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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced 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 with 43% opting for Going Global.

Centres may wish to consider some general points going forward:

- Candidates responses showed that the following key areas of the specification should be reviewed and taught in greater detail:
 - The concept of 'forest die-back' and 'ocean carbon sinks' and their roles in climate change tipping points.
 - The key term of 'remittances' and the purpose of these for source countries.
 - Environmental challenges in megacities at the appropriate scale.
 - Trends over time in the number of deaths caused by natural disasters and reasons for the changes.
 - The role of national governments in reducing carbon emissions. Candidates should look to evaluate the effectiveness of these responses.
 - The role of Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) in promoting globalisation. Candidates should look to evaluate their effectiveness when compared with other factors.
- 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 define the term landslide. Whilst most candidates got the idea that this involved some type of movement involving soil or rock, they didn't consider that this would not happen if there was a slope/mountain or cliff to move down.

Question 1aiii

Candidates were asked to suggest one cause of the landslide shown in Figure 1. The majority of candidates were successfully able to apply their geographical knowledge to suggest a plausible reason why the landslide occurred. Whilst most candidates could confidently pick up the first mark, they struggled to explain why the factor they identified would lead to the landslide, for example, simply stating that an earthquake occurred without explaining why this could lead to landslides. The most popular answer was earthquakes and those that chose this often were able to easily gain the extension mark by identifying the 'shaking' of the ground would weaken it. Those that chose to mention the road were less successful in explaining how this would cause the landslide.

Question 1aiii

This question asked candidates to suggest one way in which the landslide could have impacted local people. Generally, this was answered well with most candidates, offering a basic explanation, and some form of development. A small minority offered impacts that were not feasibly shown in the image i.e. a hospital had been destroyed, which was not applicable to the question.

Question 1b

This question asked candidates to explain how population density and governance can increase the impacts of earthquakes. Candidates tended to be stronger understanding how population density could lead to increased impacts, but again, some struggled to gain the second development mark. A small number of candidates failed to gain marks for the governance part of the question as their responses focused on how governance could reduce the impacts of earthquakes, thus not answering the question.

Question 1c

There was variability in terms of quality of response for this question. The best responses were able to explain explicitly the challenges of reducing vulnerability, such as limited funding, weak governance or rapid population growth. The best responses achieved level 3 as they set the challenges they discussed in the context of named examples, this meant that they were able to hit the 'detailed and fully developed' aspect of the marking criteria for level 3. Weaker responses tended to be generic in terms of describing why areas/people might be vulnerable which was not answering the question.

Question 2aii

Candidates were asked to suggest two reasons for differences in CO₂ emissions per capita in North America and Africa. Frequently candidates recognised that differing economic development level and how this could lead to increased car ownership for example. A number of candidates attributed the differences to variations in population size. This was inaccurate as the data already took this into account as it was per capita, this therefore failed to gain any marks.

Question 2b

For this question candidates asked to explain how forest 'die back' and ocean carbon sinks could lead to climate change tipping points. The majority of candidates struggled to answer this question as it appeared they lacked the geographical knowledge to undertake the question successfully, this resulted in a high number of blank responses. Many candidates attributed forest 'die-back' to deforestation which is inaccurate and failed to gain any credit. Few candidates understood the role of ocean carbon sinks and had the misconception that oceans storing carbon was a negative outcome of climate change. Very few mentioned positive feedback or were able to develop their response with the idea of an ever-increasing problem and simply mentioned it would reach a tipping point (as stated in the question). In addition, a number of candidates incorrectly discussed ocean pollution which gained no credit.

Question 2c

This question asked candidates to explain why global warming may be viewed by some people as an opportunity, not a threat. This was answered well, with the majority of candidates discussing tourism opportunities, access to fossil fuels and changing shipping routes. However, the majority of the answers were largely generic with a lack of 'place' giving context or a lack of 'people' i.e. examples such as farmers who might benefit from longer growing seasons. The best responses achieved level 3 as they set the opportunities in the context of named examples, this meant that they were able to hit the 'detailed and fully developed' aspect of the marking criteria for level 3. The Arctic was by far the most popular place discussed with some excellent understanding of the opening up of the North-West Passage and which countries would benefit from this. The other most popular advantage for the Arctic was the exploration of oil and gas. Candidates that focused on this specific region did very well. Tourism was explained less well as was farming because candidates didn't have the same detail to draw on and so their responses were far more general. Weaker answers lacked place location and went for a generic 'some people' approach.

