



Pearson

International Advanced Level Geography

**Contested Planet
Unit 3 WGE03**

**Assessment Guide with exemplars and
commentaries for teachers and
students**

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International Advanced Level GEOGRAPHY

Unit 3 Contested Planet WGE03 Assessment Guide for teachers and students

Introduction

This guide is designed to support students and their teachers and to help them understand the examination requirements for IAL Geography Unit 3 Contested Planet (WGE03).

It contains information and advice on:

1. The length of the examination and its weighting within the IAL qualification as a whole
2. The structure of the examination, and how this changes from one examination series to another
3. Information on question styles, command words and marking
4. Some exemplar student responses to questions from the published Sample Assessment Materials, with commentaries and indicated mark scheme level.

1. The Contested Planet examination

- Unit 3 Contested Planet is worth 60% of the IA2 marks, and 30% of the marks for the overall International A-level Geography qualification.
- The examination is 2 hours long
- There is a total of 90 marks
- The examination paper is divided into three sections, as shown in Table 1 below:

Section A	Section B	Section C
50 marks	20 marks	20 marks
Compulsory questions 1, 2 and 3	Options: either question 4 or question 5	Options: either question 6 or question 7
A1 Atmosphere and weather systems A2 Biodiversity Under Threat + Synoptic question	B1 Energy Security Or B2 Water Conflicts	C1 Superpower Geographies Or C2 Bridging the Development Gap

Table 1

Question types

The examination contains a variety of question types with different mark tariffs (Table 2).

Candidates should spend different amounts of time on these questions during the examination:

Question type	Mark tariff	Time spent in the examination on each question
Data stimulus, using a Figure (1 in each exam)	5	7 minutes
Data stimulus, using a Figure (2 in each exam)	10	14 minutes
Essay question (3 in each exam)	15	20 minutes
Essay question (1 in each exam)	20	25 minutes

Table 2

2. Examination structure

It is important to understand that the examination question types and mark tariffs shown in Table 2 **do not** vary from one examination series to the next.

However, within Sections A, B and C the questions **will vary** from one series to another as shown. This variation is random and does not conform to a pattern.

The tables below show the possible different structures of a Unit 3 Contested Planet examination.

Some important points to note are:

- In Section A, Question 3 is a synoptic question and it will **always** be a 15 mark essay question.
- In Section A, there will **always** be a 10-mark data stimulus question on both A1 Atmosphere and A2 Biodiversity but the 15 mark essay question could be on either A1 or A2.
- In any exam series, Section B will **either** consist of a 5 mark stimulus question plus a 15 mark essay question, **or** a 20 mark essay question.
- Section C will be the **opposite structure** to Section B in any given examination series.

Section A	Topic	Stimulus question	Essay question
	Q1 Atmosphere	10	15
	Q2 Biodiversity	10	
	Q3 Synoptic		15

Or

Section A	Topic	Stimulus question	Essay question
	Q1 Atmosphere	10	
	Q2 Biodiversity	10	15
	Q3 Synoptic		15

Table 3.1 Section A

Section B	Q4 Energy	5	15
	Q5 Water	5	15

Or

Section B	Q4 Energy		20
	Q5 Water		20

Table 3.2 Section B

Section C	Q6 Superpowers		20
	Q7 Development		20

Or

Section C	Q6 Superpowers	5	15
	Q7 Development	5	15

Table 3.3 Section C

The tables above show that the position of different types of questions can move between Sections and Topics but importantly candidates in one examination series will complete exactly the same number of 5, 10, 15 and 20 mark questions compared to any other examination series.

The Assessment Objective balance remains consistent between each examination series and there is no variation in question demand or command words used.

3. Question styles, command words and marking

Details of the command words are in (Appendix 5) of the specification.

There is consistency in the use of command words (Table 4).

Question type	Mark tariff	Possible command words
Data stimulus, using a Figure	5	Explain Suggest Compare
Data stimulus, using a Figure	10	Explain Suggest
Essay question	15	Assess Evaluate To what extent
Essay question	20	To what extent Evaluate

Table 4

Command words have distinct meanings (Table 5), which candidates need to understand. One of the most common sources of problems in examinations is candidates misunderstanding of command words. For instance describing in a question where the command word is 'explain', or only explaining when the command word is 'evaluate'.


