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**Examiners' Report**  
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE in

AS Geography (8GE0/01)

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## **Introduction**

This is the eighth year of examinations for 8GE0. This 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 scenarios which explores the interaction between tourism and the physical processes that create a landscape: the Sangay National Park in the Andes (Glaciation) and the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean Tonga (Coastal landscapes). With the focus on evaluating the relative significance of Tectonic and Geomorphological processes, there was a slightly higher focus on geomorphological change, and management of landscapes, earlier in the paper.

The quality of knowledge and understanding was perhaps slightly higher than in previous years. Candidates responded well to the synoptic question and a slightly more predictable 12-mark assess questions enabled candidates to score higher marks on discursive answers. It was surprising that candidates did not react well to the 9-mark 'fieldwork assess' questions and again struggled to identify ways to use ICT in their primary fieldwork. Most candidates performed well on the maths and skills questions, however there was, predictably, more variation in outcome from the question about interquartile range. 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.

### **Question 1a (i)**

This question was answered correctly by most candidates, although by the number of times answers were crossed out, it seems many confused 'destructive/divergent' and 'constructive/convergent'.

### **Question 1a (ii)**

Candidates performed well on this question, most identifying how the Somalian plate was moving East and colliding with the Indo-Eurasian. Some noted the transformational plate boundary in Figure 1b. Others made comments about subduction / upfolding, and it was decided to let these ideas feature in the mark scheme. However, most candidates confined their answers to compass directions to describe the movement.

### **Question 1a (iii)**

'Suggest' questions are the first opportunity in the paper to start differentiating between candidates based on geographical skills. Most candidates remembered to extend their initial idea to get 2 marks, and some remembered to extend this explanation again to get the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. Others also needed to remember

to link their explanations to something in the resource, and that could have been as simple as ‘plates are moving in a particular direction’.

Most candidates recognised elements of plate tectonics theory, writing about the movement of the plate because of either convection currents, or ridge-push / slab-pull. The best way to extend this might have been to write about reasons for that, e.g. the heat of the earth’s core. Others chose to write about evidence of continental drift in the map, e.g. the jigsaw fit of the continents leading to explanations of seafloor spreading.

### **Question 1b**

4 mark explain questions typically pose few problems for candidates. However, in this paper, a surprising number of candidates did not score well. This is likely because of the focus on multiple hazard zones, which was examined in June 2023 (the 6-mark ‘Explain’ question). In the specification, the detailed content draws attention to the presence of hydrometeorological hazards alongside and perhaps even contributing to a tectonic disaster.

Candidates who wrote simply about the hazards on a tectonic plate boundary would have achieved some marks based on the first bullet point on the mark scheme. However, to perform well they needed to demonstrate more complexity – and most did this through the way in which hydrometeorological hazards (e.g. storms) can make some volcanic hazards (e.g. ash) worse by creating lahars. Only a few candidates chose to write about human vulnerability as a result of living in densely populated areas.

### **Question 1d**

The Pressure and Release model is an area of the specification that has been examined in a number of questions over the last few years. This year, as a 6-mark ‘Explain’ question, it was pleasing to see many candidates were aware of the 3 key terms and were able to distinguish between them. It is worth noting that:

- The mark scheme allowed candidates who understood the principles behind vulnerability to score well, even if they had forgotten the exact terms.
- The best responses were able to explain the links between the 3 components, but this was not the only route to 6 marks. There were some excellent explanations based on detailed examples.
- It was not required for candidates to write about all 3 components to get full marks. In 6-mark responses, it can be advised to focus on 2 very clear and detailed paragraphs.

### **Question 1e**

This 12-mark ‘assess’ question was designed to give candidates an idea to bite into; explain the reasons why earthquakes have severe impacts, why they are greater than volcanic eruptions;

and then consider if that's always true. The most likely assessment would have been to flip the question and consider when volcanic eruptions are more severe.

Many responses focused on the eruption in Montserrat and contrasted it with earthquakes in Japan, Kashmir or Christchurch. By contrast, Iceland frequently featured as an example of a volcano which had severe impacts. Good responses noted that it depended on how you classify impact, with a number considering areal extent / global impact a way of building this argument. When candidates struggled to access more marks within level 2 it was because they did not consider the idea of 'greater' impacts and wrote about either volcanoes or earthquakes without comparative vocabulary.

