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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary Level in Geography (WGE01)
Paper 01: Global Challenges

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Introduction

Noticeably there was an increased proportion of blank responses in this examination series, with candidates failing to attempt a range of questions.

Global Challenges contains a choice of World at Risk or Going Global longer essay questions. More candidates opted to answer the World at Risk option in this exam series with approximately 57% of the responses, compared to 43% opting for Going Global.

Centres may wish to consider some general points going forward:

- Candidate responses showed that the following key areas of the specification should be reviewed and taught in greater detail:
 - The geographical processes underpinning the formation of volcanoes, including their presence at hotspot locations.
 - The role of the Milankovitch cycles in causing changes in long-term climates.
 - How population pyramids can analyse population structure and how they can be used to predict future numbers.
 - The effectiveness of responses to natural disasters in multi-hazard zones.
 - The role of Transnational corporations (TNCs) in increasing global connections and flows.
- Mark schemes refer to 'evidence' this is particularly important in the context of the 20 mark extended questions: this can come in the form of examples, case studies, data, facts, detailed reference to places, concepts and geographical theory.

Question 1aii

Candidates were asked to describe the trend in hydrological disasters using a resource. Whilst most candidates understood the idea that there was a fluctuating pattern, and that hydrological disasters had increased in recent years. Some candidates misread the data and talked about the disaster rather than the hydrological as directed in the question.

Question 1aiii

Candidates were asked to suggest one reason why the number of meteorological disasters might be increasing. The majority of candidates successfully secured at least one mark here. The most common response focused upon global temperatures increasing due to climate change. However, some candidates struggled to then link this causal factor to why this would lead to meteorological disasters increasing. Many candidates for example did not address the rise in temperature of the oceans more accurately, saying it would increase ocean temperature, rather than surpassing 27° which would have been more geographically accurate.

Question 1b

This question asked candidates to explain two causes of landslides. Generally this was answered well, with most candidates offering a basic explanation and some form of development. The two most common approaches were tectonic and weather events i.e., the role of heavy rainfall. Less able candidates struggled to extend their responses beyond the initial identification of a causal factor. Whilst a number of students did not fully address the role that deforestation played in the creation of landslides.

Question 1c

There was variability in terms of quality of response for this question. The more able responses were able to explain clear processes in the formation of volcanoes. They included explicit geographical terminology and had a clear understanding in the differences in volcanic formation at both divergent and convergent plate boundaries. The best responses also recognised the role of hotspots in the creation of volcanoes outside of plate boundary locations. Weaker responses tended to be generic in terms of lack of referencing of specific plate boundary types or having clear misconceptions of the role of conservative/transform plate boundaries. These answers tended to remain within level 1.

Question 2ai

Candidates were asked to define 'global warming' and the majority of candidates could give a basic definition of global warming i.e., increase in global temperature. It is important the candidates look at the mark tariff for each question to ensure that they have fully answered the question. This was a 2-mark question, so candidates were expected to link to the causation i.e., increased greenhouse emissions/enhanced greenhouse effect etc.

Question 2aii

For this question candidates were asked to suggest a reason why there were different global warming projections. Here many candidates were just not specific enough here and did not mention protocols or indeed why projections can be different depending on future plans (IPCC). A number of candidates were limited as they did not use the resource as a springboard from which to base their suggestion. Most candidates could give one reason for the difference and projections, however only a few fully developed the answer to gain three marks.

Question 2b

This question required candidates to explain why global warming might provide economic opportunities for high-latitude locations. On the whole candidates responded well to this question with links made between melting ice and increased navigability of the Arctic Ocean and the fact that this would provide economic opportunities. A number of candidates focused on the farming opportunities that a warmer climate would provide whilst referencing the Arctic. Whilst this may occur in other high-latitude locations, it would not be appropriate to link this to the Arctic.

Question 2c

This area of the specification remains a challenge for some candidates and centres should consider spending increased teaching time providing clarity on the three different cycles and their roles in changing the climate. Many of the candidates lacked clarity of the timeframe of the cycles and often could not fully explain how they impacted climate, often repeating themselves. The best responses had accurate levels of geographical knowledge and were able to explain how eccentricity for example impacted the length of seasons.

Question 3aii

This question asked candidates to describe the pattern of trade within the NAFTA trade bloc. The majority of candidates were able to achieve at least one mark here with most candidates recognising the USA's dominance in the trading partnership. Best responses recognised the fact that both Mexico and Canada had a trade surplus, whilst the USA was in a trade deficit. Some candidates drifted into explanations as to why countries would trade with each other, which was not the focus of the question.

