

Commentary on Edexcel GSCE 2012 Geography B Sample Assessment Materials - Unit 3

The aim of this document is to support you with the **delivery of Edexcel GSCE 2012 Geography B - Unit 3** by using the **Sample Assessment Materials** to give some guidance on understanding the assessment and help you to deliver the level of detail required by Specification B in relation to the demands of assessment.

The sample assessment materials along with the specification itself were approved by Ofqual in the summer of 2012.

It is useful to have a copy of the sample assessment materials, to hand – both question paper and mark scheme.

This looks at only the higher tier paper for this presentation but many of these apply equally well to the Foundation tier papers.

The page numbers for reference are 31 to 34 in the specification and 201 to 230 in the sample assessment materials.

This paper takes the form of a decision making exercise, here entitled 'Making Geographical Decisions'. The 'Geographical' part refers to the fact that the decisions will be set in real places and involve variations in space and in time. The content for this Unit can be found on pages 32 and 33 of the specification, with the 'Key ideas'. Each key idea has a theme/focus. This is not really new material, but a focus on the material covered in Units 1 and 2. There is an assumption that students have studied Units 1 and 2, with the exception of the Section B and C material from those units. As a result there can be questions in the paper that presume, for example, an understanding of the relationship between population and resources drawn from topics 1 and 2 on Unit 2. For the paper this would be set in the context of a real place. Thinking geographically involves using a very wide range of skills in the interpretation of resources from tables to graphs, from maps to photographs.

The resource booklet is no longer pre-released. Preparation for this unit can't be built around known content. Instead preparation has to be focussed on the development of the skills students need to deal with unseen resources quickly and draw conclusions from them. The questions will start with an introduction to the location, moving on to identifying the problem or issue, and ending with a series of options that students are asked to choose between. The questions themselves are not predictable.

The Resource Booklet in the Sample Assessment materials (pages 219-230) is a trimmed down version of the pre-released examination booklet. The emphasis here is on trimmed down – the number of words will be somewhere between 500 and 650 and the booklet will be about 7 pages long. From 2014 onwards

examination papers will follow a very similar pattern and require the approach outlined in the question by question analysis.

Candidates should read the whole booklet through before they begin to answer questions because they gain an overview which will help contextualise the questions.

Question 1 part (a) is a skills question like the (a) parts of Unit 1 and Unit 2 questions. The trends should be described. The rate of change has slowed down.

Question 1 part (b) is a question based on knowledge and understanding of the topic in Unit 2. This is a 4 mark question divided into 2 x 2. A basic point is needed with extension through detail or the development of the idea. The basic point is 'to increase the number of births' with the development that helps explain the basic point 'because otherwise the population will age rapidly'.

Question 1 part (b) on page 203 asks candidates to explore the consequences of an ageing population. The Resource Booklet offers some views on the ageing population in Australia on page 221. The issue of an ageing population can be developed to the skill shortages in key sectors in Australia.

Question 2 part (a) is a resource interpretation question. The material on page 222 using the background knowledge of how development is measured from Unit 2. The evidence needs to be contextualised. Instead of quoting the figure for GDP per capita, a comment that it is 'very high' or 'higher than the UK' is necessary. They have several options to choose. However, the nature of Australia's exports are not typical of wealthy developed countries.

Question 2 part (b) is a two mark questions which ask for 'one piece of evidence' and some detail through an example. A point about Australia's export structure is worth one mark, with an example such as '...minerals such as iron ore' worth a second mark.

Question 3 part (a) is a skills questions. It presumes some knowledge about the nomenclature of vegetation. As the mark scheme on page 211 clarifies the basic point is identifying the difference in either forest cover or its inverse, grassland. To develop this, students a close look at the photographs is required and a description of what is in them. Photograph A shows a forested landscape with an unforested steep and rocky slopes in mountainous terrain. Photograph B has trees much more sparsely distributed than in Photo A. Photo C , is a treeless landscape.

