

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel International
GCSE in Bangladesh Studies
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Unit 2: The Land, People and
Economy of Bangladesh

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General comments

This was the sixth examination of the current IGCSE specification and the number of candidates maintained last year's significant increase. Also the overall quality of the performance matched that of last year's cohort, so that there was a significant proportion of candidates at the top end, i.e. those achieving an A grade. As last year, the large majority of this year's candidate cohort appeared well prepared for the examination in terms of their knowledge, understanding and willingness to confront the questions.

Candidates now seem to be well able 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. Very few candidates spilt their answers onto additional sheets of paper. Nor was there evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time. Indeed, it was particularly heartening to see the bulk of candidates giving the part (c) of Questions 2 to 7 an allocation of their time and effort commensurate with its value of 6 marks. There is still scope here for sharpening the precise focus in answering the question, with a tendency to 'describe' rather than 'explain'.

Perhaps more in evidence this year was a small but growing number of candidates who simply attempted all or most of the questions in the examination paper and who, therefore, ignored the rubric requirement. They should be disabused that there is anything to be gained from such a 'spread it around' practice.

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 well. Answers to part (a) were mostly sound, except for a fair amount of guesswork about the resource in (iv). Likewise the general knowledge required in (b) was satisfactory except that in (iii) rather too many candidates gave the latitude rather than name the Tropic of Cancer. The exemplification required in (c) was generally provided. In (d)(i) most were aware of the economic interdependence but failed to identify the main links (mentioning most often foreign aid rather than trade and foreign investment) creating that interdependence. There was a tendency in (d)(ii) to provide general indicators of development rather than identify specific ways in which economic globalisation was impacting on Bangladesh.

A small percentage of the candidates opted for Question 2 in Section B and it has to be said that the overall performance was rather weak. In (a) few correctly identified the flood plain and understood how it was formed. In (b)(ii) there was a tendency to set down three seasonal names such as 'winter', 'summer' and 'monsoon' in random order. In (c), candidates had a limited view of river uses (often just confined to fishing) and few began to explain why it is important to manage these different river uses.

Question 3 was both popular and generally well answered. Candidates scored well in parts (a) and (b). In (c) there was a tendency just to describe the range of forest resources. As a consequence, the economic importance of some of these resources was neglected. So too the broader environmental and ecological value of the forests. However, the value of forests is being threatened by the devastating impact of deforestation on what little forest survives.

In Section C, Question 4 proved the more popular choice with most candidates responding commendably well. Particularly encouraging was the interpretation of Figure 4, except that some ignored the 'describe' command and instead offered a general explanation of the changes. Answers to (b)(iii) tended to be rather oblique, preferring to cite factors attracting people to the chosen location rather than the reasons for the high population density. There was a good awareness of 'push' and 'pull' factors in ©.

The answers to Question 5 were mostly satisfactory to parts (a) and (b). Candidates showed that they had a reasonably sound grasp of both poverty and urbanisation. In (c) there was scope for improvement in that too many candidates simply described and be-moaned the status of women today or were content to say that it was slowly improving. The focus needed to be shifted to the benefits ensuing from an improvement in status. Indeed, some candidates showed themselves to be well aware of a whole range of ensuing benefits.

In Section D, Question 6 attracted more takers. Many struggled in (a)(ii) to explain by the EU and US accounted for such a large percentage of the RMG exports, namely the huge consumer markets, the large amounts of disposable income and the lack of 'local' manufacturing. There was sound work in both parts of (b) and plenty of well-informed and wholly relevant responses to ©.

In Question 7, quite a number of candidates struggled in (a)(iii) to trace out the simple links between shopping and the secondary sector (sale of manufactured goods) and primary sector (sale of food). When it comes to the indicators required in (b)(ii), GDP or GNI are of no value unless expressed in per capita terms. In (c) a small number of candidates showed no grasp of the informal sector, but they were compensated by other candidates other showed a good understanding of the the different facets that make this sector an important component of the Bangladeshi economy.

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