GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

GEOGRAPHY A
GCSE

SUMMER 2019

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C111U10-1 Changing Physical and Human Landscapes

General Comments

Once again it was encouraging to see that most of the questions were accessible to the vast majority of candidates and there was evidence of very good quality scripts. It is also pleasing to note that the mean mark for this paper increased by 0.9 and the overall performance was on a par with the other two components.

In Section B the Tectonic Landscapes and Hazards option is still the most popular choice for study and on the whole the performance of candidates was comparable in both Theme 3 and Theme 4.

Question 2d was used to assess spelling, punctuation, the accurate use of grammar and specialist terms (SPaG). Most of the candidates were able to attain at least the Intermediate Band and the mean mark was 2.7. Centres are reminded that candidates who do not attempt this question do not gain any marks as a result.

Comments on individual questions/assessment objectives

AO1

Most of the knowledge focused questions were generally well answered. In question 1a(iv), for example, the best responses fully described one positive and one negative impact, including reference to a specific landscape within the UK, and consequently many candidates scored the maximum four marks. On the other hand, in question 2b(iii) correct knowledge on the challenges of an ageing population was less secure. Some candidates simply referred to housing problems rather than the need for the creation of more suitable housing, for example the more focused answers concentrated on future pressures on the NHS and the rising costs of providing more state pensions. Some of the responses seen did, however, provide light relief for the examiners! In questions 3b(i) and 4b(i) specific knowledge was also required from sections 3.2.1 and 4.1.1 of the specification.

AO2

Even though some excellent answers were seen, generally the responses to these questions lacked the depth of elaboration and understanding to gain the higher band marks.

In question 1b(iii), for example, the better answers made explicit links between the processes of erosion and/or geology which result in rock falls on the cliffs of some UK coastlines. Furthermore, in question 2b(iv) many candidates focused on urban pull factors rather than rural push factors and therefore failed to make an effective link between the factor and the reason for the declining population. The better candidates explained the push factors and also referred to specific rural areas such as the Lake District to support their answer.

Questions 2a(iii) and 2c(ii) asked candidates to give one reason. Most candidates gave a valid answer but failed to add an elaboration to fully demonstrate understanding for the second mark.

Question 1c(iii) proved to be the most challenging of these questions. However, some candidates did understand the unintended consequence of groynes on beaches further along the coastline and consequently attained Band 2 marks.

AO3

Most candidates attempted these eight-mark questions but only the most able students attained Band 4 marks.

All the questions this year provided an ideal opportunity for candidates to present an argument and counter-argument which is advantageous when asked to make a judgement on a geographical issue such as the problem of flooding or on the concept of cost-benefit. Question 2(d) proved to be the most demanding of these questions. Nevertheless, the best candidates applied their knowledge and understanding of current urban challenges, which include congestion, migration, poverty/deprivation and providing housing in two contrasting cities.
Ideally candidates should use the resources given as stimulus material and also apply their own knowledge and understanding to support their decisions.

AO4

Questions 1a(i), 1a(ii), 2a(i), 2c(i), 3a(i) and 4a(i) which targeted a number of different map and graphical skills proved to be very accessible to most of the candidates.
The calculation questions – 1c(i) and 2b(i) – were also done correctly by most. Candidates, however, should be reminded of the importance of showing their working in order to attain the maximum marks. In question 2b(ii) some candidates did not focus fully on the question set and described a change in an age group which was under the age of 65.
The response to question 1c(ii) was the most disappointing with many candidates unable to give a reason as to why the median might not be the most appropriate measure of central tendency.

Summary of key points

Candidates must read the command words and subsequent key words in the questions carefully and also look at the mark allocations for each question.

Develop simple statements in answers which require one reason.

Make sure that the candidates are familiar with the techniques and skills in Appendix A of the specification.

Prepare students to tackle AO3 questions by combining novel stimulus material with the use of prior knowledge and understanding in order to reach a meaningful decision.

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C111U20-1 Environmental and Development Issues

General Comments

The first question on core Theme 5 was based on climate and ecosystems in tropical rainforests. The questions proved to be accessible to most, although some topic specific knowledge was lacking on some of the AO1 questions. The focus then moved to energy production, before the final 8-mark question on the impact of low-pressure systems in HICs. Most candidates were able to make some attempt at the question although some missed the point by gearing their answer towards a comparison with LICs.