Compare	<i>Find the similarities and differences of two elements given in a question. Each response must relate to both elements, and must include a statement of their similarity/difference.</i>	
Suggest	<i>For an unfamiliar scenario, provide a reasoned explanation of how or why something may occur. A suggested explanation requires a justification/exemplification of a point that has been identified.</i>	
Explain	<i>Provide a developed, reasoned explanation of how or why something occurs. An extended response explanation requires a depth of understanding to be demonstrated through the justification/exemplification of points identified.</i>	
Assess	<i>Use evidence to determine the relative significance of something. Give balanced consideration to all factors and identify which are the most important.</i>	
Evaluate	<i>Measure the value or success of something and ultimately provide a balanced and substantiated judgement/conclusion. Review information and then bring it together to form a conclusion, drawing on evidence such as strengths, weaknesses, alternatives and relevant data.</i>	
To what extent	<i>Give the main arguments for and against a point of view to create a written debate with a conclusion that is justified and supported by evidence.</i>	

Table 5 Command word definitions

The command words in Table 5 are arranged, broadly, in order of increasing demand i.e. towards the bottom of Table 5 answers require higher-order thinking skills or evaluation, the ability to sustain and argument and the ability to make evidenced and supported judgements.

How answers are marked

There are two types of marking on Unit 3 Contested Planet:

- 5-mark data stimulus questions are **point marked**.
- All other questions (10, 15 and 20 marks) are marked using levels-based marking or 'levels'.

Point marking only applies to 5 mark questions that use the command 'explain' or 'suggest', such as this question:

4 (a) Using Figure 3, suggest reasons for the differences in energy mix between Mexico and the Czech Republic. **(5)**

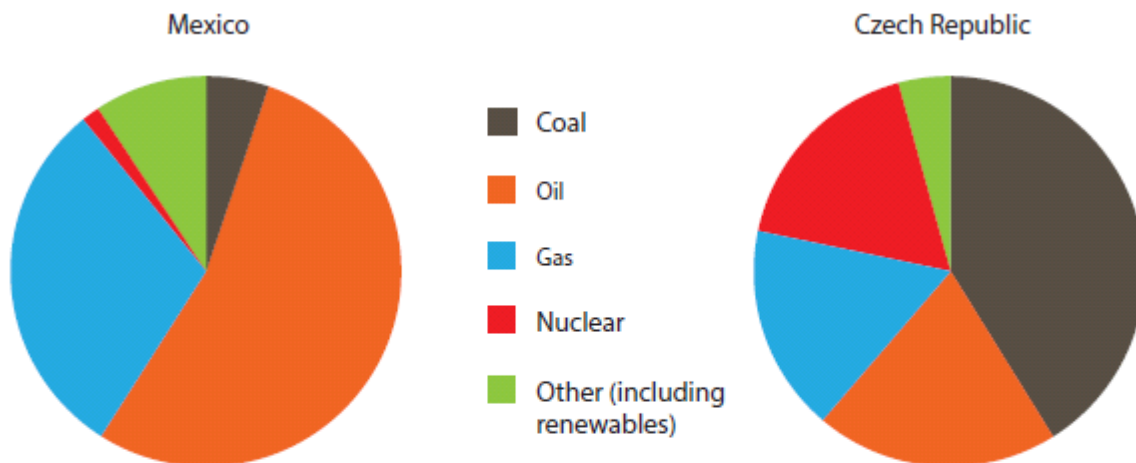


Figure 3

The energy mix of two countries in 2013

Question number	Answer	Mark
4(a)	<p style="text-align: center;">AO1 (2 marks)/AO3 (3 marks)</p> <p>Award 1 mark (AO1) for each relevant point and further expansion marks for reasons/explanations linked to the data shown (AO3), up to a maximum of 5 marks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries may have greater domestic physical resources (1), e.g. oil in Mexico/coal in the Czech Republic (1) • Mexico might be better placed to use renewables (solar) (1) due to physical conditions (1) • Costs could lead to a reliance on cheap energy sources (1), e.g. cheap coal and gas in the Czech Republic (1) • Fossil fuel technology is generally cheaper/simpler to use (1) so may be used more in a developing country, e.g. Mexico (1) • Nuclear technology is too costly to obtain/use (1) for a developing country, e.g. Mexico (1) • Public perception (acceptance/rejection) of an energy source (1) might explain the different proportions of nuclear, or renewables, e.g. wind (1) • Government policy may play a role (1) by deliberately creating a diverse mix to reduce risk of insecurity, e.g. Czech Republic (1) 	(5)

The points-based mark scheme for SAMs Question 4a

As the mark scheme for this question below shows, marks are awarded as a series of extended points:

- One mark is awarded for providing a reason that explains some aspect of the different energy mixes shown in Figure 3.
- One mark is awarded for linking this reason to the specific data in Figure 3.

Candidates need to answer as a series of extended points that link the specific information in the Figure to a valid reason. Simply writing a list of basic reasons not linked to the data provided will not show the interpretation skills needed to achieve 5 marks. Similarly, a description of that data will not provide the necessary explanation / reasoning.

