

Markscheme

May 2026

Geography

Higher level

Paper 3

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Paper 3 part (a) markbands

Marks	Level descriptor		
	AO1: Knowledge and understanding of specified content AO2: Application and analysis of knowledge and understanding	AO3: Synthesis and evaluation	AO4: Selection, use and application of a variety of appropriate skills and techniques
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.		
1–3	The response is general, not focused on the question, and lacks detail and structure.		
	- The response is very brief or general, listing a series of unconnected comments or largely irrelevant information. Evidence is general or relevant to the topic, but not to the question. - Evidence (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) is listed, lacks detail, and the relevance to the question is unclear. - Evidence is not used to formulate an argument or an analysis. - Everyday language is used; there is little use of geographical terminology or it is used with errors in understanding.	No evidence of synthesis or evaluation is expected.	- Information is listed but is not grouped together in paragraphs, or paragraphing is erratic. - If present, the conclusion is brief, does not summarize the argument and/or does not address the question.
4–6	The response only partially addresses the question; evidence is both relevant and irrelevant and is largely unstructured.		
	- The response partially addresses the question and/or does not meet the requirements of the command term. Key evidence is not included. - A mix of relevant and irrelevant evidence is outlined (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) and any links to the question are only listed. - The evidence presented supports only one element or interpretation of the question. - Key geographical terms are defined briefly. The terminology used is both relevant and irrelevant to the question.	No evidence of synthesis or evaluation is expected.	- Paragraphs do not reflect grouping of information that addresses a specific element of the question. - If present, the conclusion is one-sided, addressing only part of the question.

7–9	The response addresses most parts of the question and outlines an analysis supported by relevant evidence but may lack clear links between paragraphs. • The question is broken down into parts and most parts of the question are addressed in the response, with supporting evidence for each aspect of the question. The response meets the requirements of the command term. • Relevant evidence (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) is described, focused on the question and mostly correct. Links with the question are described. • The analysis outlines a two-sided argument briefly (if appropriate) and is mostly descriptive, using examples as explanation. • Correct definitions are given, and relevant and irrelevant specialist geographical terms are used with occasional errors; or everyday language is used.
10–12	The response addresses all aspects of the question; the analysis is explained using evidence integrated in the paragraphs, and it is well structured. • All aspects of the question are addressed and the response meets the requirements of the command term. • Detailed evidence (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) are integrated in sentences and paragraphs, and links made between evidence and the question are explained and relevant. • The response explains how the two sides of the argument (if appropriate) are supported by detailed evidence that is integrated in sentences. • Clear, correct definitions and use of geographical language is integrated in the sentences and throughout the response.

Paper 3 part (b) markbands

Marks	Level descriptor		
	AO1: Knowledge and understanding of specified content AO2: Application and analysis of knowledge and understanding	AO3: Synthesis and evaluation	AO4: Selection, use and application of a variety of appropriate skills and techniques
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.		
1–4	The response is general, not focused on the question, and lacks detail and structure.		
	- The response is very brief or general, listing a series of unconnected comments or largely irrelevant information. Evidence is general or relevant to the topic, but not the question. - Evidence (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) is listed, lacks detail, and the relevance to the question is unclear. - Evidence is not used to formulate an argument or an analysis. - Everyday language is used; there is little use of geographical terminology or it is used with errors in understanding.	- No synthesis or evaluation is expected at this level. - No links are presented between the response and (sub)topics in the guide. - No valid opinion or perspective on the issue is formulated.	- Information is listed but is not grouped together in paragraphs, or paragraphing is erratic. - If present, the conclusion is brief, does not summarize the argument and/or does not address the question.
5–8	The response only partially addresses the question with limited links to the guide; evidence is both relevant and irrelevant and is largely unstructured.		
	- The response partially addresses the question and/or does not meet the requirements of the command term. Key evidence is not included. - A mix of relevant and irrelevant evidence is outlined (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) and any links to the question are only listed. - The evidence presented supports only one element or interpretation of the question. - Key geographical terms are defined briefly. Terminology used is both relevant and irrelevant to the question.	- No synthesis or evaluation is expected at this level. - The link(s) between the response and the guide focus on one topic; other potential links are listed. - A valid but limited opinion or perspective on the issue is formulated.	- Paragraphs do not reflect grouping of information that addresses a specific element of the question. - If present, the conclusion is one-sided, addressing only part of the question.

