

Cambridge International AS & A Level

GEOGRAPHY**9696/21**

Paper 2 Core Human Geography

May/June 2025

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the May/June 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **20** printed pages.

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.












Annotations guidance for centres


Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning	Use
	Correct point	Point-marked questions only: Section A, Section B part (a)
	Incorrect	Point-marked questions only: Section A, Section B part (a)
	Level 4	Levels-marked questions only: Section B part (c)
	Level 3	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
	Level 2	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
	Level 1	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
	Level 0 – No creditable response	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
Highlighter	Creditworthy part of an extended response	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
	Evaluative point	Levels-marked questions only: Section B part (c)
	Omission or further development/ detail needed to gain credit	All questions
	Unclear or validity is doubted	All questions
	Developed point	All questions

Annotation	Meaning	Use
EG	Appropriate example or case study given	All questions
IRRL	Irrelevant	All questions
NAQ	Material that does not answer the question	All questions
	Highlighting a significant part of an extended response – to be used with another annotation e.g. IRRL or EVAL	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
SEEN	1. Diagram or essay plan has been seen but no specific credit given 2. Additional page has been checked	1. Any diagrams or essay plans 2. All blank pages in the provided generic answer booklet and/or extension answer booklet(s).
R	Rubric error	Optional questions only (place at start of question not being credited): Section B (Candidates answer one question)

Examiners must consider the following guidance when marking the essay questions:

Candidates are free to develop their own approach to the question and responses will vary depending on the approach chosen. Whichever approach is chosen, essays which address the question and support their argument with relevant examples will be credited. There may be detailed consideration of a case study/one or more examples, or a broadly conceived response, drawing on several examples to illustrate the factors involved.

Section A

Answer **all** questions in this section. All questions are worth 10 marks.

Population

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)(i)	<p>Fig. 1.1 shows the percentage of the population aged 0–14 years, 15–64 years, and 65 years and over, for selected countries and the world, in 2023.</p> <p>Using Fig. 1.1:</p> <p>State the country with the population structure that is most similar to the world's population structure.</p> <p>Brazil</p>	1
1(a)(ii)	<p>Using Fig. 1.1:</p> <p>Calculate the percentage of the population aged 15–64 years old for the USA. Show your working.</p> <p>$100 - (18 + 18)$ <u>or</u> $82 - 18$ (1) = 64% \pm 1% (1)</p>	2
1(b)	<p>Using Fig. 1.1, compare the dependency issues for Italy and Laos.</p> <p>Italy has an ageing population but Laos has a youthful population (1).</p> <p>Both have a relatively high dependency ratio but with different pressures.</p> <p>Other marks for development using data and/or implications, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy has higher aged dependency (23% 65 years and over compared to 5% for Laos) Laos has higher child dependency ratio (30% 0–14 years compared to 12% for Italy) the working population is the same (65% 15–64 years in both Italy and Laos) <p>Issues could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy's working population will shrink (and must provide for an increasing aged population), whereas Laos will have a larger working population in the future Laos (youthful population) issues – education, child health, employment opportunities, further population growth Italy (ageing population) issues – pensions, shrinking workforce/tax base, social and health care <p>1 mark for a simple comparison, 2 marks for a developed comparison (with as detail or an example) up to the maximum.</p>	3

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>Suggest why the dependency ratio may <u>not</u> be an accurate indicator of the percentage of the working population in a country.</p> <p>Reasons could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people work beyond 65/before 15 e.g. child labour • elderly working due to lack of welfare state/family to support them • not all people 15–65 work (due to a variety of reasons such as health, education etc.) • people working part-time or seasonally may not be accounted for • countries vary in age of retirement/between men and women/some can afford to take early retirement • there may be unemployment • not all births may be registered – e.g. as result of China’s one-child policy, refugees, other reason – UNICEF says 1 in 4 children under 5 do not officially exist. • Areas may vary within a country e.g. rural vs. urban. <p>1 mark for a simple explanation, 2 marks for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).</p>	4

