

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

International GCSE
Bangladesh Studies
Land, People & Economy
4BN0_02

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Publications Code UG031758

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Introduction

This was the second examination of the new International GCSE specification and the number of candidates was roughly the same as in 2011. Overall, there was a slight improvement in the general performance, but an unusual feature was its polarisation. There were a significant and heartening number of candidates towards the top end of the mark range. They were counterbalanced, however, by a grouping of candidates towards the bottom end. In other words, there was a dearth of candidates performing in the middle mark range. This unusual pattern of discrimination within the candidature perhaps calls for some explanation. Is it simply that some centres have got to grips with the demands of the Specification whilst others are failing their students in terms of preparation for the examination? We cannot be certain.

Candidates coped well with the answer-book format of the examination that was first introduced last year. The allocation of lines to each question part seems to have been well judged in terms of what candidates were prepared to write, with the notable exception of the part (c) element of questions 2 to 7. Here lined spaces remained unfilled. Candidates do need to be reminded that they should devote a commensurate amount of time and effort for the six marks on offer for this question part.

Section A

Q.1, the compulsory question, seeks to test the candidate's more general knowledge of Bangladesh. In Part (a)(i) few were able to name the physical region – i.e. the Himalayan foothills or piedmont. Perhaps the most worrying default was in (b)(i) where only a small number of candidates were aware of the name given to the seasonal reversal of wind direction – i.e. monsoon. Many candidates struggled in (c)(i) and (ii), but were stronger in dealing with (d)(i) and (ii).

Section B

Of the two optional questions in this section, Q2 was significantly more popular. Perhaps first-hand experience helped candidates to cope well with all three sub-parts of (a). The answers to all sub-parts of (b) were also quite well informed. In (c) some candidates provided only a descriptive account of human hazards rather than looking at ways people make worse the impacts of natural hazards, such as floods and storm surges.

Responses to parts (a) and (b) of Q3 showed a general thinness of knowledge and understanding. However, in most cases this lapse was compensated by a stronger performance when tackling part (c). Most candidates were able to cite, if not explain, a number of resources provided by Bangladesh's forests.

Section C

Q4 was the preferred question in this section. An insecure grasp of the meaning of 'population density' and a tendency to explain population change in terms of only migration (i.e. ignoring natural change) had a depressing impact on performance. So too the misconception in (b)(i) that urbanisation is only about rural-to-urban migration. However, in (b)(ii) candidates had no difficulty in pointing out three valid differences between Dhaka and Chittagong. In (c) candidates seemed well acquainted with the problems confronting rural areas in Bangladesh, but too many were content simply to list rather than explain them.

Although fewer candidates attempted Q5 than Q4, the performance was altogether better. The causes of poverty were well understood in (a)(ii), so too the part that education has to play in reducing the level of poverty in (iii). In (b) candidates were generally well informed about the domestic 'costs' of international emigration and understood the significance of remittances. Part (c) was yet another chance to pick a question on what is seemingly a very popular topic, namely rural-to-urban migration. Most answers were, however, rather one-sided in that they focused on the 'pull' of urban areas to the neglect of the 'push' forces rural areas.

Section D

In this Section, there was an equal patronage of Q6 and Q7. Parts (a) and (b) of Q6 produced a good number of sound responses, but it was in (c) that too many candidates were found wanting. Knowledge of problems created by the Green Revolution was distinctly thin and patchy. In Q7(a)(i) candidates were unable to define the term 'development', whilst in (b)(i) few used the generic term 'services' to describe the type of economic activity that distinguishes the tertiary sector. Most candidates just listed a few exemplar activities – shops, offices, etc. In (b)(ii), explaining the significance of the tertiary sector as an indicator of the level of development challenged all but the strongest candidates.

But this was not the case in (c) where there was widespread grasp of the ways in which Bangladesh is becoming involved in the global economy.

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