

Examiners' Report Summer 2010

IGCSE

IGCSE Geography 4370 1F

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Summer 2010

Publications Code UG024258

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CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT : iGCSE Geography (4370)

June 2010

Paper 1F

General Comments

This year's entry in the last year of the specification was the highest it has been since 2005. The mean mark, however, was lower than in 2009 and more in line with those achieved in 2007 and 2008. Some questions, especially question 1 : Water challenged candidates more than their equivalents in 2009. Changes in entry policy with, for example, more potential C grade candidates being entered for the higher tier paper rather than this paper, seem to have taken place. Knowledge, especially of case study-type was absent from most scripts with marks generally being gained from skill tasks and generic responses to knowledge and understanding tasks.

Question-specific comments

Section A

Question 1 : Water

In relation to previous examinations this was not as well answered. The only two items that regularly scored well were (a)(v) and (c). Candidates were able to use the information on flood impact provided to good effect, and recall a range of valid reasons as to why rivers flood. The phrase, river engineering seemed to throw many candidates off course, and the terms - flood plain and river basin - were often unknown. Parts (a)(i) and (iv) showed reduced use of the channel map in Figure 1.

Question 2 : Hazards

This was one of the paper's better answered questions. All candidates were able to gain some marks from (a)(i) but the stronger gaining maximum marks. Equally, parts (a)(ii) to (iv) enabled candidates to continually score but in a discriminatory fashion. Volcanic eruptions and the reasons for living in such areas were generally understood. It was encouraging to see so many creditable explanations, many offering valid diagrams in (b) of eruptions.

Question 3 : Production

This was another relatively low scoring question though candidates tended to start well and finish well. Careful map reading enabled them to score well in (a)(i). Responses to (a)(ii) were generally generic to industrial location and frequently lacked relevance to car assembly. Part (b) disappointed; high-tech industry was often understood in only the vaguest terms. As was pointed out earlier, candidates tended to finish well. The rising demand for energy (item (c)) was typically linked to population increase, industrialisation and rising prosperity. Good scores were common.

Question 4 : Development

This development question has generally challenged the candidates and this year's question 4 was no exception. The concepts of redevelopment, area of declining prosperity and unequal regional development seemed to be little grasped. There were very few scripts with any sound understanding of these three concepts and their associated items, (a)(ii) - (c). Valid interpretation of the Salford Quays photograph was limited, and specific knowledge of areal decline and regional disparity was not brought to the examination by these candidates.

Question 5 : Migration

A reasonably well answered question. Rural-to-urban migration and the push-and-pull model are well known, and many candidates picked up all or most of the first 7 marks (ai-iii). Parts (a)(iv) and particularly (b) proved less fruitful. Many candidates appreciated that villages lost young workers and cities gained shanty towns from rural-to-urban migration, but too few set their responses to (b) in the context of this type of migration. International migration was the typical context with candidates writing about visas, border controls ... rather than rural development schemes. There were some creditable answers on self-help schemes in shanty towns.

Question 6 : Urban environments

This question scored well with the stimulus-material (Figures 6a and 6b) proving to be a very effective resource. Many candidates gained all the first 5 marks in items (a)(i) - (ii) and (b)(i). The resource was again effective in enabling (b)(iii) to be well answered. Most candidates were aware of the conflicts of interest resulting from using greenfield sites on the rural-urban fringe. There were some decent responses to (b)(iv). Item (b)(ii) was the question's most problematic; the reasons offered tended to be broad and unrelated to the changes recommended in (b)(i).

SECTION B

Question 7 : Fragile environments

This was the overwhelmingly popular choice in Section B. Deforestation is a familiar topic and again scored reasonably well. The value of forests was generally understood (part (c)) as was the broad reasons for their clearance (part (d)). Biodiversity was less well known than expected with many candidates confusing productivity rates with range of species.