9–12	The response addresses most parts of the question with developed links to the guide and outlines an analysis supported by relevant evidence but may lack clear links between paragraphs. • The question is broken down into parts and most parts of the question are addressed in the response, with supporting evidence for each aspect of the question. The response meets the requirements of the command term. • Relevant evidence (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) is described, focused on the question and mostly correct. Links with the question are described. • The analysis outlines a two-sided argument briefly (if appropriate) and is mostly descriptive, using examples as explanation. • Correct definitions are given, and relevant and irrelevant specialist geographical terms are used with occasional errors; or everyday language is used.
13–16	The response addresses all aspects of the question; the analysis is explained and evaluated using evidence integrated in the paragraphs, and it is well structured. • All aspects of the question are addressed and the response meets the requirements of the command term. • Detailed evidence (that is, facts, statistics, examples or theories) are integrated in sentences and paragraphs, and links made between evidence and the question are explained and relevant. • The response explains how the two sides of the argument (if appropriate) are supported by detailed evidence that is integrated in sentences. • Clear, correct definitions and use of geographical language is integrated in the sentences and throughout the response.

1. (a) Analyse ways in which illegal flows of people and goods have affected different places. [12]

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on pages 3–4.

Illegal flows of people and goods are a growing cause of global concern. Illegal flows of goods, including counterfeit merchandise, narcotics, arms and endangered species, break national and international laws. “Illegal flows of people” is a blanket term for a range of movements, experiences and human rights issues, including undocumented / irregular economic migrants, trafficking and modern slavery. It is a key political issue.

Place is a key geographic concept that can be applied at a range of geographical scales. Responses may focus on flows between named countries, wherein “place” becomes a synonym for “country”. Better answers may focus on specific named places, *eg* cities or regions that are global hubs for drug trafficking or other illegal activities.

An analysis of how places are **affected** by illegal flows can be structured into negative, positive, social/political, economic, environmental (endangered species), short-term or long-term effects. The analysis may explore how “source”/exporting countries are affected by these flows, and not only “host”/importing places. A good analysis may show that effects are rarely wholly positive or negative, including for irregular migrants themselves.

Likely themes for analysis include:

- Flows of counterfeit goods and the global trade in illegal drugs
- People trafficking and modern slavery, and human rights issues
- Informal / irregular / undocumented economic migration (*e.g.* Mexico–US border)
- Global trade in endangered species, *e.g.* meeting demand for food or medicine
- Rising incomes in middle-income countries / emerging economies leading to the growth of new/expanding markets for illegal flows of goods
- Anti-immigration government policies / reactions, populist political movements, cooperation between governments to tackle the issues
- Place-specific examples of the effects of illegal flows of people/trade on societies and / or environments.

Answers that focus mainly on flows of people or trade – but not both – should be marked positively, especially when there is good use of geographical concepts such as place and connectivity. Answers that focus on legal flows may reach the 7–9 band if their analysis of the concept of place is sufficiently well developed.

Good answers may **apply** (AO2) a **wider range** of knowledge and understanding (AO1) in a well-structured way (AO4). One approach might be to provide a systematic analysis of different types of **possible** effect that goes beyond basic positive/negative coding, by showing a more complex or localised pattern of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ *eg* there are both challenges and opportunities of irregular migration for “host” countries in cities or regions with high in-migration levels. Good answers are likely to demonstrate understanding of the geographical concept of **place**. They may also analyse the growth of international **connectivity** / interdependence between places.

For 4–6 marks, expect some weakly evidenced outlining of examples of illegal/irregular movements of people and/or goods.

For 7–9 marks, expect a structured, evidenced analysis of:

- either a range of positive and/or negative impacts of illegal/irregular movements of people and/or goods for source/exporting and/or host/importing countries
- or uneven, localized, complex or interconnected impacts of illegal flows of people and goods for affected places *eg* border regions of receiving countries are disproportionately affected

For 10–12 marks, expect both of these traits.

1. (b) Evaluate the impact of the internet on global culture over time. [16]

Credit all content in line with the markbands. Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on pages 5–6. Credit unexpected approaches wherever relevant.

The concept of **culture** encompasses a wide spectrum of cultural traits (including language, food, music, religion, identity and diversity), and the shared sense of belonging/community that is fostered. Any of these individual traits, such as diet/food or identity politics, can form the basis for an evaluation. The idea of a **global** culture is distinct from that of national cultures, eg the idea of an “Americanized” world. Good answers may also reflect on what role the internet plays in creating a truly “global” culture that is highly reflective of European languages, American media and some Asian cultures (candidates are likely to mention South Korean and Japanese influences).