Most questions in Unit 3 are marked using **levels-based mark schemes**. These mark schemes have two components:

1. **Indicative content:** this suggests the most likely content answers will contain in terms of knowledge, understanding and in some cases assessment or evaluation. In the case of a data stimulus question it is fairly prescriptive because it is tied to the geographical data (Figure) the candidate is asked to study. In the case of essay questions worth 15 and

20 marks it is a little more suggestive, and candidates could include many other examples, case studies, concepts and themes and still achieve maximum marks as long as the question was answered in a logical way. Indicative content is specific to a particular question.

2. **Levels descriptors:** these appear in table format at the end of each mark scheme. They do not change from exam series to exam series. Each combination of mark tariff and command word has a set of levels descriptors which does not change. Answers are marked on the basis of 'best fit' i.e. the whole of a candidates answer is considered and it is then placed in the appropriate level. A candidate gaining a Level 4 mark may not have covered every aspect of the Level 4 descriptors, but will have demonstrated some aspects of Level 4 quality work to lift them out of Level 3.

It is important that candidates have looked at the **levels descriptors** in the SAMs, or past papers, and are familiar with their demands and the language used in them.

The levels descriptors make it clear what is required to gain a particular mark band.

Answers which are written in very general terms, not supported by place-based evidence and examples – or those which fail to make judgements and come to conclusions – will not be able to access the higher bands in the levels descriptors.

Table 6 suggests some practical ways of helping candidates interpret the levels descriptors.

Levels descriptors	How this could be demonstrated in an answer
Demonstrates accurate and relevant geographical knowledge and understanding throughout. (AO1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate use of geographical terminology. • Accurate understanding of processes and concepts. • Detailed and accurate place knowledge (examples/case studies).
Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to find fully logical and relevant connections/relationships. (AO2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising the complexity of the issue (s). • Explaining how issues/impacts have multiple causes/solutions.
Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to produce a full and coherent interpretation that is supported by evidence. (AO2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covering all aspects of the question (not missing some key words/themes). • Using evidence (data, examples, case studies) to

	support the points/explanations made.
Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to come to a rational, substantiated conclusion, fully supported by a balanced argument that is drawn together coherently. (AO2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced consideration of both/all sides of an argument or debate – such as costs versus benefits. • Evaluative statements that show the ability to weigh-up different perspectives and move towards a conclusion. • A clear conclusion that makes supported judgments i.e. that link to the evidence used in the answer.

Table 6 The Level 4 descriptors for a 20 mark essay question (16-20 marks)

Data stimulus questions

5 and 10 mark questions use a data stimulus resource, or Figure, such as a map, graph, table of data, photograph (s) or other geographical data. These questions use the command words 'explain' or 'suggest reasons', or occasionally 'compare'.

The skills being tested are:

- The ability to understand and interpret geographical data – including identifying patterns, trends, contrasts, anomalies and the significance of some information compared to other information.
- The ability to provide explanations for the information presented using geographical concepts, processes, ideas and theory.

Candidates need to make sure:

- They refer to all, or most, of the information in the Figure; weak answers often only refer to a small part of the data stimulus information.
- They quote / refer to data directly in their answers; this is especially important when the data is numerical.
- They avoid descriptive answers which 'say what they see' but do not move on to explanations.

Question 3: Synoptic question

Question 3 on the exam paper is always a synoptic question. In simple terms, this is a question that links two different parts of the Specification. It is designed to test candidate's ability to make connections between the different areas of Geography they have studied.

The question themes can be based on **only**:

- Unit 1 Global Challenges: Topic 1: World at Risk and Topic 2: Going Global

- Unit 3 Contested Planet Topic A1: Atmosphere and Weather Systems and Topic A2: Biodiversity Under Threat

The inclusion of this question does mean that candidates should be prepared to discuss some of the Unit 1 themes from AS level within this question.

The question from the SAMs links the AS globalisation theme to the A2 biodiversity theme:

3 To what extent is globalisation responsible for the threats facing biodiversity? (15)

Essay questions

A common area of concern is candidate's performance on essay questions, worth 15 to 20 marks. These questions use the command words 'assess', 'evaluate' or 'to what extent'.

These commands have in common the theme of 'how far' or 'how much' i.e. they invite candidates to weigh-up several different sides of a debate, argument or contention and make a judgement.

The synoptic question from the SAMs is a good example:

3 To what extent is globalisation responsible for the threats facing biodiversity? (15)

It may help candidates to think of answers to this style of question as falling somewhere on a spectrum as shown in Table 7.

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- Avoid the extremes of the spectrum: such answers risk being very unbalanced and one-sided which will usually not show an understanding of the complexity of geographical issues or connections and inter-relationships.
- Avoid the 'no argument' position: such answers do not address the command word 'to what extent' and are usually answering a much simpler question, in this case '*explain how globalisation is a threat to biodiversity*'.
- Take up one of the 'green' positions: both of these include the view that globalisation is a threat to biodiversity but also consider other factors (e.g. global warming, natural hazards) and possibly the idea that globalisation might encourage the protection of biodiversity.