Question 3 part (b) is a 4 mark question and asks for an explanation of the differences in vegetation. The plural 'reasons' points to two possible reasons with detail for each or perhaps three reasons with only one extended. The source material offers climate as the key reason. This needs to be broken into the key elements of temperature and rainfall. These elements need to be identified

correctly and then linked with the impact on vegetation for the second mark. In Photo A, a comment on the topography, the impact of slopes on vegetation cover, can be explained by soil depth and how it relates to vegetation for 2 marks.

Question 4 is a 10 mark question and asks students to examine the material on page 8 of the Resource Booklet, which can be found on page 226 in the sample assessment materials. The available resources offer a few basic ideas which candidates need to develop.

Question 4 part (a) is a 4 mark question. The mark scheme on page 213 offers a range of possible reasons which each consist of a basic point with some development for the second mark. Two such developed points is enough for 4 marks although three reasons with only one developed also acceptable. Two of the suggested answers can be derived for earlier parts of the resource booklet although not from page 8 itself. The resource offers the basic data about low population density but not the challenges that contribute to these low densities. These are the climatic points (the second and third bullets in the mark scheme). You will notice that the reject column is used here. Good explanations very rarely include why people are not in one place by telling you that they are in another.

Question 4 part (b) is a levels-based question. The examiner is looking for several things when making a judgment about what level an answer belongs to. In this particular question it is worth noting the difference between a 'low-level' explanation which, to use the wording of Level 2 in the marks scheme on page 214 simply 'asserts' a linkage as in '*low rainfall limits economic development*' without developing it fully by adding some clarification or detail as in '*...because agriculture is unproductive and income is low*'.

Question 5, is a levels-based 6 mark question. Page 9 of the resource booklet, page 227 in the sample assessment materials, contains a set of possibilities of how climate change might well exacerbate a difficult set of climatic challenges. . It would be a useful exercise to apply knowledge about climate change; particularly changing temperatures and rainfall patterns to each of the points raised on this page. For example, the unreliability of the rainfall might increase with both more frequent and more severe droughts. Increasing evaporation, reducing rainfall and groundwater depletion could all be added with subsequent developments through increasing rates of soil erosion and desertification. This would form the basis of a level 3 response especially if the ideas and processes are linked together.

Question 6 returns to the problem identified at the start of the resource booklet on page 220. This question involves making a geographical decision. What matters here is not just the focus of the question but the various restrictions and qualification that the question contains.

Four options (3 on the Foundation Paper) are offered. Candidates are asked to select the one that they think would be 'best for the people and environment of Australia'. They are asked to justify this choice. There are two points to make here firstly 'people and environment' prompts an answer about both of these and, perhaps, suggest that there might be some tension between them. The second is to consider what is meant by 'best' – best in what sense is the obvious question and how is that evaluated? This can be further developed by examining whether a 'best' option for the people would bring benefits to all of the people or just some of them.

Knowledge and understanding from elsewhere in the GCSE course, such as their own case studies of the relationships between population and resources but also the theory that they covered, Boserup and Malthus would support the answer.

The command word 'justify' should steer answers towards a debate. This debate should cover material that supports their choice by assessing the potential benefits that this would bring to both the 'people' or, better still, certain groups of people and the environment, probably seeing 'best' as preserving that environment in a more obviously sustainable way. But it should also address the perceived weaknesses of the other options. It is important to use comparative language in this type of response and linking words that qualify ideas. So a phrase such as - *'a rapidly expanding population might stimulate more innovation and greater skills in the population which might increase average incomes as well as producing solutions to environmental challenges'* might be qualified by *'..however there would need to be great care taken with the level of mineral exploitation perhaps encouraging more quaternary development rather than a reliance on mineral exports'*. All future papers will offer options which are possible future scenarios. All debate is bound to be tentative because there are so many variables that might affect future scenarios.

I hope that this has been useful in furthering understanding of the sample assessment materials and how they can be used in your teaching and learning over the course of the next year and beyond.