Question 2 on core Theme 6 question began with questions on inequality, beginning with a focus on LICs or NICs, then moving to the UK. Candidates were then presented with questions on aid before the 8-mark question on growth in deprived areas of the UK with a focus on Liverpool in the resource material.

The Theme 7 question proved more popular than Theme 8. Theme 7 had questions based on child labour and refugees and Theme 8, ecological footprints and restoration of habitats. Both were well attempted and there were some good responses on both themes where candidates had sound understanding of the topics.

Comments on individual questions/assessment objectives

AO1

Where candidates had a secure knowledge of the areas of the specification being examined, these questions were generally done well. Candidates must look carefully at mark allocations. In question 1c(iii) for example, 4 marks were available for describing the impacts of energy production on the environment, and in 2a(ii) 4 marks were available for describing inequality in a named LIC or NIC. Whilst many responses were valid, and clearly linked to the questions, many lost marks as ideas were not elaborated. In addition, in 2a(ii) specific knowledge was required from section 6.4.1 in the specification of the patterns. Many candidates did not have secure knowledge, used Africa or the UK as their country, or described Map 2.1. None of these approaches were valid for this question. The style of AO1 question which did score well for many candidates were those that required two simple ideas, such as in 1b(iii) 3b(i) and 4b.

AO2

Some of the AO2 questions asked candidates to 'give a reason', for example in 1a(ii) in relation to the location of rainforests, and 1b(ii) on nutrient cycling. Where these questions are worth 2 marks, the reason must be elaborated with a clear link to the focus of the question in order to score well. Many lost marks by just offering a simple statement. In both themes 5 and 6, there was a 6-mark AO2 question, and in themes 7 and 8 these questions were worth 4 marks. Scoring well on these questions requires the same technique in demonstrating understanding of the concept being examined.

Answers must be written in a way which makes understanding clear, with ideas being clearly linked to the wording of the question. For example, in 1b(iv) there needed to be an explicit link between deforestation and specific impacts on climate and nutrient cycles. Likewise, in 2c(ii) explicit links between the characteristics of types of aid and its effectiveness were needed. Many lost marks on these 4 and 6-mark questions by offering simple descriptive statements with at best implied links to the question. Candidates with a secure understanding of the ideas and sound literacy skills scored well on these questions.

AO3

Questions on each theme ended with an 8-mark question requiring candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding to the question, using the resources provided as stimulus material. Question 1d on low pressure systems produced many good and balanced responses which discussed the possible impacts to people and the economy. Better answers gaining access to band 4 explicitly addressed 'to what extent' throughout, and considered the factors influencing how impacts might vary within an HIC, producing a more sophisticated response. The same was true of the 'to what extent' questions in themes 3 and 4. In 2d, those responses which went beyond a simple evaluation and considered that there might be variations in success within and between deprived regions, scored well. Some candidates used their own knowledge to support their answer as well as or in some cases instead of the resources provided. This approach can work well, provided candidates recognise that these questions are examining AO3 not AO1. Knowledge must be used as evidence to support the discussion rather than as the focus of the response. Candidates also need to take care, particularly in issue-based questions such 3b(ii) on refugees that they answer the question set rather than expressing their views on the issue which can lead to implied rather than explicit links to the question.

AO4

AO4 was assessed in a variety of ways. Question 1a(i) proved to be very accessible with most candidates able to identify the correct descriptors from the choice available. Likewise question 1ci) was done well, but a number of candidates missed out this question despite there being two accessible marks available. The calculation questions in 1b(i), 3a(i) and 4a(i) were also done correctly by most. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of showing working clearly in order to have access to all the marks available. Question 2c(i) required conclusions to be reached about the information presented in graphs 2.3 and 2.4. Many candidates simply described the resource which was not asked for in the question. To be awarded a mark in band 2 there needed to be a statement or statements made which went beyond the resource. For example, many suggested that the countries shown might be in need due to poverty, LIC status, conflict or famine. Some commented on possible future changes to spending based on past trends in graph 2.4.

Summary of key points

Make sure that the skills from the appendices in the specification are integrated into teaching so that candidates are familiar with the techniques which may be required for AO4 questions. For example, using topic specific data to draw conclusions.

Where a reason or explanation is required, candidates must develop their ideas, making sure that responses are clearly linked to the question. This is important regardless of the tariff of the question.

