



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary 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. There was an increase in candidate using extra paper especially on the 3 and 4 mark questions. Candidates should be advised against this as these are low mark tariff questions and as such should be concise. There was also an increase in the number of candidates who chose to write a plan before tackling the 20-mark questions which was pleasing to see.

The paper was generally accessible to candidates across the ability range, with evidence of high-quality work particularly in question 6. 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 59% completed questions compared with 41% on Going Global (question 6).

Centres may wish to consider some general points going forward:

- 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.
- The 6-mark A01 focused questions give candidates the opportunity to showcase their knowledge and understanding within a particular area of the specification. The best responses will include examples to support to demonstrate "detailed and fully developed" geographical ideas.
- The command word 'compare' should be looked at by centres, with many candidates not understanding that this required them to have a comparative statement i.e. before and after rather than just description.

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:

- How El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycles can cause changes to flood and drought patterns (1.3.1.2)
- The controversial role of IGOs such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (1.4.2.3)
- Reasons why countries have difficulty in managing international migration (1.4.5.3)

Question 1aii

Candidates were asked to suggest two reasons why the population at risk from flooding varied between the countries shown in Figure 1. This question was marked as 2+2, meaning candidates were awarded one mark for a generic reason for the difference e.g. low-lying land, but to gain the second mark there needed to be an extension idea specifically linked to one of the countries from Figure 1.

Overwhelmingly the most common reasons given were 'low lying' or 'low income' and linked to rising sea levels/storms. Bangladesh was a popular example to use and there was some good understanding of the physical nature of the delta leading to increased risk and strong responses looked at river flooding through glacier melt/monsoon rains. It would have been nicer to see more specific examples of coastal defences given – 'hard engineering' was disappointingly vague.

Weaker candidates would benefit from being more specific with their answers and be aware that flooding often requires people to be living near to rivers or within floodplains/zones for their answers to be more effective.

Question 1b

Candidates were asked to explain why the impacts of tropical cyclones are often most severe in developing countries. Overall, this question was well answered with candidates demonstrating clarity over lack of preparedness and the role of warning systems. Weaker candidate responses tended to be narrow covering a basic idea such as lack of money but not linking this to an explanation as to why would this result in more severe impacts.

Stronger responses were able to use an example to support their points (either a named tropical storm or a specific city). Typhoon Haiyan featured a number of times as did the mega city of Dhaka. Both allowed the candidates to discuss a range of reasons of which the most popular were 'slums/squatter settlements' and 'lack of defences', cleverly linked to mangroves or coastal embankments. It would have been interesting to see more candidates discussing forecasting methods and effecting warning systems, but surprisingly this did not feature very much. Those that did were often very generic.

Question 1c

Candidates were asked to explain how El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycles could cause changes to flood and drought patterns. Overall, there was variability in candidate responses.

There was at times, some confusion over what the 'normal' climatic conditions are of South America and Australia, but most candidates did know this and were able to get into Level 2 by explaining how these change, supported with a little bit of why. Weaker candidates tended to mix up the flows, and thus the effects on South America and Australia, with most candidates concentrating on either floods or droughts. A few responses got bogged down with upwelling bringing fish to Peru and this weakening in an El Niño year. Drought was less well explained, with candidates struggling to go beyond the idea of 'less rainfall'.

Stronger responses addressed the impact of sea surface temperatures (SST) on evaporation rates and then linked to impact on condensation, precipitation and surface runoff. La Nina was also mentioned in a few which added to the understanding being shown.

Question 2ai

Candidates were asked to compare global temperatures before and after the year 1980. The majority of candidates struggled to interpret this question with many struggling with what the graph was showing and understanding the difference from the average. Hence, some of the figures were being used was muddled and incorrect. Many chose to describe the overall trend rather than before and after 1980 as stated in the question. The best responses focused on two key changes i.e. before 1980 temperatures were below the average, after 1980 they were above (1) and before and after showed fluctuating temperatures (1).

Question 2aii

Candidates were asked to explain one-way volcanic eruptions cause short-term climate change. This was generally well answered with many candidates being clear on the processes involved. It was pleasing to see most candidates addressing the global dimming (rather than falling into the trap of more CO₂ leading to warming). Stronger responses were able to give specific gases, but weaker candidates were still able to explain the impact of ash blocking out the sun. In a small number of cases, candidates incorrectly explained that volcanoes lead to global warming.

Question 2b

Candidates were asked to explain why some coastal cities are economically vulnerable to the impacts of rising sea levels. Several candidates spent too much time describing the physical vulnerabilities of coastal cities and therefore were not answering the question.

Most responses focused on flooding damaging buildings and the associated cost to replace. Many struggled to gain full marks on this as many responses simply ran out of ideas. Better responses did link to wealth of cities and discussed how this may lead to more investment in defences.

