



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In AS Geography
Paper 1

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Introduction

This is the seventh year of examinations for 8GE01. The paper saw the continued assessment of physical geography ideas, testing knowledge of tectonics, with a choice between glaciation and coastal landscapes. Candidates were asked to look at the synoptic links in two hazard-based scenarios: the Chamoli disaster in the Himalayas (Glaciation) and the tsunami which mainly affected Tonga (Coastal landscapes). With the focus on evaluating the relative significance of human and physical factors in these disasters, there was a higher focus on pure physical geography earlier in the paper.

The quality of knowledge and understanding was perhaps slightly less impressive than in previous years, particularly on some core elements of physical geography. There was also a slightly less evident focus on the best way to structure responses to the longer 12- and 16-mark evaluate questions. Candidates struggled to react well to the 9-mark 'fieldwork assess' questions. However, the relative ease of the maths and skills questions enables candidates to perform comparably to the previous series. That said, their understanding of how fieldwork should be planned was good. Overall, the advice from the previous examiners' reports still applies: candidates need to find the most effective way to organise their ideas – looking to write clear evaluative paragraphs would help many responses score one level higher.

1a	The hazard risk equation has been part of Edexcel Geography teaching for this specification and its predecessor (6GE01) where similar questions were asked to test candidates' knowledge about the three elements of the hazard risk equation. As a result, it was surprising how many candidates struggled to answer this first question on the paper! Perhaps, like the Pressure and Release model, this knowledge will be more confidently expressed in future.
1b i	This question posed fewer problems. Candidates confidently used comparative vocabulary to write their statements (e.g. more / less, whereas); most also noted the need to make two different comparisons. Candidates' thinking was complicated slightly by the resource; the pattern of darker dots (aftershocks of the 2010 earthquake) whilst being more concentrated in some parts of the island was, overall, more scattered in comparison to the 2021 earthquake; some candidates presumably missed the dots that were in similar locations to the yellow dots.
1b ii	'Suggest' questions are the first opportunity in the paper to start differentiating between candidates based on geographical skill. Most candidates remembered to extend their initial idea to get 2 marks, and some remembered to extend this explanation again to get the 3rd mark. As with previous exam series, a good number of candidates need to extend their explanations with one further idea to explain why that concern might exist. As with 1bi, the resource led some candidates to overfocus on the location of the arrowheads, with an assumption then made about the location of the epicentre. Whilst not the intent, candidates were not negatively marked. It was hard for responses that started with the depth of focus, or earthquake magnitude, to be extended through explanation without getting into complicated theory regarding the geological causes of aftershocks which is not a core

	part of the specification. Candidates who focussed on 'reported aftershocks' (in the figure title) were able to extend their explanations better, with a focus on the proximity to either of the cities or improvements in hazard response over the 10 years between disasters.
1c	This question posed very few problems for candidates. Almost all responses confidently explained two volcanic hazards and extended those explanations to focus on why human activity might be affected. Weaker responses, thereby, neglected this and provided information simply about the nature of the hazard itself. Pyroclastic flows and lava flows were the most likely areas of focus.
1d	This question, as with other 6-mark 'Explain' questions for Tectonics in the past, was answered well by many candidates. Many demonstrated secure knowledge about why earthquakes are found at different tectonic plate boundaries (both convergent and divergent boundaries) with confident explanations of the processes such as slab-pull, subduction, and mantle plumes. That said, candidates who focussed on intra-plate earthquakes struggled to develop their explanations. An alternative style of response focussed on the socio-economic differences between countries, picking up the idea of vulnerability (or capacity to cope) from the word 'hazard'. The best answers focused on two different reasons, or two different locations and provided detailed explanations about why earthquakes were formed there.
1e	This 12-mark 'assess' question was designed to give candidates an idea to bite into; explain why destructive plate boundaries suffered from some of the most severe volcanic disasters; and then consider whether that's always true. Many responses focussed on the eruption at Mt Pinatubo and contrasted it with the eruption in Iceland. Given the latter is notable for its aerial extent whilst being located on a constructive plate boundary, this was a good way to tackle the question. A few candidates noted the complex tectonic setting in Iceland, reflecting on the 'destructive-style processes' that happen because of the interaction between the magma plume and basaltic rock. That said, many candidates struggled to access level 3. The explanations for their alternative perspective on the question were not as strong as the main point; or vice versa! This lack of explanation inhibited their ability to reach the top of level 2 and prevented them from being able to make a comparative judgement, or even judgement within each side of the argument. Either approach would have been fine. The best candidates adopted a more logical approach; perhaps considering the merits of each plate boundary type for producing