Question 3ai

This question asked candidates to define the term globalisation. This question was answered well by most candidates, showing good geographical understanding of the key term. Increased inter-dependence and interconnectedness were by far the two most common words mentioned. A small minority gave the definition of a 'shrinking world' and therefore did not answer the question.

Question 3aii

In this question candidates were asked suggest why the countries shown in Figure 3 had very high globalisation scores. A majority of candidate demonstrated strong application of geographical knowledge with them able to consider a range of factors such as geographical location, role of trade blocs and participation in IGOs. The best responses brought their own geographical knowledge of Swiss banking for example, although this was not necessary for full marks. Weaker responses went down the 'more developed' idea without addressing the closeness of linkages part of the question or why this would make them more connected. They failed to understand that just because a country is wealthy doesn't mean it is well connected.

Question 3b

This question focused on transport developments contributing to a 'shrinking world'. Candidates demonstrated good understanding of this key term and the majority were able to achieve at least two of the four marks available. Candidates as in other questions often struggled to develop their initial idea to explain how this contributed to a shrinking world, other than to just state that it did. Containerisation was explained much better than jet aircraft. Most candidates understood that containerisation has made trade more efficient/faster/cheaper and that ships can carry thousands of containers; while stronger responses were able to explain how this occurred (e.g. the benefits of intermodal containers for not only shipping but also rail and road transport) for achieve the second mark. Some candidates mentioned how containerisation had benefited TNCs and therefore linking countries economically through this. Candidates struggled to get beyond quick/easy/cheap point for jet aircraft. Stronger responses linked this to cultural globalisation through tourism, or economic globalisation through TNCs/business flights.

Question 3c

Candidates showed a mixed performance with this question with candidates struggling to consider a range of ideas as to how weak connections impacted people in developing countries. Very few considered the positives of being weakly connected to the global economy, which whilst not compulsory would have increased the range of ideas for candidates to discuss. Weaker responses focused on how weak connections to the global economy (without saying what these may be) would keep people poor. The best responses used supporting examples to

provide evidence of locations that were weakly connected and explained how this resulted in lack of trade, access to goods and weak economic development.

There was a couple of responses where the candidates had misread the question and discussed the global shift negatively affecting high income countries.

Question 4aii

Some candidates struggled with both this and the subsequent question as they didn't understand what the term remittance meant. It is key that centres take the time to teach and test these key concepts and vocabulary. Most candidates were able to identify that migrants had left in search of better paid jobs, higher wages etc and gained one mark. For the second mark the candidates needed to link this back to the demand for remittances, some simply stated money was being sent home which is the definition not the reason. For the second mark candidates needed to explain that this was sent to support families for example.

Question 4aiii

Similarly to question 4aiii, some candidates misunderstood the question and explained negatives to the source countries i.e. loss of working population, which gained no credit. Most could articulate that money was not being spent in the host country and therefore there was less taxes/economic growth.

Question 4b

This question asked candidates to explain two reasons why it is difficult to meet housing needs in developing countries. Overall, this was answered well by candidates who had a good grasp of the content for this area of the specification. Common ideas included the demand brought about by rapid population growth leading to the growth of informal settlements or lack of affordable housing (particularly in emerging megacities). Dharavi was used as a supporting example in several responses. Cost of housing/lack of affordable housing was often addressed for the second reason.

Question 4c

Whilst most candidates had a good foundation in subject knowledge for this question, they must ensure that they are writing at the appropriate scale. The best responses were able to explain the cause of the problem, the affect this had and then extend – e.g. sewage disposal cannot keep pace – so rivers get polluted – this can cause local people to become ill with diseases like typhoid or cholera. The majority of responses focused on CO₂ emissions and air pollution or deforestation to make space. A significant number of candidates attributed environmental challenges such as global warming to megacities which is not appropriate. As with all of the six-mark questions, those that used applied examples with a range of ideas were awarded level 3 marks.

