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Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Geography (4GE1)

Paper 1: Physical Geography

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## Introduction

This was the third series of the new specification for International GCSE (9-1) Geography, Paper 1 – Physical Geography component and it was pleasing to see a good standard of responses from candidates. This paper consists of two 25-mark questions and one 20-mark question. The paper has a total of 70 marks. The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, calculations, and 8-mark extended writing questions. The exam command words which are used in this paper are defined on page 47 of the specification. Each of the questions is mapped to one or more of the Assessment Objectives (AOs). The approach to individual items is considered in this report.

In section A River environments, Coastal environments and Hazardous environments are covered. Candidates are required to select two out of three questions. In section B candidates choose one out of three fieldwork related questions relating to River environments, Coastal environments, and Hazardous environments. The International GCSE (9-1) Geography specification has been designed for all levels of ability, rather than being differentiated into higher and foundation tiers. In this qualification, there is greater emphasis on application and interpretation (AO3), as well as the introduction of new command words (e.g., 'assess' and 'evaluate') which appears once again to have proven challenging for some candidates.

## **Section A**

### **River Environments**

#### ***Question 1 (bii)***

This question was answered very well by most candidates. Most answered by identifying precipitation as a factor that affected river discharge. Very few candidates identified factors such as drainage density or channel gradient.

#### ***Question 1 (biii)***

This question was answered quite well by candidates with most scoring at least 1 mark, for either the idea of “lag time” being a delay or through identification of time between peak rainfall and peak discharge. Some candidates gained full credit through a full explanation.

#### ***Question 1 (c)***

The response to this question was variable with many candidates failing to identify or infer any information from the resources available. This had a limiting affect on the credit gained here. Where candidates did identify factors from the resource, they often gained full credit through a relevant expansion of how the factor affected the Water cycle. For example, several candidates talked about how urbanisation increases water transfers through increased surface run off.

#### ***Question 1 (d)***

Many candidates experienced difficulty with this question. There was a failure to understand what the question was asking, and candidates often talked about the causes of pollution. The question required candidates to identify a source of pollution and then explain how the particular type of pollution impacted water quality. Where candidates did gain credit, it was through the development of ideas such as wastewater from agriculture as a type of pollution with further expansion exploring the idea of eutrophication and the resulting change in the chemical balance of the water.

#### ***Question 1 (e)***

The majority of candidates were able to identify the feature correctly.

#### ***Question 1 (f)***

Most candidates scored 2 marks on this question, there were only a few candidates who scored 3 or 4 marks. In many cases candidates grasped the idea of the river flooding and the concept of depositing sediment on the surrounding

land but were unable to develop the answer any further or relate this to position in the river profile.

### **Question 1 (g)**

in this 8-mark extended writing question there were very few candidates who did not attempt to provide an answer. There was a good range of responses broadly in line with expectations. Candidates who produced a level 3 response were able to make good use of the resource and making a range of relevant points relating to A04 and then linking them to A03. Level 3 responses were generally well balanced looking at both the positive and negative impacts of the scheme. Candidates scoring in the level 1-mark range were primarily descriptive whilst level 2 responses showed some partial analysis which was generally unbalanced focusing on either positive or negative impacts.

## **Coastal Environments**

### **Question 2 (bii)**

Candidates provided a wide range of correct responses to this question.

### **Question 2 (biii)**

This question was answered with most candidates with most scoring at least 1 mark (e.g. shallow water / water of 26-28 degrees), however candidates struggled to access the second mark for development on this item as they were unable to develop how this could affect distribution.

### **Question 2 (c)**

The response to this question was variable with many candidates failing to identify or infer any information from the resources available. This had a limiting effect on the credit gained on this question. Where candidates did identify factors from the resource, they often gained full credit by suggesting a reason why the approach was used.

### **Question 2 (d)**

Most answers were generally well done; however, many were not developed sufficiently to secure the full three marks. The question asked for 'one cause of coastal flooding', some Candidates mentioned more than one cause which resulted in them not developing answers fully. Candidates who scored full marks on this question often developed ideas around the concept of global warming causing polar ice melting and resulting in sea levels rising and associated flooding.

### **Question 2 (e)**

Most candidates were able to identify the cave correctly.

### **Question 2 (f)**

A significant number of candidates confused the formation of stacks with the formation of a Spit and so received few marks. Many had the idea about longshore drift transporting material before it being deposited, but only a small proportion could explain why it was deposited. Candidates rarely identified elements of the process in detail such as how wave type or prevailing wind.

### **Question 2 (g)**

In this 8-mark extended writing question, the majority of candidates made good use of the resource and provided a good range of responses broadly in line with expectations. Level one responses tended to be quite descriptive in nature with. Level 3 responses provided a good well-balanced analysis of the different benefits of Mangrove ecosystems. Some candidates made judgement of the relevant importance of different benefits.

## **Hazardous Environments**

### **Question 3 (bii)**

Candidates provided a good range of responses to this item with most gaining the mark available. Where candidates did not score, it was mainly because they were confused between measurement and prevention of natural hazards.

### **Question 3 (biii)**

There was some variability in the responses to this question. Many candidates provided a strong response however, sometimes a candidates showed a misunderstanding about 'longer-term', talking about 'emergency food/water supplies and rescue services'.