In the 8-mark AO3 questions candidates should take care not write descriptive answers either based on the resource or their own knowledge. Evaluation or assessment of an issue or an idea will be required therefore answers must be focused in this way, only relying on knowledge as supporting evidence.

A focus on literacy skills in teaching is important to support candidates in writing responses which are appropriately linked to the question. This applies to all questions but is particularly important in 6 and 8 markers where providing elaborated and sophisticated responses will gain access to the higher bands. One well-constructed sentence for example can achieve 2 marks in the lower tariff AO2 questions and is also an effective time management strategy.

GEOGRAPHY A

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C111U30-1 Applied Fieldwork Enquiry

General Comments

Part A was focused on investigating flows in fieldwork and was contextualised using traffic and commuter flows. Part B was focused on investigating risk mitigation in fieldwork and was contextualised using river flooding. Part C continued this area of focus, leading to sustainable ways of managing river flood river in the UK.

Overall all items in the paper were attempted by most of the candidates: with all but five questions being attempted by over 90% of candidates. The length of the paper appeared appropriate with very little evidence of candidates running out of time for completion.

AO4 questions were the most accessible overall, however they did produce the greatest range of accessibility, with question 2biv (reason to use inter-quartile range) being the least accessible on the paper and question 1bii (vehicle count at point F) being the most accessible on the paper.

AO3 questions were marginally more accessible than AO2 questions, with students' own fieldwork being the least accessible of the AO3 questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Part A

Q.1 **(a)** **(i)** This question focused on the interpret strand of AO3. Candidates found this question accessible. The question focused on the improvement of **data collection of traffic flows.** Some candidates focused on the improvement of generic data collection, without reference to the context of the resource or traffic flows.

(ii) This question focused on the use strand of AO4. There was a great variety of workings for the percentage increase, many were not correct. Some candidates were able to gain a correct response but without showing their workings, this meant they potentially lost half of the marks for this question. This was the fourth least accessible question on the paper.

(b) **(i)** This question focused on the use strand of AO4. Almost all candidates completed this question, with a high rate of correct answers.

(ii) This question focused on the use strand of AO4. This was the most accessible question on the paper, with nearly all candidates attempting an answer and a mean mark across the cohort of 0.9 out of 1.

(iii) This question focused on the adapt strand of AO4. Marks were awarded for improving **Map 1.3** not for the improvement of the data collection leading to the map. The response "complete flowline F" was not credited. Some candidates suggested using *alternative* mapping techniques rather than *improvements*.

(c) This question focused on the evaluate strand of AO3, application of knowledge and understanding. Candidates needed to place their answer within the *context of the resource* provided to access higher marks. Many candidates answered well on the limitations of secondary data in a generic sense, covering aspects such as possible bias, inaccuracy, outdated data and lack of reliability, but some needed to develop this in relation to commuter flows into Birmingham shown in the resource. Candidates often did not provide enough limitations to reach 4 marks, with the mean mark across the cohort 1.5 out of 4.

(d) This question was about the candidates own fieldwork on geographical flows. This was the third least accessible question on the paper. Some candidates evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of their data *collection* methods, rather than their data *presentation* methods or described their fieldwork, some of which was not about flows, this limited their access to marks. Of the candidates who focused on data presentation, the best responses came from candidates who used an appropriate presentation method for flows. However, some candidates described tally charts and tables as their data presentation method on flows, which limited access to the higher bands, as these are not the most appropriate methods of data presentation for flows.

Part B

Q.2 (a) (i) This was the most accessible of the AO3 questions with almost all candidates attempted this question, but with some candidates opting for option 4 about coastal engineering.

(ii) This question was about interpreting the resource to suggest reasons (AO3). Successful candidates placed their answer in the context of *higher or lower* house prices, rather than just affected house prices and were able to elaborate their reasons. Few candidates scored top marks, often due to lack of elaboration of their two reasons, with a mean mark of just under 2 marks across the cohort. Most common answers were the linked to river flood risk, flood protection and attractive riverside views.

(b) (i) Most candidates attempting this got it right: this was the second most accessible question on the paper.

(ii) This question was answered well, with many candidates scoring full marks.

(iii) This question focused on the use part of AO4. Candidates were either fully confident attempting this question or did not attempt it, (it has the second lowest attempt rate on the paper) although some candidate were able to quote the correct formula but not apply it.