In order to access level 3, candidates need to either (1) use very detailed and accurate geographical information (2) reaching a judgement in their argument and are likely to (3) build a coherent argument around (4) different ways to consider the question. Some of the most effective ways to do this included a focus on 'Predictability, Preparation, Vulnerability', or 'Social, Economic, Environment', or 'Developed, Developing', or 'Primary, Secondary'. As a result, there were some impressive pieces of writing to this first 12-mark assess question.

### **Question 2a**

This question was answered well by many candidates. Most cited one form of moraine. However, a significant number identified a glacial feature that was not linked to 'extent', e.g. aretes, and some were distracted by the idea of evidence and focused on evidence of climate change (e.g. frozen River Thames) rather than evidence of ice extent. Finally, a number of candidates thought the question was linked to the dataset in the Resource Booklet, which is only required for question 2b.

### **Question 2b (i)**

For some students this was a straightforward question, and most candidates achieved two marks. Roughly half the responses were incorrect. Some candidates chose the wrong numbers, although with a correct subtraction, the error was not carried forward resulting in 1 mark. Other candidates calculated the range. There was a deliberate choice to only include 7 lines of data to help candidates chose Q1 and Q3 correctly. Of all the descriptive statistical skills, this is perhaps one that GCE students need explicit instructions on.

### **Question 2b (ii)**

This question was answered well, and there were many interesting suggestions made about why people might be concerned. As with all 'Suggest' questions, the best responses extended the answer twice, with a clear focus on concern (which implies for people). The most common responses focused on climate change, and the mark scheme permitted a range of alternative explanations about why this might result in concern.

### **Question 2c**

This question was trickier than anticipated for candidates. Although a potential steer was given in the stem, it was surprising to see how few were able to name the alternative approaches that are named in the specification. There was also some confusion between management of climate change (Kyoto Protocol) and management of glaciated landscapes (Alpine Convention). It wasn't impossible to get marks based on the former, just harder!

That said it was not required to name the approaches listed on the specification. Showing an understanding of two different approaches was required for full marks, and there were some excellent, when focused, responses by some candidates.

### **Question 2d**

This question required detailed geomorphological understanding of Proglacial landforms. The weakest responses were not clear about what make proglacial landforms distinctive, for example, writing about lakes or waterfalls. The majority of responses did recognise this, e.g. kames, eskers and outwash plains. The best responses recognised how to use detail about processes to explain these landforms.

### **Question 2e**

Although this question was answered better than previous 12-mark 'assess' questions that focus on purely physical geography, it was surprising that candidates found it hard to make the straightforward connection between latitude and the present-day distribution of ice cover. To be fair, there is not a huge amount to say! However, level 2 responses typically explain the role of uneven solar radiation with named locations that contrasted the tropics and the poles.

There are many other factors that were identified. Some wrote about altitude; however, the vast majority wrote about some form of climate change, with a particularly high number of responses about Milankovitch cycles. It wasn't impossible to gain credit in this way, but without a link to distribution of ice, it was hard to use these ideas effectively, particularly when the idea of latitude was not covered in the response at all.

There were very few level 3 responses and even within this very few scored above 10. Better responses remember a need to include some element of assessment and judgement and, although not required for this question type, this was typically done in a short conclusion.

A good way to prepare candidates for this question could be to remind them to focus on the 'blatantly obvious' part of the question first.

### **Question 3a (i)**

This question caused no problems for candidates.

### **Question 3a (ii)**

This question caused no problems for candidates.

### **Question 3a (iii)**

This question caused no problems for candidates.

### **Question 3a (iv)**

As with 2024, 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 focused on the level of risk found in coastal environments. Most were also able to explain where the risk came from, or the implications of that risk for their planning. Others focused on logistical arrangement, size of study area and interesting how research can focus on developing a hypothesis.

As always, the advice about 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.

### **Question 3a (v)**

In 2024 a similar focus was used for the 9-mark question and the responses were disappointing. It was therefore pleasing to see candidates had a better understanding of how ICT might help with their fieldwork. Most focused, correctly, on management and processing of data – rather than collection of data (but even these showed more knowledge of the role of ICT than last year). The best answers were very clear about how ICT helped to answer the question in this scenario, rather than generic applications of technology.

### **Question 3b**

This type of question about fieldwork has been asked (in different forms) across 8GE01, 8GE02 and indeed GCSE papers. Candidates are used to writing about their fieldwork and took advantage of the question to write about elements that were valuable (or not!). Most chose to write about reliability and validity – whereas others saw the question as an invitation to write about the place of fieldwork in their whole investigation. This was encouraging.