Question 5a

Candidates were required to suggest reasons for the trends in average deaths caused by the natural disasters (droughts, earthquakes and floods) in Figure 5. The weaker responses struggled to interpret the resource, instead either describing what was happening to each natural disaster by year, thus failing to identify the changing trends. There was some confusion about drought and how this can lead to deaths (other than less rain/climate change). Very few candidates were able to suggest what caused the deaths by drought in the 1980s, or where these may have been. The best responses could apply their geographical knowledge to the resource and suggest plausible reasons for the changing trends. Many included applied examples for support (Philippines and Bangladesh featured widely) and made relevant connections between the resource and their own understanding.

Question 5b

There was considerable variability in the level of responses that candidates wrote in response to this question. Weaker candidates read the first part of the question and listed some ways that governments have tried to reduce emissions with a focus on renewable energy, recycling and public transport. This meant that they struggled to apply their knowledge specifically, instead describing a range of initiatives that governments were trying. In addition these responses struggled to go beyond the fact that national governments hadn't been successful because of the cost of making changes. The key feature of these responses was that they lacked any form of evaluation, so the candidates themselves struggled to conclude if national governments were or were not doing enough.

Mid-range answers showed some understanding of the role of global policies but there were clear misconceptions regarding Kyoto Protocol and very few could take the discussion beyond the fact that the USA did not sign, and China and India did not have to as they were developing. There was a missed opportunity to discuss how some EU countries met their Kyoto Targets. The Paris Agreement was also vaguely covered with limited understanding of what the temperature target is and also what nationally determined contributions are. There was limited understanding shown of more recent COP meetings.

At the top end, candidates explored the role that national governments were playing in reducing carbon emissions and evaluated throughout how successful these were. These candidates also had a clear grasp of the global policies such as Kyoto and the Paris Agreement and could articulate how successful these had been. Candidates should be encouraged to apply named examples and contexts to questions such as these in order to access top band marks.

An unhelpful approach taken by some was to counter argue with the natural causes of climate change, suggesting that the Milankovitch effect is responsible for our current global warming crisis.

Question 6a

Overall, candidates, were more successful on this question than the corresponding question 5a. The best responses applied their geographical knowledge and understanding can could suggest why the average age of the populations caused different costs and benefits. Level 3 candidates also tended to cover at least three regions i.e. youthful, middle and ageing populations, this meant their responses had both depth and breadth of understanding. There was also a good balance of social and economic costs/benefits discussed. This structure worked well and enabled a good analysis of the resource to be made. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive with little additional knowledge applied to the resource.

Question 6b

Candidates performed better on this question than the corresponding question 5b. This appeared to be due to candidates having stronger base knowledge on the key intergovernmental organisations (IGOs). Most popular IGOs discussed were the WTO, World Bank and IMF. The role of the WTO was understood the best out of the three with several candidates lumping the roles of the IMF and World Bank together (e.g. through loans). There was some confusion among weaker responses between the WTO and trade blocs, with some candidates thinking the WTO is a trade bloc. There was also the misconception that all trade blocs allow freedom of movement, thus leading to cultural globalisation through migration.

Level 3 responses were able to use their knowledge of these IGOs and then evaluate how successful they had been at promoting globalisation. Top level 3 into level 4 responses then considered other factors that had promoted globalisation and came to substantiated conclusions as to their successfulness. Most popular alternative drivers of globalisation were TNCs – there was some success here with stronger responses able to identify and explain both economic and cultural globalisation linked to named TNCs (e.g. McDonalds). National Governments also featured in stronger responses with the decision to allow SEZs, take on loans, join the WTO. N Korea was given as an example in some responses to show how national governments can choose to 'switch off' from globalisation.

Weaker candidates had some understanding of IGOs but lacked understanding of the role they had played in promoting globalisation, as a result the responses tended to be a partial interpretation that lacked coherence.

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