



Pearson

Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

May 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
Geography (WGE02_01)
Unit 2

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Introduction

This was the third sitting of WGE02 Contested Planet and the entry was small, however the standard of responses was generally good and encouraging in some areas such as the fieldwork where some very good answers were encountered. In this area there has been a marked improvement over time.

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.

There was a roughly even split between the physical and human options (Q4 and Q5).

Centres may wish to consider some general points going forward:

- The paper totals to 60 marks and candidates were given 90 minutes to complete the paper.
- This exam paper consists of 5 questions, with the last two being paired options. In most cases each question has been tiered with longer, cognitively higher questions at the end of each section.
- Questions 1 and 2 test a mixture of AO1 and AO2 skills, whereas question 3 (compulsory), 4 (option 1) and 5 (Option 2) are based largely on fieldwork which is examined as an AO3 skill.
- Neither the Sample Assessment Materials nor any of the live examination papers used the command word 'describe'. There are few marks for descriptions, and description should be used as a means to an end i.e. leading to an explanation, not an end in itself.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

The overall impression given by examiners was that the paper has discriminated well between candidates and has proved accessible. However, Examiners did identify some issues in candidate performance which centres should be mindful in future preparation of candidates for this exam. This included:

- Breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the unit specification varied considerably, even with this small sample of students. There was variation especially in knowledge and understanding of key theoretical concepts, particularly with respect to some of the more technical physical geography.
- Although stimulus response material was provided many candidates are still not applying their knowledge accurately or relevantly. Many candidates still have problems in using evidence directly from the resource (an AO2 skill) in order to be able to generate a successful answer.
- Some candidates had a poor knowledge and understanding of the fieldwork questions, especially Q3d when there was a tendency to write "all I know" rather than giving a focus on the part of the enquiry pathway that was being examined. For this question, some failed to get into the L2 or L3 mark band as their answers were simply too generalised and non-specific.

- In addition, there was often a lack of fluency and structure in the longer answers, many candidates just describing and explaining, rather than a focus on assessment or evaluation when appropriate.

QUESTION BY QUESTION FEEDBACK

Question 1 had a focus on the Crowded Coasts part of the specification (Topic 2.3). It was perhaps surprising the number of students who struggled to identify both hard engineering structures in Q1ai. These questions will always be about responding to the resources which have been provided. Rehearsing how to respond to photographs, data and maps is an important skill to encourage prior to taking the exam (e.g. by using these resources as starters at the beginning of lessons), allowing candidates to deal with features, patterns, trends and even anomalies. Q1aii was generally successfully dealt with by many, showing good understanding of the conflict, although some failed to get the full two marks as they did not specify either “groups” or the types of management decisions.

Q1b presented a challenge for many. It seemed for the majority there was a lack of clear understanding about either lithology and structure linked to the idea of rates of erosion / coastal recession. Some of the better answers included for example:

- Clear separation showing understating of lithology vs structure (not just “hard rock² and soft rock”)
- Able to use located examples (knowing the geology in a couple of places) and also able to contrast rates using evidence, e.g. mm/cm per annum.

Many also found it problematic to “examine” instead treating more of a case-study question, in which case their answers ended up too descriptive. Discordant and concordant coasts, were for many, a distraction over the lithology and structure details.

Question 2, by comparison had a focus on the Urban Problems part of the specification (Topic 2.4). Again, this threw up similar difficulties for some candidates as in Q1. Most were able to understand the idea of trends, although a few did choose to just state data and information from a single time point which was not credited.

2aii similar really to 1 aii, many candidates clearly had the right intention but often didn’t specify the particular way in which the eco-city planning had produced a low ecological footprint. Again, practice is needed in developing descriptions into explanations.

In Q2b some good answers which clearly understood some of the positive and negative impacts of infrastructure projects on urban regeneration, identifying some of the impacts using a clear geographical conceptual framework such as for example, social economic or environmental impacts. The best answers had 2-3 well chosen places and projects (could be within the same city), with a good level of detail. Assessment was often interpreted as simply ‘another problems is....’ and only relatively few candidates really focused on deeper understanding

through analysis or assessment, i.e. recognising that success may be difficult to determine, e.g. for whom.

Question 3 was the compulsory fieldwork question, examining the fieldwork that the candidates has done themselves (“familiar” fieldwork). 3a was mixed, with some able to show good understanding of an idea and linking it to the purpose of the investigation. Whilst others were not able to identify either a model or idea, or consider any linkage to investigation focus. Its clear that not all candidates understanding either the sequence, nature of enquiry or the chain of reasoning that leads to an idea.

3c was mixed with some very good answers at the top-end, showing ideas, e.g. specific references to sources, books, blogs, magazines, newspapers etc. Other were less coherent, instead describing the secondary data as “the internet” and unable to link it in a meaningful way to the idea of evidence.

Q3d was the longest question on the paper. As in June 2017 and Jan 2018 there big problems for some candidates, who seemed to have no idea concept of ‘evaluate’ meant in this context. Whilst at AS this exam does not expect a deep understanding of the scientific method and fieldwork principles a lack of awareness of the route to enquiry was often troubling, especially in the context of design and methods. This was all too often evidenced by students describing the wrong part of the enquiry sequence. the focus for this Q was on Stage 5 (page 70) rather than the design and methods which are Stage 3-4. In this question in particular, students are still finding it troublesome to evaluate, rather than describe. Remember that the AOs are rewarding for this skills, rather than the skill of (fieldwork) recall which is characterised by description. In Q3 the fieldwork questions cannot simply be describe.

In other answers, there was evidence that candidates were writing what appeared to be pre-rehearsed responses, which in many instances were not specifically answering the question set.

Questions 4 and 5. These are the parallel optional aspects of this paper, where students can either chose to answer coasts or urban-based question. As in previous series, these were some of the most successful parts of the paper for many candidates, providing good answers that were detailed and specific and that matched the questions set.

Q4bii and 5bii were of note due to the fact that many candidates were unable to clearly communicate ideas around design, sampling and reliability. A number wrote about easier or even quicker which were not relevant in this particular question.

Q4biii and Q5biii were however difficult for many as the detail bar is set a little high with the 4 - mark explain two reason which requires development. Evidence showed only limited understanding of the term “cartography” and there were, predictably, lots of line graphs in the graphical.