Question 8 : Globalisation

Candidate's Section B question often scored higher than their Section A answers; this included those attempting this question. Part (a) frequently produced decent marks with candidates using Figure 8 well enough and knowing of exports and the secondary sector. Global shift, however, was one of those areas of content assessed by this paper which disappointed the examiner; too few candidates were familiar with the term. The impact of transnational companies on host countries, especially LEDCs was better known, and most could at least one effect. The few better offered a more balanced answer with good and bad effects.

Question 9 : Human Welfare

This was an unpopular and low-scoring option. Few started their answer well by using Figure 9 and its definition of fertility rate to good effect. The better responses came from candidates who brought knowledge of China's former one-child policy into the examination, especially when answering (a)(iii). Falling fertility generally was not an area of content with which candidates showed a deal of familiarity. Quality of life (part (b)) was familiar and many picked up two or three marks in (b). It was also encouraging to see so many valid names of aid agencies in (c). There were many Level 1 responses to this item; the nature of their aid was frequently given but its impact on quality of life invariably missing.

Paper 2H

General Comments

There is evidence that though a different cohort candidates also found this higher tier paper a tougher challenge than in 2009. The mean mark for the paper was down on 2009 and performance was more comparable with that in 2007 and 2008. Questions 1, 3 and 4 scored lowly and legitimate areas of content for examination such as river engineering, high-tech, redevelopment and global shift created difficulties. There were strong points, however, such as a high standard of answering on skills tasks, including good use made of stimulus-material, and good understanding of processes, both physical and human.

Question-specific comments

Section A

Question 1 : Water

The choice of a meander and river engineering for this year's paper had the effect of depressing the marks on what is usually a well performing unit of the specification. Most candidates identified that there would be higher discharge due to flood but failed to identify many other characteristics in (a)(i). (a)(ii) was better answered with nearly all able to make a judgement about the level of seriousness and provide a piece of evidence. The responses to (a)(iii) varied widely in quality with many candidates not being able to develop their answers beyond realising that meandering was involved. Some candidates did provide sound explanations, including diagrams of the process of meander migration. Part (b) tended to be well answered. Not all candidates displayed understanding of the concept of river engineering; some of those that did offered examples of named sites and how the river was affected.

Question 2 : Hazards

This question tended to be answered well and many candidates attained one of their higher marks. Item (a)(i) often got candidates off to a good start because of sound interpretation of the information in Figure 2. Most were able to achieve marks in (a)(ii) but simple, unconnected statements rather than a sequence of events were frequently offered. (a)(iii) was generally well answered with many candidates appropriately using the recent Icelandic ash eruptions and their impact on air travel. The majority of candidates were able to show sound understanding of plate movements, often at destructive margins and the formation of volcanoes. The best answers included a labelled diagram. There were a lot of strong answers to (c). A range of socio-economic factors were offered and some indicated that residents knew the risks but decided that the benefits outweighed them.

Question 3 : Production

The responses to this question were not of the desired standard. Most candidates used Figure 3 satisfactorily and coped well enough with the demands of (a)(i). Whilst location distributions for 1970 were provided relatively few candidates had any idea why in generic terms locations change (a(ii)). High-tech industry was not as well understood as expected; many scripts offered a single characteristic, often mere interpretation of the term. Item (c)(i) was invariably well done; there were many full mark answers offering reasons from population explosion to rising living standards. On the other hand, (c)(ii) proved to be one of the less able answers on the paper. Few were able to accurately name a nuclear power station; most ignored the location aspect of the question; some offered fallacious features (e.g. improve the landscape) of nuclear power stations as local benefits. Providing local jobs was as good as it got.

Question 4 : Development

Traditionally, candidates are challenged by the development question; this was again true. Most were able to identify a range of features in the photograph of Salford Quays suggestive of redevelopment and a former port. Items (a)(ii) and (iii) generated a range of rather generic and vague responses lacking development; the better scripts referred to dereliction and unaffordable properties or the mismatch between old skills and new jobs. Unequal regional development was not well understood and this led to two relatively low scoring sets of responses (b(i) and ii). The better answers usually related to Brazil and Italy and offered some valid indicators as well as some relevant determining factors. It was disheartening to see many candidates being unable to name a country and write even the most generic of valid responses.