Extreme agreement	Agree but considers both sides	No argument	Disagree but considers both sides	Extreme disagreement
Globalisation is totally responsible	Globalisation is responsible but there are other threats	Globalisation is a threat to biodiversity	Other threats are important, but globalisation is a threat	Globalisation is not responsible at all
☹ Risks being one sided and ignoring some key evidence	☺ Likely to cover all of the evidence and make some judgements	☹ I'm just going to sit on this fence and say as little as possible ...	☺ Likely to cover all of the evidence and make some judgements	☹ Risks being one sided and ignoring some key evidence

Table 7 The spectrum of answers

There are several other ways in which students can get to grips with 'assess', 'evaluate' and 'to what extent'. These command words benefit from the use of evaluative language in answers which shows that candidates are considering different perspectives, arguments and positions:

- However
 - On the other hand
 - But
- NEVERTHELES
- S
 - In conclusion
 - An alternative view
- On balance

Evaluative language

Another approach to these questions is to use a 'washing line' to organise an answer. Some questions imply that a range of different solutions / factors might be responsible for some geographical issue or provide a solution to a problem, such as this question:

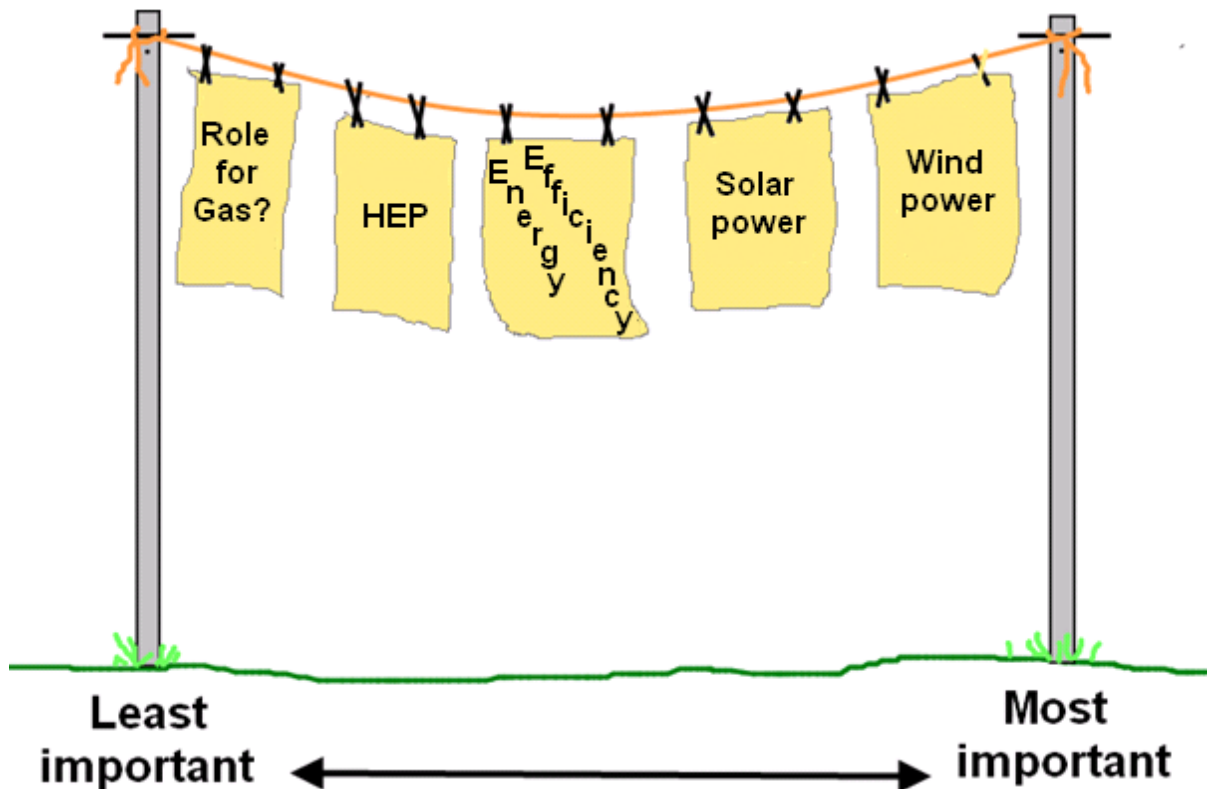
(b) Using named examples, assess the contribution renewable energy sources could make to both future energy security and environmental sustainability.

(15)

When planning an answer, candidates might consider the possible renewable energy sources that could be discussed and arrange them on a 'washing line' from the most to least suitable in terms of energy security + environmental sustainability.