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(iv) Many candidates appeared not to fully grasp the concept of the inter-quartile range, even if they had scored well on the previous question. This question was the least accessible on the paper, with 89% attempting the question but with many wrong answers.

(c) This was the second least accessible question on the paper. It was attempted by 86% of candidates, slightly less than 1d (the other own fieldwork question), however mean scores across the cohort were the same at around 1.5 marks. Successful candidates demonstrated that they had grasped the concept of reliability and how conclusions are based on results and therefore data collection methods and sampling. Less successful candidates commented just on the accuracy and/or reliability of generic data collection methods e.g. weakness was it only happened on one day, not enough people asked etc. not linking it to their conclusions. Some candidates only *described* the methods they used during their fieldwork or *stated* their conclusions. Only a few candidates were able to contextualise their answers using their own fieldwork in a detailed and specific way, therefore accessing Band 3 marks. A number of candidates misunderstood the question and described their risk assessment strategy for ensuring they were safe on their fieldwork. Some candidates thought their conclusions were reliable because their conclusions confirmed their fieldwork aim.

Part C

Q.3 **(a)** **(i)** This question focuses on the use aspect of AO4, to interpret patterns / trends. This question was answered well by most candidates, with very few not selecting 3 answers.

(ii) Some candidates wrote about coastal flooding. Lots of candidates were able to gain one mark for heavy rainfall but failed to develop their reasoning. Most successful answers were urbanisation and reduction of infiltration.

(b) **(i)** Most candidates used a variety of different methods to gain the correct answer, although some missed out on the working out mark even though gaining a correct answer. However, it was answered more successfully by more candidates than 1aii.

(ii) This question provided a range of answers with a good range of marks. The most successful candidates were able to structure their answer, by providing two reasons and *development* of the reasons, often using connectives such as because / so / therefore. Many answers referred to values of land and costs of flooding, some referred directly to the diagram in relation to flood risk. Less successful candidates referred just to flood plains rather than the 'distance from the river/flood risk' concept inherent in land use zoning. Most candidates understand the concepts of impermeable/permeable surfaces, run-off etc, but some didn't relate this to land use zoning.

(c) **(i)** This question focused on the interrelationships between places, processes and environments. Few students got into Band 3, with a mean mark across the cohort of 2.5 out of 6. Candidates who were most successful named different groups of people and gave reasons for possible views. Tourists, homeowners and business owners were the most common groups used. Candidates achieving Band 3 used

chains of reasoning and wrote about more than one engineering strategy or place. Less successful candidates often wrote about sea defences or the safety of the glass in the picture without reference to different groups of people.

(ii) Almost all candidates answered this question, however some gave Wednesday 22nd as the first answer and 0.8 for the final answer.

(d) **(i)** This question had the lowest attempt rate at 66%, with many students who did attempt it losing the second mark for inaccurate shading.

(ii) This question was one of the more accessible of the AO4 questions, with a high attempt and success rate.

(e) This question was attempted by most candidates, with little evidence of any running out of time. The question had the great range of answers on the paper, with the mean mark in Band 2.

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the aspects of sustainability and short and long terms effects of the chosen strategy. The most successful candidates considered at least two of the strategies and discussed the positive and negatives of these to come to a conclusion.

A significant number of candidates described how the strategy would work and the strengths and weaknesses of it, rather than analyse and evaluate which strategies would be most sustainable. Less successful answers lack balance across the strategies, limited chains of reasoning, lacking a focus on sustainability and a weak justification.

The most commonly chosen strategy appeared to be 'slowing the flow' and most candidates scored in B3. Band 2 answers were very generic and often didn't consider aspect of the non-chosen strategy.

Some candidates interpreted 'storage areas' as places for people to store their belongings to keep them dry during a flood, or areas which housed emergency equipment for use during a flood.

Summary of key points

Own fieldwork: Questions in Part A will be about the fieldwork method and questions in Part B will be about the fieldwork concept.

Diagrams and Resources: If these are provided in the exam paper, it is likely that the candidates will need to refer to them or use them to contextualise their answer.

Command words: The command word evaluate was the most likely to be answered less successfully by the majority of candidates.
Describe versus Explain: Many candidates spent a lot of their answers describing rather than explaining. Descriptions were apparent specifically in fieldwork questions and 3e.

Working out: Some candidate missed out the working out marks, even though they got current answers, this could mean candidates lost half of the calculation questions.

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