	severe volcanic disasters. Others had very impressive geographical knowledge about different processes and disasters.
2a	This question was answered well by many candidates. However, a significant number identified a whole range of periglacial (or even glacial) landforms instead. The most relevant landforms are listed in the specification.
2b i	This was a very straightforward question, and most candidates achieved two marks. A few, having done the correct working out, then rounded down, instead of up, and lost the second mark.
2b ii	The processes associated with the formation of patterned ground were difficult for candidates to express well. The mark scheme allowed for a very simple developed explanation and, as a result, a good number of candidates therefore scored 3 marks for this question. However, for most, it was evident that whilst they knew what patterned ground was, they were not able to accurately recall the logical keychain for their formation.
2c	Many candidates answered this question well, producing clear explanations of how valley glaciers changed landscapes. There was quite a bit of repetition in the answers. Although in the specification truncated spurs, U-shaped valleys and glacial troughs are listed as separate landforms candidates struggled to write about them without repeating some of their explanations of the previous point. As a result, many candidates scored 3 marks. Better responses used more varied landforms (e.g. hanging valleys, although these required better AO1 recall), or ribbon lakes. Some candidates wrote about periglacial processes, or depositional landforms instead.
2d	As with question 2c, putting aside the confusion between glacial erosion / deposition / periglacial and fluvio-glacial, candidates generally performed well on this question. Many achieved Level 2 with a good understanding of the link between depositional processes and landforms. There was no requirement to explain distinctiveness to reach Level 3. That said, many achieved this through detailed and accurate geographical knowledge of 2 different landforms (e.g. erratics / crag and tail etc). That said, it was not required to produce 2 balanced paragraphs for this question. Some candidates displayed an impressive array of detailed knowledge about a range of landforms.
2e	Candidates seemed to appreciate the opportunity to write about management on this 12-mark 'assess' question, given the previous few years have focussed on physical processes. There were many interesting answers! The majority focussed on the management of the Himalayas, Alaska, the Lake District and the Arctic.

	Weaker responses identified either management challenges, the management solution or the stakeholders. It was not until these two components were linked could candidates achieved level 2. The storytelling was compelling, and the best answers looked at multiple locations and were able to compare by commenting on which stakeholders had the most influence (or at least were more successful at influencing others!) That said, there were very few responses scoring 11/12. A balanced and coherent argument, or full and coherent interpretation requires something slightly different from what candidates are currently doing. What order are the case studies presented in? Have two quite contrasting stories been presented? Does the type of scenario/story determine whether some stakeholders need to be more influential than others? For example, management in the Arctic is very different in scale to management in the Lake District! Could there be an assessment of the role of stakeholders within each story, resulting in mini-conclusions or judgements that would help candidates reach level 3? This is hard to achieve by the end of only 8 months of GCE study; however, it could be a logical step from the 8-mark assess questions asked at GCSE.
3ai	This question caused no problems for candidates.
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3aiii	This question caused no problems for candidates.
3aiv	As with 2023, this style of question might have been familiar to candidates answering questions about familiar fieldwork scenarios at GCSE Geography. Most candidates were able to make sensible suggestions, which mostly focussed on the level of risk found in glacial environments. Most were also able to explain where the risk came from, or the implications of that risk for their planning. Others then focussed on whether the locations chosen would help answer the question or were accessible. This model of SAQ (Safety, Accessibility, Question) is a good model for candidates to adopt in their preparation. Weaker responses focussed on temporal reasons, rather than spatial ones. Ultimately, the best way to prepare candidates for this type of question is to involve them in the enquiry planning process or to help them co-construct a hypothesis before beginning their actual fieldwork.
3b	The responses to this question were disappointing. Because the use of ICT in the overall fieldwork process is presumed, it would have been reasonable to expect that candidates would have collated and presented their data in graphs using commonly available applications. Better responses tended to write about different graph types or compare these with plotting data in GIS systems. The very best responses then reflected on the merits of these approaches. One inhibiting factor for candidates seemed to be the weather! Limited by access to high-quality fieldwork experiences,

	particularly in glacial environments, candidates found it hard to write about their follow-up investigation work. There is no provision in the specification design for this, however, there are resources available online for candidates to gain comparable virtual experiences.
4	Candidates were able to make good use of the resources to explain the interaction of different factors influencing the scale of the disaster in Chamoli. To reach level 2, it was enough to explain a link between a factor and why it made this situation a disaster. Without that explanation, some responses struggled to score higher than level 1. Either physical or human was acceptable, and candidates who explained both tended to score in the level 3 band with the higher marks awarded to candidates who also made a judgement about the relative contribution. There were not many responses reaching level 4. The best approaches contained evaluation within paragraphs, typically commenting on the extent to which the factor was particularly relevant (or irrelevant). These responses also tended to include quite sophisticated ideas from their wider study of tectonics and glaciation, perhaps about the hazard models. The best advice might be to encourage candidates to plan their answers before they engage too fully with the resource. There can be a lot of information in these synoptic stories. Sifting through it to make an argument is likely to create a more coherent answer than a narrative of the resource, figure by figure. Therefore, in centres perhaps a 3x2 table would help candidates develop their evaluation skills within paragraphs. Finally, centres should note that there is no requirement to write an introduction. However, on 16-mark 'Evaluate' questions, a conclusion is required.
5a	This question was answered well by some candidates. However, a significant number identified a whole range of coastal landforms instead, which were not linked to mass movement. The most relevant are listed in the specification.
5b	This was a very straightforward question, and most candidates achieved two marks. A few, having done the correct working out, then rounded down, instead of up, and lost the second mark.
5c	This question was much better answered than its equivalent in glaciation. Most candidates were able to suggest sensible reasons based on the photo, which mainly related to winter waves causing more erosion. The mark scheme then required candidates to develop that explanation by writing about how waves exploited the rocks. The mark scheme demonstrates several routes to 3 marks and a good number of candidates achieved this. The most common pitfalls were for candidates to not refer to the resource or make suggestions based on a flawed understanding of cliff erosion – e.g. the amount of rainfall might make a difference