Even though the question is focussed on renewable energy, other energy sources could be considered such as natural gas (the 'cleanest' fossil fuel, widely available and currently low cost).

This type of approach is useful in terms of planning, organising thoughts and providing a structure to use when writing the answer.



4. Exemplar student responses with commentaries

All of the questions below are taken from the published Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs). Please refer to the mark schemes in the SAMs.

A1: Atmosphere and Weather Systems

Question 1(b) Evaluate the contribution forecasting technologies can make to the successful management of extreme weather events. (15)

Exemplar answer:

Extreme weather events include tropical cyclones ❶, mid-latitude depressions, drought and flooding caused by storm events. They frequently affect the developing and developed world and in the case of tropical cyclones and monsoon flooding usually occur in a 'season' e.g. the Atlantic Hurricane Season ❷ from June to November.

Forecasting extreme weather events is crucial ❸ to their successful management because it allows predictions to be made, which can be acted on in terms of preparation, evacuation, and aid response. Since the 1970s satellite technology has allowed tropical storms to be tracked in real-time meaning their landfall and intensity can be predicted with some accuracy. In addition data from satellites and 'hurricane hunter' aircraft are used in computer models by organisations such as NOAA which have a high-degree of accuracy in terms of predictions. Satellites technology and ground monitoring weather stations are also used to monitor drought conditions, especially in locations vulnerable to food and water shortages. The FEWSNET organisation forecasts famine in Sub-Saharan Africa ❹ partly by monitoring the onset of drought conditions.

Forecasting technology is most useful ❹ when it leads to evacuation in the face on major storm. For instance, in September 2017 6.3 million Florida ❷ residents were ordered to evacuate as hurricane Irma approached Florida. However, ❸, evacuation is not always possible. The Caribbean islands of Barbuda, ❷ Saint Marten and the Virgin Islands were not evacuated because of the difficulty of removing 1000s of people, quickly from small islands. In coastal Bangladesh ❷, poverty and lack of infrastructure prevents evacuation to distant places. In these cases, forecasting technology provides timely warning but ❹ other management strategies are needed to reduce loss of life. Local, elevated concrete cyclone shelters in Bangladesh directly save lives and long-term plans to develop salt-tolerant rice that can survive sea-water storm surges would reduce the risk of post-cyclone famine.

In most cases forecasting technology, evacuation and storm shelters does not ❹ reduce the economic losses from tropical cyclones. This requires hard engineering such as levees and storm barriers. These, as was the case with 2005 Hurricane Katrina ❷ in New Orleans, are prone to failure and over-topping by storm surges. In the case of emerging and developing countries their costs is prohibitive. Perhaps the most ❹ important aspect of managing extreme weather is good governance. Government and agency led education, preparation,

emergency response and post-disaster aid are all crucial to reducing human losses.

In conclusion ❶, forecasting technologies are a very important aspect of managing extreme weather but they are only one piece of the management jigsaw ❷ and accurate forecasts themselves do not save lives. Forecasting can predict an extreme weather event, but preparation in terms of shelters and evacuation routes, suitable engineering structures and emergency and aid response are equally important. Overall, good governance is the most effective life saver.

Examiner commentary:

This is a Level 4 13-15 mark answer:

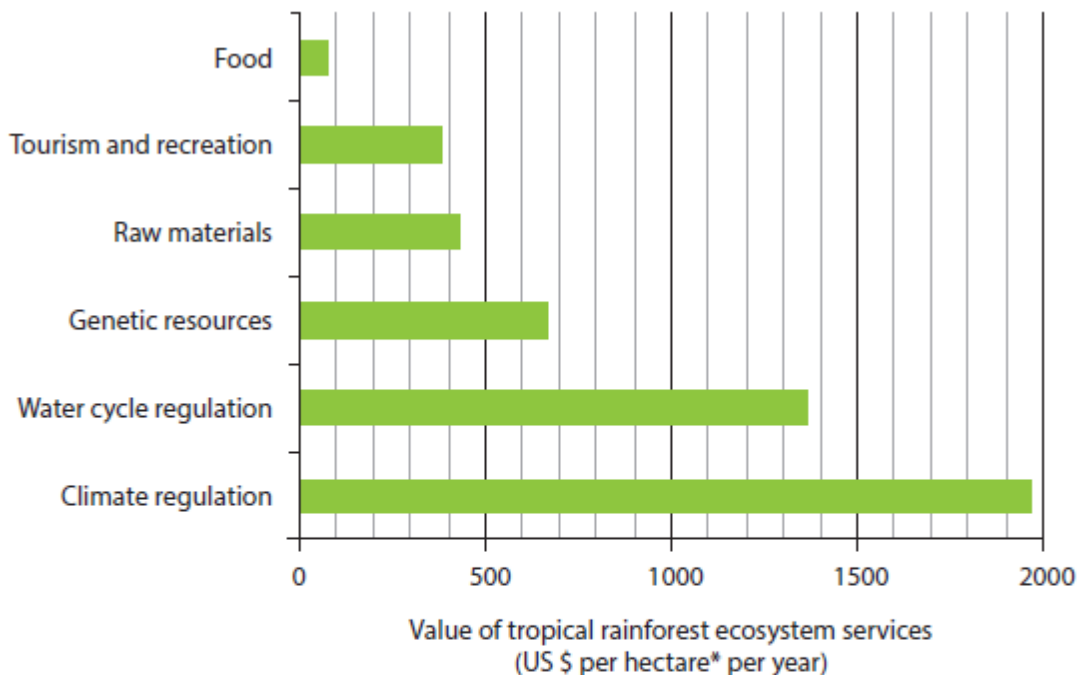
- ❶ The answer has a logical structure, beginning with an opening paragraph that defines extreme weather. It moves on to discuss forecasting's role in some detail as well as other aspects of management, and ends with a clear conclusion.
- ❷ There is good place knowledge; a range of examples are used to provide supporting evidence. This is accurate and relevant.
- ❸ The answer uses evaluative language throughout to make judgements about the importance of different factors, and recognises the limitations of forecasting and other management approaches.
- ❹ The conclusion draws several strands of management together coherently to make the case that forecasting is only one part of a larger management 'whole'.

