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Principal Examiner Feedback

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

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Introduction

Centres should be commended on the performance of their candidates this exam series. Fewer candidates used extra paper, showing that answers were of the length expected. Therefore, most candidates were focusing their answers on the mark allocation and were guided by the question's command word.

The paper was generally accessible to candidates across the ability range, with evidence of high-quality work particularly in the higher 20-mark questions. Most candidates managed to answer all questions on the examination paper, with a smaller number of blank responses.

As in the previous series World at risk (question 5) remained the most popular with around 63% completed questions compared with 38% on Going Global (question 6).

Centres may wish to consider some general points going forward:

- 20-mark essays work best if there is a plan, perhaps written and certainly in the mind of the candidate.
- All essays should be 'supported by evidence' (third bullet point in the mark scheme). This might be a series of located examples, case studies, or facts or data, or a candidate's geographical knowledge.
- Candidates are exposed to a wide range of key terms throughout this specification. Candidates should be clear on the definitions of these key terms and be able to apply them to both short and longer response questions.
- Many questions use the command word 'assess' this is defined in the specification on page 77. This requires higher-order thinking skills that involve candidates looking at several sides of an argument or question, weighing up issues, considering which factors/explanations are the most important and making supported judgements. Failure to demonstrate these cognitive skills limits available credit.

Centres may consider the need for a greater amount of teaching time to be spent upon a number of key areas which underperformed in this exam series. These include:

- Reasons why tectonic hazard responses vary between country, with reference to contrasting examples to support (1.3.3.3)
- The concept of a climate change tipping point (1.3.5.2)
- Social and economic impacts of economic restricting on developed countries (1.4.3.1)
- Reasons why some countries receive high numbers of refugees (1.4.5.3)

Question 1aii

This question asked candidates to describe the distribution of deaths caused by the Asian Tsunami. The majority of candidates scored at least 1 mark with the most popular responses recognising that the highest deaths occurred closest to the epicentre or that Indonesia had the highest deaths. Lots of candidates then lifted figures off the resource as their attempt at developing their point. As easy second mark that the best candidates focused upon was identifying the anomaly of Thailand were closer than India and Sri Lanka but had lower deaths.

Question 1aiii

Candidates were asked to suggest one reason for the variation in deaths caused by the Asian tsunami. There were a lot of repeated points from the previous question with the reason being 'closer to the epicentre', this gained credit but very few managed to extend this to discuss height of wave. Those that took a 'development' approach were more successful in getting the extension mark i.e. 'not having prepared emergency services' or 'population being uneducated'. Some candidates misinterpreted the question as chose to write about the earthquake causing buildings to fall and not the tsunami wave which meant they were not addressing the question. This demonstrates the importance of reading the question very carefully.

Question 1b

This question asked candidates to explain two reasons why economic losses from natural disasters have increased. This question was well done by most candidates with a range of reasons given. Most answers were based around earthquakes and tsunamis with expensive assets/infrastructure being damaged and having to be replaced. However, there were some that took a wider approach and looked at hydrometeorological hazards and then linked this to global warming and increased intensity which was also a valid approach.

Question 1c

There was variability in terms of quality of response for this question. Generally, candidates who were clear on tectonic hazards achieved well on this, however there were several who slipped into non-tectonic hazards where they may have felt more comfortable but there were no marks available for this. A thorough understanding of tectonics was not shown by a large majority at times and often the idea of response was not addressed whilst other ideas were developed instead such as writing about hazard impact. The most popular responses were focused on level of development/wealth and supported this with place specific detail - usually based around either buildings or preparedness/education. Japan was a common example used. Weaker responses fell into the mirroring trap, which limited their mark.

Question 2ai

For this question candidates were asked to explain how ice albedo feedback caused increased global temperatures. A significant majority scored two out of the three marks available, but there were some awarded zero where they just copied out the stages from the diagram given. Most candidates understood that albedo was to do with reflectivity and that ice reflects sunlight and then went on to say that with less ice the dark surfaces would absorb more sunlight. This approach was by far the most common. However, although rare, better

responses then addressed the feedback side of the question by identifying that this is a positive feedback loop which then leads to more and more warming. This development into a positive feedback loop was often the missing component that limited candidates in achieving full marks.

Question 2aii

Candidates were asked to define the climate change tipping point with most being able to articulate that the response was an 'irreversible change'. Therefore, many candidates scored 1 mark here. However, most did not notice that the mark tariff was two marks and so were not able to then extend this to give an example of what might cause this. Where candidates were able to extend Brazil and trees was the most common point.

Question 2b

This question required candidates to explain two ways that carbon emissions can be mitigated. This was another question that was done well by candidates with lots of full mark responses. Some candidates were quite generic in terms of mitigation strategies with lots focusing on improving/reducing cost of public transport rather than private car and then extending with fossil fuel use being reduced. The other most common response was about generating energy from wind/solar rather than fossil fuels which release carbon dioxide. Interesting responses linked this to a real locational place, e.g. London and its high emissions zone fee.

Question 2c

This question was poorly answered by candidates who struggled to consider why farmers may not be able to adapt change climate. Responses focused heavily on farmers in dryland areas of Africa. Stronger responses went down the rainfall route and then were able to extend this with specific examples of how farmers cannot afford water saving measures (storage/irrigation) or drought resistant crops. Responses that went down the temperature route struggled to develop their ideas with specific schemes. GM crops featured heavily for both temperature/rainfall but there was a lack of examples of what these crops may be. Stronger responses then went onto to look at farmers in other places who are able to cope better.

Question 3aii

This question asked candidates to describe the distribution of Nike's workforce using a resource. Some candidates struggled to interpret the resource and fell into the trap of seeing the 'red' shaded countries as having a high workforce. However, most were able to identify from the map key countries in Asia (India and China) and then the USA, Canada and Mexico. A popular response was to pick out either Africa or N America as having very few workers while SE Asia/China has a lot.

