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Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level in Geography (WGE04_01)
Unit 4: Researching Geography

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In a small entry there was a very wide range of candidate responses. Once again, two dominant themes emerge. Firstly, the importance of presenting a report rather than an essay; as both the generic and specific mark schemes make clear. There were several responses which were seamless, lacking any structure whatsoever and thus unable to achieve anything more than 1 or 2 marks in either the 'introduction' or the 'quality of written communication' sections of the mark scheme. This was often compounded by the difficulty of teasing apart their 'research' and their 'analysis'.

The second, and ultimately critical weakness of some of the better organised reports was a failure to address the contention in the title, each of which was set up as a debate. Despite, in some cases, thorough and thoughtful research in which case studies were carefully presented a failure to apply this information to the title ultimately impacted on the marks awarded for both analysis and the conclusion/evaluation section of the mark scheme. It is critical that, as central part of their preparation, candidates are taken through past questions alongside the relevant pre-release steers in order to get them used to selecting the appropriate evidence from their case-studies to make a point that would part of an argument or counter-argument. To help them achieve this it would be good practice to reference the key contention in their introduction pointing the direction of travel of their report. To assist in their analysis there are a number of useful ideas that can prove helpful including, for example, differences between short term and long-term costs and benefits; the concept of externalities; the divisions within countries as well as those between countries and the different types of costs and benefits from social to environmental.

For this paper there were a few sound answers to Question 1 but only a minority of candidates addressed the central contention. Obviously, it was important to address the word 'impact' and offer some suggestion of how these impacts might be assessed. A good starting point would have been to differentiate between types of impact from economic to social and environmental. Of courses these could also be seen as short term-and long-term that could also be linked to 'level of development' and ultimately a view needed to be taken about the phrase 'more important'.

There were some strong responses to Question 3. Many were well structured providing a clear framework for their reports and showing a strong command of the language. The best answers were quite conceptual and certainly addressed the main contention. Most took issue with the word 'impossible' but suggested that it was very difficult to protect specific cultural landscapes. Some never addressed what exactly a cultural landscape actually is despite offering some case-studies whilst others treated the 'increasingly globalised world' as a given. However, some did explore differences in the globalisation of ideas alongside the increasingly mobile global population as different aspects of this process and profited from so doing. Conclusions were sometimes a little brief and repetitive but there was, by contrast, often quite strong on-going evaluation.

There was a considerable range of marks in the answers to the Question 4. They were often characterised by good research and quite impressive place detail, but the depth was usually more notable than the range. Some built

rather too much of an edifice on single causes of health risk, often obesity. What was slightly disappointing was the habit of using national data rather than recognising that life expectancy data is very variable within countries and closely driven by deprivation in general and poverty in general. Those that did produced strong reports.

In general, the standard was similar to previous outings and, as before, it is disappointing that structural issues persist but pleasing that analysis seems a little stronger.

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