Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Geography (WGE01) Paper 01

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Question 1ai
Most candidates were able to score one mark on this question by giving the correct answer D (4°C). A minority of candidates misread the question and answered the question in the context of La Nina.

Question 1aii
This question proved to be a greater challenge than had been intended. Candidates able to describe trends could see an overall pattern of sea surface temperature anomalies and were able to use data to identify the key trends of colder temperatures along the equator with a generally increasing rise towards the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn. Common errors included focusing on the area outside of the Tropics and trying to describe specific points without identifying a pattern. This may be a skill centres wish to explore for future exam series.

Question 1aiii
There was a mixed response to this question with variable interpretations on how El Nino could lead to increased flooding. Good answers focused on the idea of either; generally creating low pressure leading to rainfall in areas that are not used to it, or specifically focusing on the conditions which are created off the coast off the west coast of South America. The most common reason for not scoring any marks was referring to increased warming leading to increase in sea surface temperature leading to tropical storm formation and rainfall.

Question 1b
Most candidates were able to score some credit on this question recognising either a local or global scale action to reduce greenhouse (GHG) gas emissions. Some candidates were limited to two marks because despite being able to recognise relevant features, they did not develop their explanation to show how their chosen method could reduce GHG. Some candidates chose inappropriate scales; for example the implementation of renewable energy, which was more of a national / local scale response. Good answers were able to identify, particularly at global scale, the action, for example a named international agreement and identify specifically the targets which countries agreed to.

Question 1c
This was a generally well answered question, with the majority of candidates able to offer valid reasons for different approaches to adaptation. Lower scoring candidates tended to focus on one factor, such as wealth / state of development and gave generic reasons linked to place. Good answers could identify a range of factors and could link them together; a common response included linking development to wealth to use of adaptation methods such as defences. Some candidates were able to apply contrasting examples to determine the difference in approach and use these as a basis for discussion. The candidates achieving Level 3 marks often had a range of linked explanations and some comparison of examples.

Question 2ai
A well answered question where most candidates could identify Rocky Point as the correct location.

Question 2aii
This question elicited a range of responses from candidates. Many candidates found it difficult to look beyond the heavy rainfall, which led to the range of responses. Lower scoring candidates simply described the hazards associated with heavy rainfall. Some candidates were able to develop this idea and link the rainfall to increased landslide risk or even flooding. Higher scoring candidates were able to explain two different hazards linked to hurricanes; common ones included wind damage, or secondary hazards and then able to link the effect to a hazard, such as roofs destroyed or water borne disease as a consequence of limited water supply.

Question 2b
This question proved to be more of a challenge than expected. Many students were aware of the concept of magnitude but unable to describe it for different tectonic hazards. Common answers involved just stating the use of the Richter / Magnitude scale for earthquakes or the Volcano Explosivity Index for volcanic eruptions. A minority of students made reference to the Safir Simpson scale, despite it not being a tectonic hazard. Few students could develop their descriptions to describe how magnitude was measured. Some candidates were able to give detail on the range in the scales, the logarithmic nature of the scales or make reference to instruments which may collect the magnitude data.

Question 2c
Candidates adopted one of two approaches to this answer. Some focused on the hydro-meteorological hazards, giving specific detail on different types, without focusing on the human factors; these answers were often limited to Level 2 responses. Candidates scoring Level 3 responses were able to make clear links between a range of hazards, most commonly storms / hurricanes or flooding, and the associated human factors. Some candidates were limited by making reference to hazards other than hydro-meteorological.

Question 3ai
Most candidates were able to recognise India as the correct response.

Question 3aii
This question presented a challenge to many students who were overly descriptive of the changes shown by Russia and China, without clear comparison. Higher scoring candidates had a clear focus in their answer using comparative language, such as 'both Russia and China had a decrease in GDP values', or 'Russia had negative GDP growth whereas China has remained positive in the period'. There was good use of data and in some cases candidates manipulated data to show changes between periods of time.

Question 3b
Most candidates were able to achieve some credit on this question. Lower scoring candidates were limited by their range of points, or ability to link their explanation specifically to economic growth. Common answers focused on global shift, development of Foreign Direct Investment or TNC growth in emerging countries. Some candidates were also able to refer to examples of regions within countries, such as the SEZs along the China coastline, modelling their answer around this which enabled them to quickly access marks.