Question 5 : Migration

A reasonably well answered question though low numbers indicated that migration involves a permanent/semi-permanent change of address. There was good understanding, however, of the various push and pull factors, and in-journey obstacles and opportunities relevant to rural-to-urban migration. The effects of obstacles and opportunities were often underplayed, and some candidates referred to international migration in their responses to (a)(iv). Many candidates did correctly relate their (a)(v) answer to rural-to-urban migration and mentioned shanty towns, self-help schemes and rural development programmes. Some continued on the international migration path and referred to visas, border controls ...; some credit was given. For those doing the latter, item (b) became problematic. Generally though, (b) was answered relevantly and well, with reference being made to examples - USA-Mexico being popular.

Question 6 : Urban Environments

Figure 6 proved to be a very effective resource with the vast majority of candidates performing well on the resource-based items (ai, aii and bi). One limitation in the responses to (b)(i) was the failure to note that the question related to inner city only not the whole city. Rural-urban fringes seemed to have been taught well. Nearly all were aware that fringes had moved outwards, been built on and why. Equally, the terms - greenfield and brownfield site - were well known and most appreciated that issues around their use was a cause of controversy. Conflicts of interest were frequently discussed in (c). The final three items of this question were answered very well.

Section B.

Question 7 : Fragile Environments

This was the overwhelmingly most popular choice in this section. It was also a high-scoring answer. Deforestation is an established area of content familiar to candidates. In (a) the trend of reduction in forest area was universally recognised but fewer candidates recognised that the rate of forest clearance was itself reducing. Part (b) revealed good understanding of forest ecosystems; there were some detailed answers highlighting the role of deforestation in soil erosion and ecosystem collapse. Part (c) scored well with most appreciating that the forest provided a home and livelihood for local people, contained a rich biodiversity and via photosynthesis acted as the "lungs of the Earth" and a carbon sink. The latter was most candidate's strongest response. Part (d) also generated some good answers; most candidates were aware that rainforest clearance was linked to the economy and development of the deforesting nations. Finally, sustainable rainforest management (item (e)) had clearly been well taught; there were some excellent accounts, including case study-type knowledge of sustainable schemes by named governments and agencies in named locations.

Question 8 : Globalisation

This was a relatively unpopular question which tended to score modestly, largely because many candidates did not seem to understand global shift (bii) and so found it also difficult to gain much credit from items (b)(ii) and (iii). Part (a) provided a sound start for the candidates with most being able to extract the relevant information from Figure 8. Part (c) was also decently addressed with most possessing knowledge of transnational companies and being able to identify both the advantages and disadvantages that they bring to host countries, usually LEDCs. Candidates tended to score quite well in the 9-mark finale (part (d)). Most could write about aid, IT and tourism with the better developing their answer into the realm of how these actually promote globalisation.

Question 9 : Human Welfare

This question was both unpopular and low scoring. There was a general lack of clarity in part (a); the terms, fertility rate, birth rate and population stability were frequently confused. The links between them, the factors behind falling fertility and the effect on living standards were not well expressed. Quality of life, however, was well understood and there were some decent accounts in (b) of how it can be measured, including frequent references to indexes such as HDI. Pleasingly, most could name an aid agency in (c); the responses that followed showed differentiation with almost all achieving Level 1 and some producing detailed accounts of the impact of their work on quality of life and so reaching Level 3. Part (d) proved more challenging with lower level responses being typical. The best answers gave isolated, relevant factors only without development as to their impact on quality of life levels and without exemplification, especially in the place sense.

Statistics

Paper 1F & 03

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
grade boundaries	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	44	38	32	29	20	0

Paper 1F & 04

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
grade boundaries	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	37	31	25	19	0

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