The **internet** is a global network connecting billions of devices, exchanging information through websites, emails, and apps. Its growth since the 1990s is the product of innovation and investment by governments and large transnational corporations (TNCs). It has transformed how people live, work, and share knowledge in real time, making it a powerful agent of change. *Do not over-credit descriptions of government restrictions on internet access (North Korea, China) that lack some explanation of how such actions will impact on the growth of global culture.*

The question invites consideration of the internet’s role at different moments in **time** and not just during the present day. Prior to the 1990s, the internet played little if any role in shaping global culture, and other agents of change were more important eg colonialism, migration, TNCs, tourism, Hollywood films, etc. Whereas the wider adoption of internet-enabled phones apps, and social media since 2010 has arguably made internet technology a dominant force for change. Perspectives may vary on whether the **impacts** are positive or negative.

Possible **applied** themes (AO2) include **knowledge and understanding** (AO1) of:

- The role of shrinking world technology (and its role in cultural change) [Guide 4.3]
- Civil society resistance to global interactions, flows and changes – and the role of the internet in spreading information / resistance [Guide 5.3, 6.1 and 6.3]
- The impact of migration and diaspora growth – and how the internet may foster diaspora growth and communication [Guide 5.2]
- The role of transnational corporations (TNCs), e.g. how glocalization brings complexity through cultural hybridity – including possible links with internet use [Guide 5.3]
- The influence of superpower states, e.g. United States, European empires [Guide 4.1]
- Cultural imperialism and the enforced diffusion/adoption of cultural traits, e.g. European languages and religion – including possible links with internet use [Guide 5.2]

Good answers may **synthesize** (AO3a) three or more of the above (or other) themes in a **well-structured** (AO4) way.

Good answers may additionally offer a **critical evaluation** (AO3b) of the statement that evaluates the internet as one of several **processes** of cultural change in different located **places** (eg governments, TNCs). A different approach might be to critically explore varying **perspectives** on key global impacts / issues eg in relation to freedom of speech or gender and race issues. Another approach might be to critically evaluate the importance of the internet over different **time scales**, e.g. pre-2000 and post-2000. A good evaluation may conclude with a substantiated final judgement on the overall degree to which the statement is true.

For 5–8 marks, expect weakly evidenced outlining of two or three relevant themes.

For 9–12 marks, expect:

- either a structured synthesis that links together several well-evidenced themes from the guide
- or a critical conclusion (or ongoing evaluation) informed by geographical concepts and/or perspectives.

For 13–16 marks, expect both of these traits.

2. (a) Analyse the scale of the different environmental challenges caused by shipping and one other type of global transport.

[12]

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on pages 3–4.

Environmental challenges are hard-to-solve issues/problems arising at varying scales. Possible examples include threats to ecosystems, soils, water quality, air quality, oceans and global climate. Higher-scoring answers (10-12 band and upper end of 7-9 band) are more likely to use located evidence and to explain challenges and processes. Lower-scoring answers may state impacts but without development or exemplification (“oil spills destroy ecosystems”).

Types of global transport – other than **shipping** - include air, road, and rail systems. Air transport connects distant places quickly (the shrinking world effect), while ocean transport (shipping) is crucial for goods/commodity/trade flows over long distances. Roads and railways support flows of people and goods at more local, national or regional/continental scales. All transport impacts on the environment in varying ways – including the construction of infrastructure, day-to-day pollution emissions and ecosystem impacts.

The geographic **scale** of the challenges could include *local* impacts on environments (e.g. local oil spills, deforestation to create roads; air pollution in cities), *transboundary* environmental impacts (e.g. oil spills along shipping lanes), and the *global* “wicked problem” of climate change (linked with carbon emissions from different forms of transport). The global scale of transport networks creates governance challenges, because of pollution emissions in the ocean and atmosphere beyond national jurisdictions.

Likely themes for analysis include:

- Oil or air pollution impacts along global shipping lanes.
- Transport emissions, carbon footprints and global climate change.
- Global flows of food and goods using different forms of transport, e.g. container shipping.
- Global flows of people using different forms of transport, e.g. increased use of air travel.
- Rising affluence in middle-income countries / emerging economics, and growing use of different forms of transport, e.g. for trade or tourism.
- Transportation of goods around the world (e.g. movements of e-waste for processing) linked with the global shift of industry.

Candidates whose work that leans heavily on climate change or urban air pollution as themes should be scored according to their ability to sustain a link with global transport networks. Generic responses that focus mainly on the carbon emissions and/or urban pollution caused by ‘the world’s cars’ are more likely to be in the 4–6 or lower part of 7–9 markbands.

Good answers may **apply** (AO2) a **wider range** of knowledge and understanding (AO1) in a **well-structured** way (AO4). One approach might be to provide a structured systematic analysis of different **processes** of environmental change (i.e. pollution of the air, water, soil *etc*). Another approach might be to analyse different ways in which **places** and systems at increasing **scale** have been affected, for example from local ecosystems to the global climate system.