### **Question 3 (c)**

There were very mixed responses to this question. In a few cases very strong answers were seen clearly mirroring the mark scheme. However, the majority of candidates generally found this more difficult than the corresponding question in 1c and 2c. Candidates sometimes tried to use their own knowledge to answer the question rather than making use of the resource. Candidates for future series need to ensure they use the stimulus material to answer the questions.

### **Question 3 (d)**

Candidates generally performed well on this question. There was a good understanding of ways in which governments could help prepare the population for earthquake events. The most common response involved candidates exploring the idea of emergency drills or the development of evacuation plans. Only a few candidates were able to gain the full three marks in this case candidates had developed the answer fully outlining the impact of the government intervention as per the mark scheme.

### **Question 3 (e)**

Most candidates were able to identify the feature correctly as per the mark scheme.

### **Question 3 (f)**

Candidates had some difficulties with this question, 1-2-mark responses were often seen for the generic idea of plate movement. There was a general lack of understanding about the specific types of plate movement and what actually happens to cause the shock waves (i.e., built up of pressure due to friction, release of pressure / energy in the form of seismic waves below the surface). In these type of questions candidates need to understand the process to access the full range of marks.

### **Question 3 (g)**

In this 8-mark extended writing question, the majority of candidates made good use of the resource and provided a good range of responses broadly in line with expectations. Level one responses tended to be quite descriptive in nature with Level 3 responses provided a good well-balanced analysis of the differences between the two tropical cyclones. Some candidates made clear judgements about the impacts and why they had been so different in each case.

## **Section B –Fieldwork Component**

**Questions 4,5,6 In this section, candidates were required to answer one out of the three questions available and as such, the questions mirrored each other.**

### **Question 4/5/6 (ai/aii)**

Candidates were able to answer the first part of this question well, although many responses that gained credit were quite vague e.g., 'maps' or 'using books'. Where candidates failed to gain credit for this question it was because they had confused secondary and primary data collection methods.

In the second part of the question (**aii**) candidates were not as successful as in the first part but many gained credit for the idea of the secondary data being inaccurate or biased. A few candidates developed the idea that the sample area may not have been exactly the same.

### **Question 4/5/6 (aiii)**

In all three mirror questions candidates were asked to calculate a "mean" average and were expected to show their calculations and final answer. Overall candidates responded well to this question with the majority scoring 1 mark. Where candidates didn't score both marks, it was due mainly to an incorrect final answer where the candidates had forgotten to give the answer to one decimal place.

### **Question 4/5/6 (aiv)**

Across all the question's candidates performed well on this item and were able to complete the graphs appropriately with most candidates scoring two marks.

### **Question 4/5/6 (v)**

Many candidates experience difficulties with this question. There were several who used random sampling which was referred to in the question or failed to identify a method of sampling at all. Some candidates were able to gain credit for describing an alternative method but often struggled to get the second mark for explaining why it was better than random sampling.

### **Question 4/5/6 (b)**

The majority of candidates attempted this question, but responses were quite vague "it can show you things", "they are not very accurate". There was some misinterpreting of the question, talking about drawing fields. Many candidates seemed to have difficulty with what was meant by the term annotate when they talked about it in the context of field sketches.

### **Question 4/5/6 (c)**

There were very few answers that developed further than low level 2 responses for this question. As in previous series the main issue was that candidates evaluated a different stage of the enquiry rather than the one, they were being



asked about. In this instance many candidates evaluated data collection rather than data presentation. Where candidates did use data presentation answers were largely descriptive.

## **Paper Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Ensure that you are familiar with the command words used in this specification. For example, the difference between what is expected for 'examine' and 'evaluate'.
- In questions where there is reference to a resource, it is important that evidence from the resource is used to answer the question, as these are targeting AO3. There will be specific AO3 or AO4 marks available for the interpretation of these resources. Making clear reference to the resource in their responses (e.g., 'Figure 2a shows that. . ') may help ensure that the candidate does use this evidence.
- In questions where they are asked to develop a single reason, it is important to ensure that the appropriate number of links in the explanatory chain are developed. The number of marks should be used as a guide to this. These questions usually have the command word, 'suggest' or 'explain', but may differ in depth depending on the expectation of the question. For example, a 4-mark, 'explain one reason why... ' question requires greater depth than a 4-mark, 'explain two reasons for...' question.
- Centres should spend time reviewing the specimen and live papers to ensure that they are familiar with key vocabulary which is being used in the questions - both in terms of key geographical terms and words which provide the 'slant' to the question (e.g., adaptation, formation, factor).
- Candidates should also spend time reviewing the process of geographical enquiry to ensure that the stages are understood, this will help candidates prepare for the level response question in section B.
- When plotting graphs, it is important that this is done accurately. Candidates should use a ruler when, for example, completing a bar chart rather than drawing freehand.

- There will always be a few questions that require candidates to perform a calculation. Therefore, it is essential that candidates have a calculator with them. It is also important to read the question carefully. For example, if the question states, 'answer to one decimal place', this must be done to access full marks.
- Candidates should ensure that they have a good understanding of sampling methods and when it is appropriate to use them.
- When answering the 8 mark 'evaluate' questions, ensure that candidates understand that they are required to measure the value of something and, ultimately, provide a substantiated judgement/ conclusion.
- It is important that centres incorporate the teaching of the 'integrated skills' into their delivery. These can be found below the subject content in each section of the specification.

### **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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