Could it be improved?

- Although drought is mentioned, most of the answer focuses on tropical cyclones; some additional detail on drought response could provide additional balance.
- The focus on governance is very good, but an example of good governance might have been provided.

A2: Biodiversity Under Threat

Question 2 Using Figure 2, suggest reasons for the different values of tropical rainforest ecosystem services. (10)



(Source adapted from: http://openlandscapes.zalf.de/openLandscapesWIKI_Glossaries/Regulating%20Ecosystem%20Services.aspx)

Figure 2

The value of tropical rainforest ecosystem services
(*one hectare is an area 100m × 100m)

Exemplar answer:

Ecosystem services are the ❶ benefits humans gain from natural ecosystems such as tropical rainforests and grasslands. Figure 2 shows that they vary in value from nearly US\$ 2000 per hectare / yr for climate regulation to about US\$ 100 for food.

Climate regulation and water cycle regulation are the largest services in terms of value. This is because ❷ they are global services, which benefit people worldwide. The tropical rainforest sequesters ❸ carbon dioxide and this helps regulate the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, protecting people from climate change. Forests also intercept ❹ precipitation, encouraging infiltration ❺ and through-flow and so ❷ reducing flood risk. Forests act as huge water filters, eventually providing clean drinking water to millions of people via groundwater and rivers. The value, at US\$1350, is smaller than that for climate regulation ❷ because many of the benefits of water cycle regulation are felt most by people living close by e.g. in and around the Amazon basin or Indonesian forests – rather than globally as for climate regulation.

Some rainforest ecosystem services are local in nature and therefore this ② explains their smaller value. Few people depend directly on forests for either food supply e.g. bush-meat or fruits, or raw materials such as timber for housing. Tourism, valued at US\$480 is locally important in places such as Costa Rica, but in other areas of tropical forest such as the DRC it is non-existent.

Genetic resources have a value ② because genetic material from plants and animals in rainforests can be used to create new medicines and is used in crop development e.g. GM crops. This is relatively small in value, but has the potential to be much larger ④. Medical or plant breeding breakthroughs could provide huge financial value for companies that make them. There is also the value in terms of health benefits and increased food security for people using the new products.

Examiner commentary:

This is a Level 3, 8-10 mark answer:

- ① These 10 mark data stimulus questions do not require an introduction or conclusion, however an introductory sentence defining a key word / concept from the question is often a good way to 'get into' the answer.
- ② The different sizes of the valuations are clearly explained; in many places words like 'so', 'because' and 'explain' are used in the answer which makes it clear that explanations and reasons are being given.
- ③ The answer uses good terminology especially when explaining physical processes, and so shows understanding.
- ④ In the last paragraph the candidate begins to question the data in a tentative way, and provides a good explanation of the value of genetic material.

Could it be improved?

Not really. The answer covers all aspects of the Figure (maximum marks are possible without covering every bar in the graph) and explains clearly throughout. The local / global contrast is very good and the answer avoids describing that data.

Synoptic question

You should use relevant knowledge and understanding from AS unit 1 and A2 unit 3 (topics A1 and A2) to answer this question.

Question 3 To what extent is globalisation responsible for the threats facing biodiversity? (15)

Exemplar answer:

➊ Globalisation is the increase in the density of economic, cultural and demographic connections globally and it has led to increased global trade, migration, urbanisation and resources consumption. As part of globalisation direct and indirect threats to biodiversity have increased.

