Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in Geography (WGE01_01)
Unit 1

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Introduction

Most candidates managed to answer all questions on the examination paper and few 'blanks' were encountered. As might be expected there was variation in the quality of answers but there were many interesting and informed responses.

Global Challenges contains a choice of World at Risk or Going Global longer essay questions. The World at Risk question proved more popular than the Going Global option. The quality of responses from one option to another was not significantly different for the 20 marker responses but candidates tended to score more highly on the 10-mark World at Risk question.

Centres may wish to consider some general points going forward:

- Compulsory topic 1 World at Risk does contain detailed physical process content that demands an understanding of avalanche hazards and the Milanokovitch cycles – this was often lacking in responses to Questions 1 and 2.
- When tackling 'describe' questions, students are not expected to suggest reasons as they will not receive credit for this.
- Many questions use the command word 'assess' this is defined in the Specification on page 77. This requires higher-order thinking skills that involve candidates looking at several sides of an argument or question, weighing up issues, considering which factors / explanations are the most important and making supported judgements. Failure to demonstrate these cognitive skills limits available credit.
- Mark schemes refer to 'evidence': this can come in the form of examples, case studies, data, facts, detailed reference to places, concepts and geographical theory.

Question 1aii

Most candidates were able to complete this question with ease attaining the two marks available by commenting that the overall trend showed an increase, however, there were ongoing fluctuations. Some answers did not always comment on the idea of overall trend and instead focused on sections within the given years shown. A small minority commented on the overall trend rather than focusing on meteorological hazards as directed by the question.

Question 1aiii
Overall most students were able to access this question and commonly gained a mark for increased global warming or temperatures. Students then often struggled to gain the 2nd mark as they shifted into answered that focused on gradual sea level rise linked to thermal expansion or ice caps melting. The question asked focused on rapid onset disasters. The best responses linked increased global temperatures to greater evaporation rates and therefore larger rainfall events.

Question 1b

The majority of students were able to identify how the cause of avalanches but found it challenging to develop this to gain the extension mark. Most commonly, students referenced earthquakes or human activities but often failed to link this to the vibrations that these create. The best responses were able to explain how that impact then led to the destabilisation or instability of the snow pack. A common error was to explain landslides rather than avalanches something the centres should explore with their students for future exam series.

Question 1c
Overall many students focused on one element of the question, rather than the two foci of the question; community preparedness and the role of aid. Community preparedness was less well explained by students who tended to focus on government approaches in developed countries rather than small-scale approaches. The best answers were developed through a case study approach, allowing students to demonstrate more thorough understanding. Very few students commented on the role of aid and this limited their ability to access the level 3 marks.

Question 2ai
The majority of students gained the mark available for this question. However, a number often described the resource by stating 'elliptical orbit' given rather than focusing on the change in orbital shape that the image was showing.

Question 2aii
Most students were able to identify two of the Milanokovitch cycles and a change that resulted from these. Weaker responses lacked quality of explanation instead relying on the idea of the closeness to the sun for all of the elements, rather than recognising the complexity of seasonal alteration

for example. Students tended to find the changing orbit the easier of the options, with limited understanding overall for the role of the axial tilt.

Question 2b
The majority of students were able to identify two sources, particularly dendrochronology and were able to explain how this provided evidence of climate change due to the thickness of the rings. Student tended to miss the basic mark i.e. trees add a ring of growth each year of their life and instead implied this rather than being explicit. A number of students referred to ice cores but many did not discuss using 0^{16} and 0^{18} and the role in identifying climates. Students discussed all four of the elements outlined in the indicative content but not all were able to make the link to climate explicit.

Question 2c
Students overall found it difficult to identify groups and be specific about the opportunities that these groups would have through global warming. Students tended to focus on the Arctic with generic explanations for example about the opening of the Northwest Passage but not always, who would directly benefit from this. The best responses covered a range of groups and were explicit in terms of how they would benefit from increasing global warming.

Question 3aii
This question was answered well by the majority of students, with most gaining marks through the idea of improved healthcare and therefore longer life expectancy.

Question 3aiii
Most students were able to identify a consequence of the changing population structure and develop it for two marks. Few were able to develop one reason as asked in the question; with students drifting off into a second therefore, they were unable to attain the full marks available.

Question 3b
The best responses focused on the draw of TNCs setting up in urban areas and therefore creating jobs, which earned people more money, so they migrated. Some answers focused on improvements in infrastructure which allowed greater connectivity to the rural areas. Finally, there were some responses which highlighted improved knowledge of opportunities through social media.

Question 3c
On the whole students struggled to access this question as many did not consider in what context they saw 'resources'. Most of the answers were vague e.g. not enough food or water, without further consideration of the range of resources. The best answers explored this question using Dharavi as an example and the degradation of water supplies and spread of disease etc. Very few recognised that the impact depends upon the proportion of population to other resources.

Question 4aii
Students often struggled to highlight the overall pattern that was displayed on the choropleth map, instead offering areas of common migration. A small number of candidates interpreted China's states as individual countries leading to some inaccurate responses. Similarly, despite the command being 'describe', candidates found themselves drifting into explanations for that pattern shown for which they did not gain credit.

Question 4b
Overall, the question was completed well by the majority of candidates with most focusing on impacts of brain-drain and falling birth rates. A small minority failed to pick up marks as they offered impacts of host countries rather than source which the question had asked for.

Question 4c
Some students focused on the negative impacts of migration rather than management as asked in the questions. The best responses used Germany as a case study and therefore were able to speak confidently about the management issues that had arisen. These also treated this as very much a live issue and as such had recent supporting evidence.

Question 5a
The majority of candidates used the resource well and were able to develop simple points from it, however a small minority failed to use the resource explicitly and these answers therefore were more generalised in their response. Many students struggled to go beyond the resource and develop their own explanation or knowledge to develop a level 3 response.   The best responses were able to explain the variation in risk across Africa and suggest reasons for this, with most commenting on variations in capacity to cope and a range of vulnerability factors.

Question 5b
Students answered this question in a number of ways either by comparing economic costs to environmental and social or by comparing developed and developing and which costs were the greatest in these locations. The best responses developed a smaller range of ideas but in greater depth using case study knowledge to provide supporting evidence. An encouraging number of responses responded to the command word of "assess" throughout their response although there were many who assessed in a "Therefore it can be seen that…" concluding paragraph which resulted in a less coherent argument. Linking the ideas together to get a balanced judgement and showing the connections between the points made, was much less common.

Question 6a
This was less well answered than its counterpart question of 5a. Some students appeared to be unfamiliar with Special Economic Zones and as a result found it difficult to access. These candidate's responses ended up being largely generic. Many candidates referred to the resource, although some struggled to move away from the resource to provide developed explanation. A relatively large number of students despite understanding SEZs, made limited links back to the question stem of their contribution to globalisation, instead focusing on the positives and negatives of these for countries such as India.

Question 6b

Students were able to write some strong responses focusing on challenges in the cities e.g. transport, housing and waste. They would then compare these with job opportunities, higher wages, better services etc. The best responses developed depth of explanation through appropriately applied case study details to provide support evidence. The approach to "assess" was similar to 5a, however here the difficulty was the balance between challenges and opportunities. On the whole candidate were much more confident about problems with opportunities tending to be rather more generic.