Migration/Settlement dynamics

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Table 2.1 shows the top ten sources of international migrants into Brazil, an MIC in South America, in 2020.</p> <p>Describe the pattern of international migrants into Brazil shown in Table 2.1.</p> <p>Description of the <u>pattern</u> could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5/half of source countries are in same world region as Brazil • nearly a third of all migrants (32%) are from Venezuela [248 105/771 247] • Japan is the only source country in Asia • majority/96% of migrants are from other MICs or HICs; just over 384 000 [384 146] from MICs and just over 350 000 [354 305] from HICs • majority/6 of source countries/migrants are from Spanish speaking countries. <p>1 mark for each descriptive point. Max. 1 mark if no reference to any pattern.</p>	4
2(b)	<p>Suggest how the characteristics of international migrants arriving from HICs may differ from the characteristics of international migrants arriving from LICs.</p> <p>Ideas could relate to differences in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • life stage/family • education level • wealth • type of employment being sought • voluntary/forced migration (cause may differ) • area they settle in e.g. rural vs. urban <p>1 mark for each relevant difference.</p>	2
2(c)	<p>Explain why most international migrants settle in the major cities of receiving/destination countries.</p> <p>Reasons could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater chance of employment • often first place as they fly or sail into the country • greater range of accommodation • major communication hub • existing community from similar background (feel safer/easier to assimilate) • more facilities / services, such as universities etc • greater cultural diversity • end point for stepped migration/chain migration may apply • easier to go unnoticed • may have relatives in those cities <p>1 mark for a simple explanation, 2 marks for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).</p>	4

Population/Migration/Settlement dynamics

Question	Answer	Marks																
3(a)	<p>Fig. 3.1 shows the population of three rural settlements in an HIC in 2001, 2011 and 2021.</p> <p>Compare the population changes for the rural settlements shown in Fig. 3.1.</p> <p>A comparison could include both similarities and differences. Three separate descriptions do not make a comparison – max. 1 mark.</p> <table><tr><th>settlement</th><th>2001</th><th>2011</th><th>2021</th></tr><tr><td>A (orange bars)</td><td>775</td><td>750</td><td>1100</td></tr><tr><td>B (blue bars)</td><td>1625</td><td>1675</td><td>1725</td></tr><tr><td>C (grey bars)</td><td>2175</td><td>2175</td><td>2130</td></tr></table> <p>Comparisons could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• settlement A grew significantly overall/between 2001 and 2021, unlike settlements B and C which are fairly static• settlements A and B grown whilst settlement C has declined• settlement with smallest population (A) has seen the greatest growth whilst settlement with largest population (C) has shown a slight decline• 2001–2011 saw least change for all three settlements <p>1 mark for a simple comparison, 2 marks for a developed comparison (with detail or an example) up to the maximum.</p>	settlement	2001	2011	2021	A (orange bars)	775	750	1100	B (blue bars)	1625	1675	1725	C (grey bars)	2175	2175	2130	4
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A (orange bars)	775	750	1100															
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C (grey bars)	2175	2175	2130															
3(b)	<p>Suggest <u>two</u> reasons for the change in the population for settlement A between 2011 and 2021.</p> <p>Reasons should relate to population growth of settlement A.</p> <p>Reasons could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• new housing estates built in the area• net positive migration – urban to rural/counterurbanisation• net natural increase• improved transport links to city• industrial estate/science park/retail park/office centre built there• government policy to decentralise population from city (overspill town, new town, etc.)• new resource has been found• building a tourist attraction• decline in urban living standards (e.g. crime, air pollution, housing costs) / benefits of rural living (and remote working) have encouraged people to move to rural settlement• more retirement to the area – ageing population <p>1 mark for each reason.</p>	2																

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	<p>Explain why rural settlements that are <u>not</u> near to any town or city might decline in population.</p> <p>Reasons could include:</p> <p>High death rate compared to birth rate – ageing population</p> <p>High out-migration due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of employment • mechanisation of farming • counterurbanisation • improved transport so can move out • lack of facilities/infrastructure e.g. schools, buses, shops, hospitals, etc. • cannot afford housing due to second home ownership • reverse multiplier effect – loss of rural industry, loss of young, etc. • increased environmental hazards e.g. floods, disease • attractions of urban areas <p>1 mark for a simple explanation, 2 marks for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).</p>	4

Section B

Answer **one** question from this section. All questions are worth 30 marks.

Population

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)(i)	<p>Outline the concept of ‘overpopulation’.</p> <p>The concept of overpopulation could be outlined as: Overpopulation refers to a size/number population (1) which exceeds its sustainable size (carrying capacity) (1) within a particular environment or area (1) at a given level of technology (1)</p> <p>The idea of pressure on resources and environmental degradation as well as falling living standards/quality of life.</p> <p>1 mark for idea of size/number of population. 2nd/3rd mark for relating it to carrying capacity, environment or area, level of technology, quality of life, etc.</p>	3
4(a)(ii)	<p>Explain why optimum population is difficult to achieve.</p> <p>It is a relative term such that ever-changing resources and population rarely permit an optimum – idea of dynamic equilibrium.</p> <p>Basic idea of dynamism – 2 marks.</p> <p>Other reasons could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the idea that population/resources are not homogeneous • problems of measuring resources/population • there could be different optimums such as social v economic • and/or examples <p>1 mark for a simple explanation, 2 marks for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).</p>	4