➋ Directly, biodiversity is threatened because areas of forest, reefs and grasslands are exploited for resources. Examples include the destruction of Indonesia's tropical rainforests to create farmland from palm oil and biofuels, plus mining for Coltan in the rainforests of the ➌ Democratic Republic of Congo which is used in mobile phones. Globalising ➍ megacities and industrial areas have spread into ecosystems leading to destruction. Indirectly, the pollution from industry and resource consumption has degraded rivers, lakes and forests as well as increased the pace of global warming which threatens the health of global biomes and species. In many cases the threats to biodiversity come as much from ➎ development, industrialisation and urbanisation as they do specifically from globalisation.

However, ➏ some threats are much harder to link directly to globalisation. It could be argued that poverty, rather than globalisation, is behind continued exploitation of ecosystem resources in many parts of the world. Threats such as alien species like the ➐ Australian Cane Toad existed prior to the era of modern globalisation. On the other hand ➑, the rise of both global trade and tourism does increase the risk of threats such as alien species and even the abject poverty in the DRC leads to deforestation and mining that eventually puts minerals into the global supply chains of TNCs such as Apple and Samsung.

An alternative view ➒ might be that globalisation could be seen as having some ➓ positives for biodiversity. Many of the most globalised countries based on the KOF globalisation index such as the ➔ Netherlands, Ireland and Switzerland are the most highly developed countries with good environmental awareness and systems of protection such as National Parks. People in these countries are educated and aware of global environmental threats. According to the Environmental Kuznets Curve many highly developed, globalised countries have transitioned towards pollution control and environmental protection. Even in emerging countries such as Brazil there has been an expansion of rainforest protection in the last decade. Global media organisations such as CNN and the BBC are very good at drawing attention to biodiversity threats such as the 2010 BP oil spill in the ➕ Gulf of Mexico or threats facing iconic species such as Polar Bears due to the warming ➖ Arctic. As globalisation increases tourism worldwide

more people experience biodiversity directly and might be more prepared to support global efforts to protect it such as CITES and UNESCO.

In conclusion ❶ globalisation can be blamed, directly and indirectly for threatening biodiversity although in many cases economic development is as much to blame as globalisations increase in connections between places. Equally, in a more aware, connected world globalisation could be a benefit in terms of greater awareness and protection for ecosystems. However, demand for resources and space in a globalising world are more of a threat than any benefit globalisation might bring.

Examiner commentary:

This is a Level 4, 13-15 mark answer.

- ❶ This well-structured answer begins with a brief scene-setting introduction that defines globalisation, and ends with a clear conclusion.
- ❷ There is frequent place-based support in this answer, which considers a number of locations which provide evidence for the argument.
- ❸ The consideration of direct and indirect threats show detailed understanding.
- ❹ The answer considers the question from a number of different stand-points, including the idea that globalisation might be a positive force.
- ❺ There is an interesting consideration of whether the threat is actually globalisation, or perhaps economic development.
- ❻ The answer uses evaluative language throughout, showing an ability to consider different perspectives before coming to a judgement at the end.

B2: Water Conflicts

Question 5(a) Using Figure 4, suggest reasons for the differences in water sources between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Zimbabwe. (5)

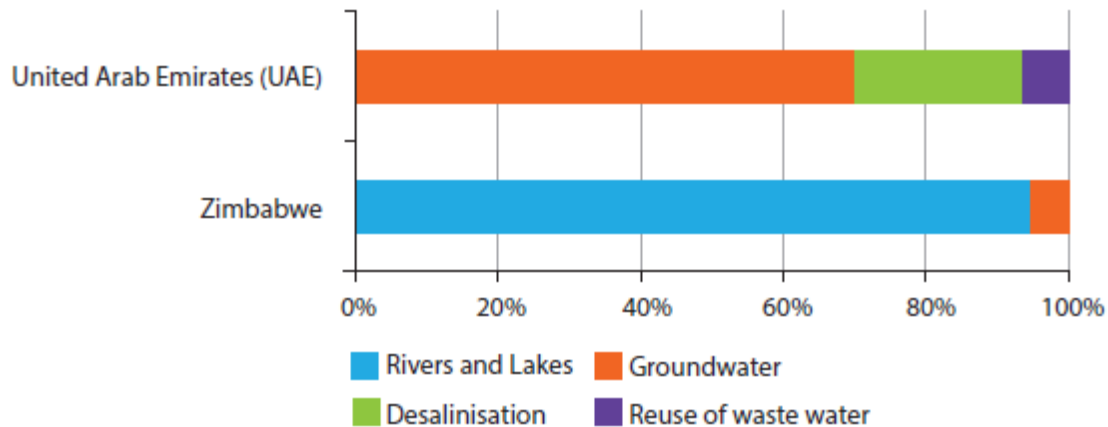


Figure 4

Water sources for two countries

Exemplar answer:

In Zimbabwe over 90% of water comes from rivers and lakes, whereas none does in the UAE. This is because rainfall in Zimbabwe will be seasonally high, and poverty means most people rely on informal, natural sources.

