark grid is essential. Use of both is recommended.
- There are still examples of administrative errors e.g. marks added up incorrectly; CAA forms not signed by teachers and candidates; resources not sent with the work. Centres are reminded that authentication is essential. Thankfully, these errors are very much in the minority.

An added administrative error by a small number of centres this year was that the incorrect marking scheme was used to mark the DME. Current mark schemes, mark grids, CA tasks and CA Teacher Guidance notes are available on the WJEC website with regular notice given when there are any updates.

For both pieces of work, communication skills are an important element in the mark scheme and more consideration needs to be given to this when awarding marks.

Titles for the DME and Fieldwork are changed annually and are available on the WJEC website. As well as the titles there is guidance given on how to approach the tasks on the website, and further there is an added step of assistance from an adviser. Centres should make full use of these, especially if in doubt so as to give candidates the best possible opportunity to meet the criteria.

Fieldwork

Assessment Objective 1

As stated last year, the marks allocated for this category were fairly accurate in the majority of centres. Level four requires "detailed knowledge and thorough understanding relating to the enquiry question or hypothesis". Basically this can be achieved by providing succinct but detailed information that is relevant to the enquiry. Candidates who are awarded a level four mark correctly should be able to demonstrate this without going to great lengths.

Assessment Objective 2

There is evidence that some candidates struggle to apply their wider geographical knowledge to the specific location that has been studied in the enquiry and some generosity of marking is sometimes seen here. In a number of examples, there was a lack of evidence of independence, and this is a word that appears in the marking grid at level three and level four.

Assessment Objective 3

Some centres ignore key phrases in the higher levels and consequently mark work generously. Of particular note are:

- Individual candidates need to provide evidence that they have identified relevant questions independently to justify a mark at the higher levels. Teachers should ensure that they design tasks that give opportunities for candidates to demonstrate independence e.g. by posing their own geographical questions, so they can access these higher levels.
- Candidates must be given the opportunity to select which data they wish to process and to select *appropriate* presentation techniques. As noted in previous reports, candidates do not have to process everything, but need to individually select data and choose an appropriate range of techniques to represent this data. Candidates must not be told which presentation techniques to use with each set of data.
- Candidates need to reflect on the validity of the resources and conclusions.

Decision Making Exercise

Assessment Objective 1

The marking was reasonably accurate for this Assessment Objective. However, there is a tendency to award marks of between 10 and 12 with little or no annotation to show where the evidence is in the body of the work.

Assessment Objective 2

The moderator is looking for evidence at level four of independently applying knowledge and understanding; understanding and explaining complex relationships, evaluating and making a decision on how this can contribute to a sustainable future. This means that candidates need to keep their focus and show their understanding of a complex world. They need to explain/justify why their decision is sustainable and not just mention a sustainable future. Some centres mark AO2 much too generously when there was weak or little evidence for all the points mentioned above. In such cases, marks have to be adjusted in the moderation process. Again, it is important to consider these points when developing tasks to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to address these issues.

Assessment Objective 3

This part of the marking scheme is new for 2014. On the whole the new marking scheme did not seem to cause a great deal of difficulty, as the new level descriptors provided clear hurdles. For example the level descriptor for level 4, which required the need to **explain** "vested interests", gave centres the necessary pointers to assess the work accurately. Despite this, a small number of centres appear to have been generous in their marking of "vested interests" with marks awarded for simple description rather than an explanation for these points of view. It is important that centres annotate the evidence for these marks as well as for the other criteria to help the process of moderation.

The new mark scheme requires candidates to accurately reference their sources. There was no evidence that it had created problems for the majority of candidates, although in a significant minority of centres candidates did not seem to have been made aware of its importance. It is essential that candidates are trained how to reference the source materials they have used when developing tasks for the next cycle.



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