Question 3aiii

In this question candidates were asked to suggest one advantage of being part of a trade bloc for countries such as Mexico. This was answered well by the majority of candidates with clear understanding of the benefits including removal of tariffs and quotas, increased trade and specialism of goods. A small minority identified that Mexico could benefit from the free movement of people, this is a misconception, as this only applies to the EU trade bloc.

Question 3b

This question was answered well by candidates, with most candidates able to secure at least two marks out of the three available. Candidates on the whole had strong understanding of the purpose of SEZs and could create linked, developed ideas from their first initial idea. A few candidates moved off the question set and instead identified benefits to TNCs rather than the host government.

Question 3c

Candidates showed a mixed performance with this question with candidates struggling to maintain a balance in their response to address both global and local environmental impacts. A number of candidates drifted into social and economic issues of TNCs outsourcing, rather than the environmental focus in the question. Many of the responses were also largely generic and it is important that for candidates to reach level 3, they need to include supporting evidence in order to fully develop their geographical ideas.

Question 4aii

Candidates overall obtained at least two of the four marks available. The most common impacts discussed were the creation of slums/squatter settlements and the pressure on services. As with the other 2+2-mark questions, some candidates struggled to extend their ideas to pick up the development mark of the explanation.

Question 4b

The question asked candidates to explain why rising populations may result in resource shortages. On the whole candidates approached this by tackling 'resources' as a whole and this led to largely generic responses. Better responses addressed resources individually i.e., food, water etc and were then able to provide a range of explanations as to why these may face shortages in the future. Responses that also brought in geographical theory e.g., Boserup and Malthus also tended to score well.

Question 4c

Candidates struggled to respond to the question focus how population pyramids could be used to analyse population structure and predict future numbers. Whilst candidates understood population pyramids relatively well, they did not fully appreciate how they can be used to predict future changes in population. It is important that candidates cover all aspects of the specification here. A small minority understood that population pyramids explored social class, rather than age and thereby struggled to achieve marks on this question.

Question 5a

Candidates were required to suggest reasons why there were different levels of flood risk in the countries shown in Figure 5. The weaker responses struggled to interpret the resource, instead either describing the trends or simply ignoring the resource completely. Candidates were expected to apply their knowledge of flood risk and the human and physical causes to the named countries shown. Candidates were not expected to have studied the specific countries shown on the resource, hence the command word of suggest looked for application.

Candidates appreciated the concepts of what they were trying to cover within the confines of the question but failed to appreciate the key points they should be making and applying it to specific places within the resource. Answers tended to be a little generic and lacking in detail. The best responses applied their geographical knowledge and understanding and applied it to the named countries and recognised the differing levels of risk therefore suggesting plausible reasons for this. A small minority recognised that the flood risk was associated with both coastal and inland flooding.

Question 5b

There was considerable variability in the level of responses that candidates wrote in response to this question. The more able candidates explored the role that responses to natural disasters played in reducing impacts in multiple hazard zones. Some also recognised that there were other factors that led to these differences e.g., magnitude and governance. The less able candidates struggled to apply their knowledge specifically to multiple hazard zones, instead focusing on generic responses that unnamed countries could implement. Candidates should be encouraged to apply named examples and contexts to questions such as these to access top band marks.

Question 6a

Candidates were required to suggest reasons why their trends in international migrant numbers in Figure 6. The weaker responses struggled to interpret the resource, instead either describing the trends or simply ignoring the resource completely. Candidates were expected to apply their knowledge of patterns of migration and causes to the named countries shown. Candidates were not expected to have studied the specific countries shown on the resource, hence the command word of suggest looked for application.

Candidates were all able to suggest basic reasons why people migrate i.e., push and pull factors. At the lower end answers tended to be focus on these meaning the response was generic and lacking in detail. The best responses applied their geographical knowledge and understanding can could suggest plausible reasons for the variations in migrant numbers.

Question 6b

Candidates did not perform well on this question, with candidates failing to fully understand the demands of the question and instead, focused on the costs and benefits of TNCs which meant they could not access certain levels. The best responses categorised the different types of global connections and flows, and considered the role that TNCs played in increasing them. Strong responses also looked at other factors/players, which could contribute to increased global connections/flows.