For 4–6 marks, expect some weakly evidenced outlining of environmental impacts of shipping and /or another transport type (processes/impacts named but not explained; little or no locational details)

For 7–9 marks, expect a structured, evidenced analysis of:

- either detailed and located impacts/issues associated with shipping and /or another type of transport, eg pollution from shipping and global climate change
- or the differing scale of the challenges created by global transport, eg the need to prevent/manage air/ocean pollution in international waters.

For 10–12 marks, expect both of these traits.

2. (b) “Superpower countries have benefited the most from globalization.” To what extent do you agree with this statement? [16]

Credit all content in line with the markbands. Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on pages 5–6. Credit unexpected approaches wherever relevant.

Superpower countries exert influence in varied ways: hard power (military, economic), soft power (culture, diplomacy), smart power (the previous two combined) and sharp power (e.g. manipulating geopolitical events using the internet). This framework/terminology is *not* required for the award of higher marks, though some candidates will use it. Credit reasonable suggestions of superpower countries that exert influence in a global or world region context, e.g. United States, Japan, China, India, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Qatar, EU economies.

Globalization is a complex set of processes by which the world has become increasingly integrated as a single economic unit and local places have become more interconnected and interdependent. Globalization is often viewed as a product of market forces, neoliberal political governance and technological advancement. The United States has promoted free trade policies and agreements (World Bank, IMF, World trade Organization) benefiting its own TNCs.

Benefits include national economic growth and political influence (candidates may know the concept of hegemonic power). The neoliberal view is that poorer countries have benefited from the world order that the United States and its allies created. For example, Global South beneficiaries of Chinese investment (Belt and Road). Others believe “the rich get richer while the poor get poorer” on account of globalization. The TNCs of superpower states – and their shareholders / owners – benefit from globalization. Citizens of superpower states may enjoy greater freedom to travel and cultural advantages when they do (e.g. global use of English).

Possible **applied** themes (AO2) include **knowledge and understanding** (AO1) of:

- Powerful countries and superpowers [Guide 4.1]
- Globalization indices [Guide 4.1]
- Global networks and the role of TNCs [Guide 4.2]
- Global development processes and measurements [Guide 5.1]
- The influence and importance of shrinking world technology [Guide 4.3]
- Cultural imperialism in the past and present [Guide 5.3]
- Powerful global organizations and groups [Guide 4.1]
- Geopolitical trends including renewed nationalism [Guide 6.1]
- Resource nationalism (a strategy associated with China and other countries) [Guide 5.3]

Good answers may **synthesize** (AO3a) three or more of the above (or other) themes in a **well-structured** (AO4) way.

Good answers may additionally offer a **critical evaluation** (AO3b) of the statement that discusses different dimensions of **power** and globalization. Another approach might be to explore the **pattern** of benefits at **scales** other than governments (e.g. benefits for businesses and citizens). This may include a critical discussion of costs and benefits for non-superpower countries, and how **perspectives** may vary on this. A good evaluation may conclude with a substantiated final judgement on the overall degree to which the statement is true.

For 5–8 marks, expect weakly evidenced outlining of two or three themes or case studies.

For 9–12 marks, expect:

- either a structured synthesis that links together several well-evidenced themes or case studies from the guide (a detailed comparison of China and the US could be sufficient)
- or a critical conclusion (or ongoing evaluation) informed by geographical concepts and/or perspectives.

For 13–16 marks, expect both of these traits.

3. (a) Analyse ways in which transnational corporations (TNCs) are closing the development gap.

[12]

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on pages 3–4.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) are businesses with operations in multiple countries. The largest TNCs have supply chains crossing the entire planet, connecting places within their networks of production and consumption (markets). Outsourcing is a key strategy for TNCs across different sectors including manufacturing and service industries, *eg* animation studios.

The concept of a **development gap** frames differences in development as a cause for concern that requires management. Development is a contested concept that views countries as parts of a continuum, ranked according to economic, social or other criteria, including gross national product and life expectancy. The human development index (HDI) is a widely used measurement. In addition to development gaps *between* countries, development gaps may be identified *within* a country, *eg* disparities in wealth or wellbeing between groups of people.

Closing the development gap can be achieved in different **ways** by TNCs, either directly or indirectly. This ranges from foreign direct investment (FDI) that creates new jobs and wealth for people in general to more specific initiatives aiming to foster equality or diversity in the workplace *e.g.* as part of social responsibility frameworks or affirmative action initiatives. Social responsibility might include, for example, a commitment to close the development gap between men and women in a particular country by pledging to pay women higher wages.