Question 3aiii

In this question candidates were asked to suggest one reason why TNCs such a Nike have outsourced their production. This was well answered by candidate with the majority scoring the full 2 marks by presenting a reason and development. The most common response was focused on a 'lower cost of labour' extended with 'higher profits'.

Question 3b

This question was not answered well by some candidates as they struggled to identify an IGO and say what they do, and then link this to globalisation. There were lots of 1-mark responses focusing on WTO promoting more trade, or the World Bank giving out loans. Other candidates mixed up the functions of the World Bank, IMF and WTO. Stronger responses however were able to extend the initial explanation to develop for a second mark.

Question 3c

Candidates showed a mixed performance with this question focusing problems created as a result of economic restructuring. Some candidates were thrown by the focus on developed countries and therefore focused on air pollution increasing in China due to outsourcing of industry. There was strong performance with candidates that obviously understood that economic restructuring in high income countries was deindustrialisation. A few candidates did not understand the term 'economic restructuring' so there was a high number of blank responses. By far the most common environmental problem was derelict land/pollution and the most popular social problem was unemployment. There was quite a bit of crime mentioned but stronger responses were able to link this to a specific place, e.g. Detroit/rust belt - this was a popular example for the top end candidates.

Question 4a ii

Candidates were asked to suggest two reasons why some countries (shown on the resource) received a high number of refugees seeking asylum. A significant number of candidates slipped into the trap of writing about reasons people had to flee their homes, rather than where they were going to. Candidates that were switched onto current events wrote about Germany's more open/welcoming approach to migrants, but few went on to develop this point by saying what this was/why/what it meant. 'Neighbouring countries' was the most popular response.

Question 4b

The question asked candidates to explain the challenges of youthful populations for developing countries. This was done well as most candidates could make the link between having a lot of young people and that causing an issue for schools. Health care was also a popular reason. There were some insightful comments about how a youthful population would increase the dependency ratio, possibly leading to pension ages having to be raised. General attempts at extension were around the fact that this would cause taxes to have to rise. The fact that this was an open question in which they could write a number of points, meant that it was relatively easy for candidates to get 3 or 4 marks.

Question 4c

Candidates were asked to explain how globalisation has increased migration both within and between countries. There was a wide range of responses with the majority of candidates having greater clarity of understanding on how globalisation led to migration between countries. London featured quite heavily as an example of between countries and China for within countries (RUM). Weaker answers tended to be descriptive about job opportunities in cities pulling people in from the countryside. Whereas the strongest responses recognised

London as a global hub and then linked this to job opportunities with some specific examples of tertiary/quaternary jobs or the mention of higher education institutions.

Question 5a

Candidates were required to suggest reasons why disaster risk varies between countries as 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 factors that affect risk 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.

Stronger answers realised the link this question has to the disaster risk equation and then used this to structure their response by through a country-by-country approach. The main focus was on tectonic hazards (particularly earthquakes) rather than other hydrometeorological hazards. Haiti and Japan were by far the most popular countries to address. A strong majority of candidates knew about the 2010 Haiti EQ and the 2011 Japanese tsunami and how these countries differed in their ability to respond. Morocco was much less well understood although some were able to link its location in N Africa to the possibility of drought. Very few realised that Morocco is in an earthquake risk area. Lots of answers showed good understanding of how risk could be mitigated against in countries such as Japan through cross bracing, disaster preparedness days etc linked to reduced vulnerability.

Question 5b

There was considerable variability in the level of responses that candidates wrote in response to this question. This was a tricky question for some lower ability candidates. They seem to have read it as 'what is the evidence for climate change' and failed to address the time aspect. Not that many dealt with both magnitude and pace and instead looked at 'is what we are experiencing today different from the past'. Milankovitch cycles were mentioned in the higher scoring answers, although these often-lacked detail in terms of what they are. There was quite a bit of stating of what they are, rather than how they lead to changes in the amount/intensity of the sunlight the Earth receives.

Candidates were less sure about past climate change and would have benefited from dealing with the ideas of 'pace'. The unprecedented development in CO₂ production today was not fully investigated by many whilst at the same time understanding past geological/ biological events and 'eras' was not considered. Whilst tree rings featured, often it was not fully developed and therefore magnitude was generally not considered. This is an area where candidates need to address the whole question, if they are hoping to access all the marks available for each question.

Question 6a

This question looked for candidates to apply their geographical understanding holistically to consider why the share of the world's GDP had shifted. This was a tricky question for candidates as at times their understanding of historical events seemed thin. The stronger answers took a timeline approach and within that gave reasons for why the countries/regions had different

scores. The candidates were better with the more recent data and could give reasons for the global shift and the rise of China, again the candidates did not give reasons why China had a massive dip in the 1920s which was due to political unrest and colonisation by the Western powers and the US of Shanghai the economic powerhouse but also the threat of Japan to the north. There were some superb answers that clearly understood the history of China (with the silk road) and also the USA being a 'young' nation in the 1800s. China's Open-Door policy in 1979 also featured frequently as did deindustrialisation in Europe.

Question 6b

Whilst many candidates performed well on this question, there was a significant number of candidates that attempted to write the question within mentioning specific megacities, and this approach was self-penalising. Most agreed fully that resource demands were difficult to manage. Mumbai and Dharavi were by far the most frequently used example. Resources focused around housing and healthcare/education services/water. Weaker responses went down the food route but struggled to actually explain this. Stronger responses took a Malthus/Boserup stance and there was some good understanding shown of what these theories were. There were few candidates that mentioned the other side of the argument and focused on how megacities like New York and Tokyo are being successful at managing resource demands.