	to mass movement but is not a reason why the rate of cliff erosion varies between the two pictures.
5d	Questions about coastal sediment cells have been asked several times both in 8GE01 and 9GE01. As a result, it was surprising that candidates struggled to provide clear responses. For example, a number confused the idea with the coastal zone models (onshore, nearshore, foreshore, backshore), or wrote about subaerial weather. The latter is not necessarily incorrect but did need to be linked to input / source material (for example).
5e	Candidates responded well to this question, with many having revised plant succession models. Many had learnt about vegetation in both sandy and mud environments. The latter was credited if linked to sandy coastlines (e.g. behind a spit). The best (level 3) responses were clear about the terminology of succession, beyond a basic grasp of marram grass! Weaker responses simply made assertions about the role of roots in trapping sand, without developing an explanation.
5f	This question was challenging to candidates. Although some responses showed a very clear understanding of the physical processes that form storm surges, many missed this opportunity. To achieve level 2 the link had to be explicit. Once established, there were then multiple ways to explore the 'Assess' command word. For example, some candidates reflected on the way coastal topography alters the level of risk; others on eustatic sea-level rise, or population pressure and lack of management. Other responses compared the risk from storm surges to the risk created by coastal recession. There was no single correct approach. Judgment was required, particularly within paragraphs, about why the level of risk was higher or lower. The best responses considered the question at the end of each paragraph (whether storm surges are the main cause) and made explicit comparisons between these factors. Finally, the best responses also displayed excellent AO1 in the form of location knowledge.
6ai	This question caused no problems for candidates.
6aii	This question caused no problems for candidates.
6aiii	This question caused no problems for candidates.
6aiv	As with 2023, this style of question might have been familiar to candidates answering questions about familiar fieldwork scenarios at GCSE Geography. Most candidates were able to make sensible suggestions, which mostly focussed on the level of risk found in glacial environments. Most were also able to explain where the risk came from, or the implications of that risk for their planning. Others then focussed on whether the locations chosen would help answer the question or were accessible. This model of SAQ (Safety, Accessibility, Question) is a good model for candidates to

	adopt in their preparation. Weaker responses focussed on temporal reasons, rather than spatial ones. Ultimately, the best way to prepare candidates for this type of question is to involve them in the enquiry planning process or to help them co-construct a hypothesis before beginning their actual fieldwork.
6b	The responses to this question were disappointing. Because the use of ICT in the overall fieldwork process is presumed, it would have been reasonable to expect that candidates would have collated and presented their data in graphs using commonly available applications. Better responses tended to write about different graph types or compare these with plotting data in GIS systems. The very best responses then reflected on the merits of these approaches.
7	Candidates were able to make good use of the resources to explain the interaction of different factors influencing the scale of the disaster in the Tonga region. To reach level 2, it was enough to explain a link between a factor and why it made this situation a disaster. Without that explanation, some responses struggled to score higher than level 1. Either physical or human was acceptable, and candidates who explained both tended to score in the level 3 band with the higher marks awarded to candidates who also made a judgement about the relative contribution. There were not many responses reaching level 4. The best approaches contained evaluation within paragraphs, typically commenting on the extent to which the factor was particularly relevant (or irrelevant). These responses also tended to include quite sophisticated ideas from their wider study of tectonics and coasts, perhaps about the hazard models. For example, there were responses with three paragraphs, each focussing on one aspect of the Pressure and Release model. Others focussed on the Tonga Region in one paragraph and then expanded the scale in the second and third (finishing with Japan). Alternatively, others saw the opportunity to write about how physical geography changes attitudes to hazard risk as a way of thinking synoptically. The best advice might be to encourage candidates to plan their answers before they engage too fully with the resource. There can be a lot of information in these synoptic stories. Sifting through it to make an argument is likely to create a more coherent answer than a narrative of the resource, figure by figure. Therefore, in centres perhaps a 3x2 table would help candidates develop their evaluation skills within paragraphs. Finally, centres should note that there is no requirement to write an introduction. However, on 16-mark 'Evaluate' questions, a conclusion is required.