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	<p>With the aid of examples, explain the difficulties for an area caused by underpopulation.</p> <p>Difficulties could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demographic e.g. unbalanced population pyramid, low birth rate • economic challenges e.g. lack of (skilled/educated) labour, few consumers, exploitation and/or utilisation of resources – leading to lack of income to the area, infrastructure gaps, etc. • social e.g. lack of marriage partners, elderly dependency, difficult to supply social services/aid • political e.g. difficult to control area, lack of security, core v periphery idea, perceived solutions (e.g. encouraging immigration) can be controversial • environmental <p>Max. 4 marks if no valid examples.</p> <p>Award marks based on the quality of explanation and breadth of the response using the marking levels below.</p> <p>Level 3 (6–8) Response clearly explains the difficulties for an area caused by underpopulation. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response.</p> <p>Level 2 (3–5) Response explains the difficulties for an area caused by underpopulation. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. Examples may lack detail or development.</p> <p>Level 1 (1–2) Response is largely descriptive about the difficulties for an area caused by underpopulation. Knowledge is basic and understanding may be inaccurate. Examples are in name only or lacking entirely.</p> <p>Level 0 (0) No creditable response.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>‘A decrease in the birth rate will lead to economic decline in many HICs.’</p> <p>With the aid of examples, how far do you agree with this statement?</p> <p>Decrease in birth rate is likely to have some negative effects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced labour supply • reduced number of consumers • increased tax burden on working population, etc. • this will increase the proportion of ageing population that will need extra (and costly) support such as specialised health and social care, so reducing economic growth <p>However, there are positives effects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less needs to be spent on education • less needs to be spent on child support etc. <p>Much depends on what happens in terms of net migration. To avoid economic decline many countries welcome young migrants e.g. Germany.</p> <p>Higher level responses may question whether birth rates and economic growth are linked – the latter may depend on other factors e.g. Norway with its resource base, technology changes (e.g. automation, AI and global production may reduce the need for a large workforce).</p> <p>Award marks based on the quality of the response using the marking levels below.</p> <p>Level 4 (12–15) Response thoroughly assesses the extent to which a decrease in the birth rate will lead to economic decline in many HICs. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic.</p> <p>Level 3 (8–11) Response assesses the extent to which a decrease in the birth rate will lead to economic decline in many HICs but may be unbalanced. Examples may lack detail or development. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>Level 2 (4–7) Response shows general knowledge and understanding of the extent to which a decrease in the birth rate will lead to economic decline in many HICs. Response is mainly descriptive or explanatory with limited use of examples and understanding of the topic may be partial or inaccurate. Some concluding remarks. General responses without the use of example(s) will not get above the middle of Level 2 (6 marks).</p> <p>Level 1 (1–3) Response may broadly discuss decreases in birth rates or economic decline in HICs but does not address the question and does not come to a convincing conclusion. Response is descriptive, knowledge is basic and understanding is poor.</p> <p>Level 0 (0) No creditable response</p>	

Migration

Question	Answer	Marks
5(a)	<p>Describe the causes of forced (involuntary) international migration.</p> <p>Most candidates will probably consider a range of push factors.</p> <p>Causes could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• environmental e.g. earthquakes, floods, rising sea levels, drought• economic collapse e.g. famine• political e.g. war, persecution, government policy• social e.g. religious/tribal conflicts• other e.g. to escape disease such as Ebola <p>1 mark for a simple description, 2 marks for a developed description (with detail or an example) up to the maximum.</p>	7