There were virtually no responses that gained 9 marks. Some were close, but in these pieces lacked judgement. The best way to do this is probably to compare two methods and state (with a reason) which technique had more value.

#### **Question 4**

Candidates engaged well with this question. They made good use of the resources to write structured responses that were interesting to read about the human and physical geography of the Sangay National Park.

To reach level 2, it was enough to explain how either coastal or tectonic processes had created either a challenge or opportunity for people living or visiting the islands. Some candidates wrote either about tourism, or the physical landscape, without referencing how they had been formed. Without that connection some responses struggled to score higher than level 1.

To reach level 3, it was necessary to consider the question from different perspectives, and most candidates were able to do this either by explaining the role of both coasts and tectonics, or opportunities and challenges. Either was acceptable. Those that managed all were likely to go higher in the level and that systematic approach was one way to reach the more complex evaluation required of a full and coherent response with a rational substantiated conclusion. Other such approaches considered different factors, e.g. the role of wind and waves, followed by geology, or timescale. One final approach, which was not used by many, was to look at the question in the context of each island, particularly since the age of each island varied.

As before, 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.

#### **Question 5a**

Although this question was answered well by many candidates a substantial number misread the question and either wrote about evidence for the causes of sea-level change or based their response on the resource (which was there for question 5b). Most responded by writing about flooding / inundation of low-lying land, or rias and fjords.

#### **Question 5b (i)**

Responses to this question could be improved. About 50% of responses were correct with the other 50% not being able to calculate an interquartile range.

### **Question 5b (ii)**

This question was answered well, particularly in comparison to previous 3-mark ‘suggestion questions’.

Most candidates were able to suggest sensible reasons based on the data. The majority reference the increased rate of erosion, and the consequences for human activity in various forms. As always, the mark scheme then required candidates to develop that explanation of the concern. A few candidates focused their explanation entirely on human geography, a valid approach.

### **Question 5c**

This is the first time a specific question about policy decisions has been asked in a short-answer response. Recognising this, an example was given in the stem of the question. The mark scheme was also written so the principle was awarded marks, rather than necessitating the exact term.

Candidates responded well typically. Some were able to identify ‘managed retreat’, or ‘advance the line’ and explained (with further development) about why they might be needed. Marks were lost when candidates wrote the similar reasons twice without distinguishing between the policies. Typically, this was done by consideration of the relative cost/benefit of implementing these policies.

### **Question 5d**

Questions about local factors increasing flood risk are not uncommon to this specification, or its predecessor (6GE01). It was therefore surprising that candidates found this question quite challenging. The most common error was to confuse ‘coastal’ and ‘river’ flooding. A number of responses about changes to vegetation or the introduction of concrete might have achieved some credit had they not gone on to introduce ambiguity, e.g. writing about infiltration.

Better responses recognised the focus on local-scale factors, e.g. subsidence, remove of mangrove vegetation, accretion at river deltas or high density of population. Some wrote about the funnelisation of the topography, e.g. in the Bay of Bengal. To achieve 6 marks, it was likely that the response dealt with 2 separate factors with either strong explanation or located detail.

Finally, it was noticeable how many candidates rewrote the question in their response. It is OK in a geography exam to go straight to the explanation.

### **Question 5e**

Responses to this 12-mark assess question were stronger than in previous years. The question was certainly more straight forward and a variation of one asked many times in both 8GE01 and 9GE01. Almost all were focused on coastal recession, without drifting into coastal flooding.

To achieve level 2 the link between type of rock / lithology, and the rate of recession had to be clear. The explanation was likely to include reference to processes, rather than simple assertions about headlands and bays. Higher within level 2, arguments were based on human intervention, wave types, or even geological structure. For level 3, detailed geographical understanding (not necessarily location knowledge) was required on both sides of the argument. Like question 1e, the best responses systemically explored a range of factors in the context of why the rate of recession might increase or decrease.

It is worth noting that whilst ‘geology’ and ‘lithology’ are very similar terms, they are different to ‘geological structure’. Candidates were not penalised for confusing the terms if the principles and processes were well understood. It was also worth noting some impressive knowledge about the impact age of rock has on resistance rather than just rock type itself.

#### **Question 6a (i)**

This question caused no problems for candidates.

#### **Question 6a (ii)**

This question caused no problems for candidates.

#### **Question 6a (iii)**

This question caused no problems for candidates.

#### **Question 6a (iv)**

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