Question 3c
Overall students struggled to access this question as they could not distinguish International Governmental Organisations (IGOs) from others. As a result, many responses were generic in approach showing a lack of understanding. Answers scoring top Level 2 or Level 3 marks were able to refer to a range of IGOs, most commonly the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, and explain how they help global trade. Centres need to focus on the role of these organisations in the context of world trade.

Question 4ai
Despite many candidates scoring the correct answer, 1990, some opted for the year 2000 as this period when values were level and neither rising or falling.

Question 4aii
Most candidates scored credit on this question for recognising the decreasing trend. However some did not refer to the period from 1995 -1997 when there was a temporary rise in world manufacturing trade. Some candidates made reference to the entire period on the graph rather than focusing their answer between the period 1995-2010.

Question 4b
For many candidates this question proved a challenge. Candidates understood that there was a link to a centre for trade, though not all understood this was on a city scale; many in fact thought that the hub was on a national scale. Few also understood the concept of connectivity between hubs which limited responses.

Question 4c
This question was generally answered well by most candidates but there were a variety of approaches made. Some candidates focused on generic benefits such as greater variety, lower cost or cultural changes ('glocalisation') but failed to explain why this benefit was created. Some lower scoring candidates focused on wider benefits to the companies who produced the products and did not focus on the customer. Most candidates were able to achieve some credit however too many gave a range of benefits rather than explaining the benefit of two.

Question 4d.
This question generated mixed responses from students. Many were able to offer a range of reasons, for example future uncertainty like war or epidemics which may impact on countries or regions. Others focused their answer on approaches which had been undertaken by countries to control population e.g. the one child policy which limited their response as it was more difficult to link this to the global uncertainty. Higher scoring responses had a clear focus on global uncertainty and may have included references to difficulties in measuring population, or the uncertainty around global crises which could lead to either a Malthusian or Boserupian outcome thereby creating uncertainty. Greater focus on the global uncertainty would have improved the outcomes for many candidates.

Question 5a
The majority of candidates were able to access this question and used the resource well to support their answer. Some did not use the resource which limited their overall response as the question specifically required this. Higher scoring candidates were able to make reference to all of the data tables and identify patterns within each table and reasons for the differences. These reasons were often related to examples of hazards that were known to the candidate. Some higher scoring candidates noted that higher cost to more developed nations was a product of rebuilding and insurance payments, whereas higher death counts in less developed regions were a product of lower levels of preparation, awareness or even infrequent hazards. We encourage students to write a concluding comment at the end of the 10 mark questions to determine the key reasons, in this case for the variations in human and economic impacts shown.

Question 5b
Most candidates were able to offer some credit worthy answers on this question but there was the issue of imbalanced essays. Questions with the command 'assess' require a judgement based on a range of factors, in this case whether climate change has mainly natural causes. Therefore, the implication is that human factors are also relevant. Many candidates who scored high level 2 or lower Level 3 responses focused on a range of natural factors without considering the human factors. Higher scoring candidates had this balance but were also able to give considered and detailed exemplification of how each of the natural and human factors could change the climate. Candidates who achieved Level 4 responses were able to do all of the above and create a clear argument to determine the relative importance of each of the factors, for example that some natural factors had created change over a longer period of time whereas human factors have been significant over the past 150 years. Evidence of clearer linkages or comparison in the conclusion also would help students achieve a greater sense of argument.

Question 6a
Candidates used the resource well to describe the changes in megacity distribution between the two time periods. Some, however, were too descriptive in their approaches and merely stated reasons for the changes. The reasons given for changes were mainly focused on rural to urban migration or linkages to globalisation. Some higher scoring candidates were able to offer specific reasons for increases in urban populations shown on the map, for example the growth rates in Chinese cities linked to SEZ development, or the rise of African cities such as Lagos due to oil exploitation. This topic seemed to be more familiar to students than that in 5a and on averaged scored a higher mark. There is potential for centres to encourage candidates to write concluding comments at the end of these 10 mark questions to better reflect the overall trends in different regions.

Question 6b
Candidates struggled to grasp the requirements of this question and consequently it performed worse than those who attempted 5b. A majority of candidates just focused on the problems of an ageing population without breaking the question down which led to many scoring just Level 2 responses. Good answers could distinguish between the problems presented to today and potential problems in the future, especially in different parts of the world. However, the highest scoring candidates could also appreciate that ageing populations may provide some benefit as well as challenges and were able to discuss these. A significant minority were unsure about the concept of an ageing population or gave their personal views on the issue. This part of the specification could be better developed, by centres, with examples from different parts of the world.