Question	Answer	Marks
5(b)	<p>With the aid of examples, explain why international migration has increased in recent years.</p> <p>Candidates may consider economic, social, environmental push and pull factors but equally there are enabling factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater ease of movement e.g. air travel • increased information on opportunities/help available via media, internet, etc. • increased global inequalities in income and life chances • higher education so more employable and more knowledgeable • cultural changes e.g. greater independence for women • some governments encourage such movements • increase in forced migration e.g. due to climate change, conflict, persecution • greater need to send back remittances • was low before due to Covid-19 pandemic <p>Max. 4 marks if no valid examples.</p> <p>Award marks based on the quality of explanation and breadth of the response using the marking levels below.</p> <p>Level 3 (6–8) Response clearly explains why international migration has increased in recent years. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response.</p> <p>Level 2 (3–5) Response explains why international migration has increased in recent years. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. Examples may lack detail or development.</p> <p>Level 1 (1–2) Response is largely descriptive about international migration. Knowledge is basic and understanding may be inaccurate. Examples are in name only or lacking entirely.</p> <p>Level 0 (0) No creditable response.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
5(c)	<p>With the aid of examples, how far do you agree that it is difficult for governments to manage international migration?</p> <p>Difficulties could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illegal immigration e.g. people are able to bypass controls, people smuggling – some migrants are victims • geographical situation e.g. bordering a country with war or unrest (e.g. Jordan, Colombia), practical issues e.g. long/unmanned borders to control, sheer volume of migration • economic issues e.g. costs v benefits of labour • social issues e.g. humanitarian action, family links • ethical issues • political e.g. disagreements over how to control/needs migrants <p>Governments may use a variety of strategies to attempt to manage international migration which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build fences, walls, strict border controls • operate quotas based on specific criteria/visas • indirect e.g. anti-migrant attitude/rhetoric <p>Some governments encourage migration, e.g. to target skill shortages.</p> <p>Higher level responses may contrast situations where the government can more easily control such migration e.g. Australia with countries that struggle such as Greece.</p> <p>Award marks based on the quality of the response using the marking levels below.</p> <p>Level 4 (12–15) Response thoroughly assesses the extent to which it is difficult for governments to manage international migration. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic.</p> <p>Level 3 (8–11) Response assesses the extent to which it is difficult for governments to manage international migration but may be unbalanced. Examples may lack detail or development. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
5(c)	<p>Level 2 (4–7) Response shows general knowledge and understanding of the extent to which it is difficult for governments to manage international migration. Response is mainly descriptive or explanatory with limited use of examples and understanding of the topic may be partial or inaccurate. Some concluding remarks. General responses without the use of example(s) will not get above the middle of Level 2 (6 marks).</p> <p>Level 1 (1–3) Response may broadly discuss how governments can manage international migration but does not address the question and does not come to a convincing conclusion. Response is descriptive, knowledge is basic and understanding is poor.</p> <p>Level 0 (0) No creditable response.</p>	

Settlement dynamics

Question	Answer	Marks
6	For your chosen case study of providing power infrastructure <u>or</u> transport infrastructure for a named city:	
6(a)	<p>Outline why the power infrastructure <u>or</u> transport infrastructure needed to be improved.</p> <p>This will depend on the case study chosen but responses may focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shortcomings of the existing infrastructure (quality, quantity/capacity, coverage) • changed needs of local community/industry • technology improvement/planning for future change • as part of an upgrade of the area e.g. redevelopment/change the image • replace damaged infrastructure e.g. after a war or earthquake • government policy • urban growth – population, urban sprawl <p>1 mark for a simple description, 2 marks for a developed description (such as detail or an example) up to the maximum.</p>	7

Question	Answer	Marks
6(b)	<p>Explain the challenges of improving the infrastructure.</p> <p>This will depend on the case study chosen but challenges could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic e.g. cost of construction, pricing policy for the new service • social e.g. opposition from local population • political e.g. differences between government layers/agencies, opposition/working with NGOs, building restrictions, decisions around distribution of services – will everyone benefit? • environmental e.g. causes air pollution, damages/demolish historical/cultural buildings, noise, space needed, etc. • practical e.g. time needed, linkages needed • technical e.g. expertise needed for construction, maintenance and operation <p>Max. 4 marks if no valid examples.</p> <p>Award marks based on the quality of explanation and breadth of the response using the marking levels below.</p> <p>Level 3 (6–8) Response clearly explains the challenges of improving the infrastructure. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response.</p> <p>Level 2 (3–5) Response explains the challenges of improving the infrastructure. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. Examples may lack detail or development.</p> <p>Level 1 (1–2) Response is largely descriptive about the provision of infrastructure. Knowledge is basic and understanding may be inaccurate. Examples are in name only or lacking entirely.</p> <p>Level 0 (0) No creditable response.</p>	8

Question	Answer	Marks
6(c)	<p>Evaluate the success of the attempted strategies used to improve the infrastructure.</p> <p>There should be at least two attempted strategies evaluated – possibly differing in approach e.g. top down vs. local bottom up strategies.</p> <p>Evaluation of success could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be viewed over time and/or space • may vary between different parts of the community/stakeholders • may vary in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes, sustainability <p>Award marks based on the quality of the response using the marking levels below.</p> <p>Level 4 (12–15) Response thoroughly assesses the success of the attempted strategies used to improve the infrastructure. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic.</p> <p>Level 3 (8–11) Response assesses the success of the attempted strategies used to improve the infrastructure but may be unbalanced. Examples may lack detail or development. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Level 2 (4–7) Response shows general knowledge and understanding of the attempted strategies used to improve the infrastructure. Response is mainly descriptive or explanatory with limited use of examples and understanding of the topic may be partial or inaccurate. Some concluding remarks. General responses without the use of example(s) will not get above the middle of Level 2 (6 marks).</p> <p>Level 1 (1–3) Response may broadly discuss strategies used to improve the infrastructure but does not address the question and does not come to a convincing conclusion. Response is descriptive, knowledge is basic and understanding is poor.</p> <p>Level 0 (0) No creditable response.</p>	15