

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE
Bangladesh Studies
Land, People & Economy
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Introduction

This was the third examination of the 'new' International GCSE specification and the number of candidates was roughly the same as in the two previous years. Whilst there was an improvement in the overall performance, there were still too many candidates in the F and G grade categories. Happily, such candidates were more than balanced by the number of candidates achieving A and B grades.

Candidates seem to have been well trained to cope with the answer-book format, and our judgement of the lined space allocations to individual question parts seems to have been about right. Only a few candidates had to resort to additional sheets of paper. However, in contrast, a significant number of candidates left an undue number of lines unfilled in the part (c) of questions. Candidates need to be reminded that rarely will a few lines of response warrant the award of Level 3 marks, i.e. 5 or 6. As suggested in previous reports, one suspects that such candidates may be guilty of running out of time when it has come to this final part of each question.

Question 1 is compulsory and seeks to test the candidate's general knowledge of Bangladesh - its land, people and economy. In general, the question was tackled quite well, save in five of the thirteen parts. In (a)(iii) there was a tendency to favour the 'cyclone' rather than the 'storm surge'. In (b)(ii) too many cited a non-renewable rather than a renewable resource. In c(ii) many thought that India rather than China was the largest supplier of imports, and in (iii) that jute was still the country's most valuable export. In (d)(i) it was insufficient to simply say that a migrant was someone who migrated.

Only a third of the candidates opted for **Question 2** in Section B. Most dealt with all parts of (a), but were found wanting in (b). Few seemed to be aware that that the coastline is being extended southwards by the accumulation of silt and the growth of the delta. At present, this is a more significant change than the threatened rise in sea level. In (c) candidates were reasonably aware of a number of possible ways, but there was a tendency simply to list those ways rather than indulge in any sort of evaluation.

In general, there was a stronger performance shown by those opting for **Question 3**. In (a) some failed to notice that the focus of the question had shifted from rainfall in (ii) to temperature in (iii) and therefore interpreted the wrong variable on the graph. There were some quality answers to (c) with the point being well made that the possible Bangladeshi contribution to the abatement of global warming would be small compared with other larger and more developed countries.

Question 4 was overwhelmingly the more popular question choice in Section C. A recurrent deficiency in (a)(iii) was to focus on the relationship of population to area rather than to resources and technology. In (b)(ii) explanations were coined almost solely in terms of the difficulty of controlling the birth rate. The contribution of a falling death rate (better

healthcare, diet and housing) to the rate of population growth was largely ignored.

The relatively few candidates who attempted **Question 5** seemed to be struggling in some parts of the question. In (a)(ii) many failed to note that the question was about the rate of urbanisation and as a consequence failed to mention the acceleration in that rate since 1980. In (b)(i), there was a general sound understanding of the reasons for the high incidence of many city slums, but there was almost total ignorance of the meaning of the term 'site' (the topography of the ground occupied by the built-up area of a city). By way of compensation, there was an awareness of the potential 'benefits' flowing from girls having an equal access to education.

In Section D, **Question 6** was attempted by three-quarters of the candidates. In (a)(ii) there was some insecurity as to what GDP stands for, but all the other three parts of (a) produced sound answers. It was surprising in (b) to discover that there were some candidates unaware of the meaning of the term 'informal sector'. It was equally surprising that few could see that working in that sector did produce some benefits. These would include providing the opportunity to supplement household income, particularly in a broader situation of underemployment or unemployment. Equally, those working in the informal sector bring benefits to society by undertaking such vital activities as garbage collection that most people would choose not to do for a living.

In parts (a)(i) and (ii) of **Question 7**, few seemed to understand the meanings of 'input' and 'output', but were aware of the difference between subsistence and commercial farming in (iii). In (b)(i) candidates were found wanting when it came to identifying two other measures of the level of development, whilst in (ii) most ignored the fact that the question was asking about variations within the country. Instead, they contented themselves by suggesting why Bangladesh was less developed than other countries. In the answers to (c) there needed to be more focus on the environmental impacts. Too many wrote more generally about the impacts of development.

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