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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level

In Geography (WGE04)

Paper 1 Researching Geography

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In this larger than average entry there was a wide range of candidate responses.

Once again as in previous years, 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.

Option 1

Option 1 was by far the most popular option this year. There were a few excellent reports which answered the contention in the question directly and with evidential support. However, answers only a minority of candidates addressed the central contention. Obviously, it was important to address the word 'entirely' and offer some suggestion of how other factors might be significant as well as physical processes. That should not have been too challenging given the steers. A good starting point would have been to explore the vulnerability of communities and their capacity to cope.

Option 2

This question was very well answered by those candidates who were prepared to address the idea that the variations within countries are sometimes greater than the variations between countries. With food banks a much more familiar part of the social infrastructure in many 'developed world' countries, not least the USA and the UK there was leverage to apply here. Given the current food crisis it was unsurprising that most took the defensible view that the contention in the title was largely mistaken.

Option3

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. Some took issue with the word 'increase' but suggested that it was very difficult to protect specific cultural landscapes. Some never addressed what exactly cultural diversity is, and so struggled to assess 'increase' or decrease'.

Option 4

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 of health risks but not so much on global programmes. The choice of case-study was sometimes problematic. Some built rather too much of an edifice on single causes of health risk, often obesity without referencing the question at all.

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

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