*Do not credit ways that TNCs can widen the development gap – this is not asked for as part of the analysis. In contrast, candidates whose analysis highlights limitations of social responsibility frameworks – *eg* by explaining why progress can be partial/slow – should be credited.*

Likely themes for analysis include:

- Foreign direct investment by TNCs, *eg* in middle income countries (using glocalization strategies, leading to employment and rising incomes that support development).
- Social responsibility frameworks adopted by TNCs to address low wages, worker exploitation or other issues in countries of the global South.
- Affirmative action by businesses to address inequality in the workplace.
- Views and perspectives on the concept of development.
- Different development indicators and indices including the Human Development Index.
- Financial and non-financial disparities between different countries and world regions, *e.g.* global North and global South, or high-, middle- and low-income countries.
- Disparities within countries *eg* between men and women or minority groups.

Good answers may **apply** (AO2) a **wider range** of knowledge and understanding (AO1) in a **well-structured** way (AO4). One approach might be to provide a structured systematic analysis of how TNCs have directly or indirectly been responsible for positive developmental changes in some global South countries. Candidates might systematically analyse key development gaps between **places** or groups (*eg* gaps in income, education, health, etc).

For 4–6 marks, expect some weakly evidenced outlining of one or two links between businesses and development.

For 7–9 marks, expect a structured, evidenced analysis of:

- either ways in which TNCs can influence development (*eg* investment and social responsibility frameworks)
- or the different types of development gap that need closing (*eg* between and within countries).

For 10–12 marks, expect both of these traits.

3. (b) “Rejecting globalization is the best way to reduce global risks.” To what extent do you agree with this statement? [16]

Credit all content in line with the markbands. Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on pages 5–6. Credit unexpected approaches wherever relevant.

Globalization is a complex set of processes by which the world has become increasingly integrated as a single economic unit and local places have become more interconnected and interdependent. Globalization is often viewed as a product of market forces, neoliberal political governance and technology. Perspectives differ on how far globalization is a force for good.

Rejecting globalization at the state/government scale may mean use of protectionist policies, limiting foreign trade and investments, strict migration/border controls and/or internet/media/culture laws. Action at the individual/citizen scale is achieved by supporting local businesses, rejecting global brands, voting for anti-immigration politicians/policies, or protesting against TNCs.

Different **global risks** may include, among others, geopolitical, economic, technological, cultural/social or environmental/biological threats and challenges. Different risks are transferred within global networks. For example, when a natural hazard disrupts economic activity in one part of the world, a supply chain may be disrupted, with implications for societies. Individuals are exposed to technological risks (identity theft, hacking) and the COVID-19 pandemic showed how disease can spread in a connected world. Some people view cultural change / migration as a risk.

Retreating from globalization is only one way to **reduce** global risks. However, improved use of technology or improved education about risks are alternative ways of reducing / mitigating risk.

Possible **applied** themes (AO2) include **knowledge and understanding** (AO1) of:

- Global networks and flows, e.g. migration and global trade – as sources of risk [Guide 4.2]
- Anti-globalization campaigns and the preservation of culture [Guide 5.3 and 6.3]
- Climate change (linked with global development) and its many risks [Guide 2]
- Hacking and identity theft affecting individuals and societies [Guide 6.1]
- Exposure of Global South communities to pollution and environmental degradation due to the global shift of industry/activity, e.g. electronic waste processing [Guide 6.1]
- Protectionism and resource nationalism by governments (to protect society) [Guide 5.3]
- Use of new technologies to manage risks, and other resilience strategies [Guide 6.3]
- Re-shoring of industries – framed as a way of mitigating the risk of job losses [Guide 6.3]

Good answers may **synthesize** (AO3a) three or more of the above (or other) themes in a **well-structured** (AO4) way.

Good answers may additionally offer a **critical evaluation** (AO3b) of the statement that discusses whether mitigation of the risk attached to globalization is **possible**, eg because of the pervasive nature of technology and the **power** of TNCs and/or superpower governments. Another approach might be to critically discuss **perspectives** on the balance of risks, costs and benefits of globalization. Another approach might be to discuss the uneven **pattern** of risks and benefits created by the global economy for people and **places**. A good evaluation may conclude with a substantiated final judgement on the overall degree to which the statement is true.

For 5–8 marks, expect weakly evidenced outlining of two or three relevant themes.

For 9–12 marks, expect:

- either a structured synthesis that links together several well-evidenced themes from the guide
- or a critical conclusion (or ongoing evaluation) informed by geographical concepts and/or perspectives.

For 13–16 marks, expect both of these traits.