Because rainfall is very low in the UAE most water (about 75%) comes from groundwater due to lack of surface sources.

Desalination in the UAE is needed because of the lack of rainfall / surface water and the country can afford this process.

Examiner commentary:

In the answer above, each short paragraph gains 2 marks. This is because in each case there is a valid explanation linked to an aspect of the data provided. Therefore the answer scores 5 marks.

C1: Superpower Geographies

Question 6 To what extent do today's superpowers and emerging powers gain and maintain power in different ways to those in the past? (20)

Exemplar answer:

Superpowers such as the USA and emerging powers such as China maintain power in a number of different ways, often referred to as pillars of superpower status such as ② economic, military, cultural and geopolitical power. Power can also be viewed as either ② hard or soft power, depending on the way it is used to gain influence. It might be the ① case that in the past military or 'hard' power was more important than the 'soft' economic and cultural power used today, but that is not always the case.

During the ④ colonial era from 1750 to 1950 ② military power was a key aspect of power. For the British Empire, a large military force with advanced technology was crucial to gaining colonial territory and maintaining it. Naval power was the most vital aspect of this military power, because it was needed to protect trade routes and transport troops to trouble spots. In 1900 the British Navy was roughly twice the size of the next largest. Today military power is used in a different way i.e. as a threat or a deterrent, because no countries have large empires to defend. Military hardware such as drones, nuclear weapons and the ③ USA's 11 nuclear powered aircraft carriers are seen as key power assets which can be used if needed. ⑤ However, there is still a place for direct military action. Russia used military force in Georgian in ④ 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 in order to gain control over territory and maintain it. This shows that although rare, military force is still used. China's actions building militarised islands in the South China Sea, such as ③ Fiery Cross Reef, could be viewed as using military power to gain control over a disputed Exclusive Economic Zone.

④ Today's power is often said to come from 'soft' ② economic and cultural sources. The USA can be viewed as a hyperpower due to a combination of economic and cultural power. The global dominance of its ③ TNCs such as Apple, Google, Microsoft and GE bring technical prowess, huge wealth and global cultural brand power to the USA. Add this to the power of the ③ USA's media (Hollywood, global news and TV networks) and that country has a powerful set of tools to project its image and ideology around the world. Today, this economic-cultural power is not matched by other powerful countries. China has enormous economic power in terms of global trade but much less global cultural influence. ⑤ Cultural influence did exist in the past, but was more locally important than globally. Both ③ Britain and France influenced their colonies in the ④ 19th and early 20th century in terms of language, sport, food and governance but was never the global cultural influence achieved by the USA in the late 20th Century.

It could be argued that during the ④ 1945-1990 Cold War, and more so since the collapse of the Communist Bloc in the early 1990s, that much power rests within global ② Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) such as the ③ UN Security Council, World Bank and IMF and WTO. These IGOs were mostly created within a 'western' or even 'American' ideological framework in the 1940s and 1950s and support a free-trade, capitalist global order that is pro-American.

These IGOs mean the USA and its allies (EU, Japan) control the levers of global power. These types of IGOs did not exist during the colonial area but could be seen as key to maintaining the power of the USA today.

⑥ Overall, the same pillars of power existed in the past as exist today, but their relative importance has changed over time. In the past power (and territory) was gained and maintained through military force which created economic power through control of territory and its human and physical resources. Today, influence is gained through culture and economic power, and via international IGOs. However, as Chinese and Russian actions show hard military power is still used – just much more rarely than in the past.

Examiner commentary:

This is a strong Level 4 answer in the 16-20 mark band.

- ① The first paragraph of this answer shows good understanding of the different types of power; it also sets out a case towards the end of the paragraph. In a long essay such as this, stating the general direction of the argument early on is a good way of maintaining focus.
- ② The answer provides explanations for a range of types of power – there is more detail on some e.g. military, but this would be expected as an answer that could not deal with all aspects of power equally in the time available.
- ③ A wide range of evidence is presented, including some that is place specific.
- ④ There is a good balance between the past and present, and reference is made to gaining and maintaining power (an aspect of the question that is easy to overlook).
- ⑤ In the second paragraph dealing with military power, and the third paragraph dealing with cultural / economic influence, a counter-argument is presented at the end of the paragraph – recognising that there is an alternative interpretation.
- ⑥ The conclusion avoids the risk of being simplistic (e.g. 'hard' or military in the past, versus 'soft' or cultural today) and instead recognises that perhaps a more subtle shift has taken place, but all types of power are still used.