Question 2c

Candidates were asked to explain why some countries have higher per capita greenhouse gas emissions than others. Often candidates got themselves confused within the question stating that newly industrialising countries (NICs) had more emissions per capita than High Income Countries (HICs).

The weaker responses failed to mention any countries, resulting in a largely generic discussion as to why mainly carbon emissions can be high. Responses were heavily focused on China and its manufacturing, with the better responses focused on the role of China's 1978 Open Door Policy and the subsequent creation of SEZs for manufacturing. Fossil fuel use in China and India were also discussed, but this tended to be superficial rather than focusing on the specific use of coal and why this was the case. Europe's emissions were discussed in terms of

being reduced through renewables and carbon taxes – but this was quite a blanket approach, assuming all European countries are acting as one.

There appeared to be a fundamental misunderstanding about per capita and there were a few responses which fell into the trap of discussing actual population numbers and missed the per capita aspect of the question. It would be prudent that candidates read the whole question, and their answers should cover all parts if they wish to access the entire marks on offer.

Question 3a ii

Candidates were asked to suggest one reason for the difference in internet connectivity between Africa and Europe in 2023. This question was well answered by candidates with the majority able to secure the full marks on offer. Most responses focused on the development level of Europe and how this had enabled increased use of mobile technology for example. A small minority of candidates misinterpreted the question and instead gave reasons why Africa's internet connectivity had increased from 2013 to 2023, so did not answer the question.

Question 3a iii

Candidates were asked to explain one reason why internet connections are important to Transnational Corporations (TNCs). Most candidates went down the easy idea of accessibility and speed, this is fine however, a phone call could achieve this and therefore the idea of internet was lost. Stronger candidates discussed ideas associated with marketing, online meetings, tracking orders etc, this allowed for them to differentiate between telecommunications and internet.

Question 3b

Candidates were asked to explain two costs of globalisation argued by anti-globalisation groups. The majority of responses were able to achieve at least two of the four marks available. Popular choices focused on issues with low wages/poor working conditions and environmental issues caused by the increase in trade. Some candidates struggled to pick up the extension marks for each of the two costs and centres are advised to use practice questions structured like these so candidates build up exposure to this question type.

Question 3c

Candidates were asked to explain why Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), such as the WTO and the IMF, have a controversial role in globalisation. There was a clear divide between those candidates who understood the role of the WTO and IMF and those that know they have some influence in economics but are not sure exactly what. The IMF was understood better than the WTO, with the idea of loans and structural adjustment policies being addressed. The best responses also were aware of the requirement to often open up markets/allow TNC investment. Stronger responses were able to give specific examples of where this had occurred (Jamaica and Uganda were popular).

Weaker responses went down the route of 'African countries borrowed money, got into debt and this impacted negatively their population'. In these responses the WTO was confused by some as being the World Bank. This then made their response narrow as they struggled to

identify the difference between the IMF and World Bank, so their answer was repetitive. Stronger responses were able to link the WTO to low-income countries having to removed tariffs and quotas but not many were able to say why this may be problematic for the said country.

Overall, the question was not well answered with few candidates able to access level 3 marks. This stemmed from the issue that most candidates could indicate the roles of IGOs but did not focus on the question stem of controversy.

Question 4ai

Candidates were asked to describe the pattern of urbanisation in Africa. Most candidates interpreted the resource correctly to identify the north and south-west having higher urbanisation rates compared to the east or central area. Quite a few mentioned coastal countries having higher rates, then followed up with a mirrored idea of countries that were landlocked having low urbanisation levels.

A small minority did not describe the pattern but instead picked out some countries and gave their percentages, therefore gaining no credit

Question 4aii

Candidates were asked to suggest one reason why urbanisation is increasingly rapidly in some African countries. Candidates would be best to consider their answer by starting directly with a larger idea such as rural to urban migration, as this would allow them to extend it via explanation for the second part with a further extension this would make candidates access the marks. Some candidates began with the growth and tried to work backwards resulting in them not gaining full marks.

Question 4b

Candidates were asked to explain two reasons why it is difficult for countries to manage international migration. There was often a narrowness across answers here and whilst some centres had obviously developed clearer teaching in terms of ideas associated with good awardable marks. Most saw international migration as being illegal migration so discussed a lack of border controls/illegal smuggling of migrants in. The second reason was often based on social conflict within areas where large number of migrants have settled. Ultimately many struggled to pick up the two extension marks as they were unable to identify what difficulties these issues would result in. Unfortunately, the misconception about migrants 'taking all of the jobs', and the cost of asylum seekers to countries seem to remain with many. Candidates who went down the route of politics/conflicts tended to be more successfully.

Question 4c

Candidates were asked to suggest why projections of the size of the global population in the future are uncertain. Overall, the question was well answered with a range of factors covered by candidates.

However, not that many candidates understood or could explain the role of fertility rates. The possible introduction of a policy like China's One Child Policy cropped up in quite a few

responses as did pandemics and the war in the Ukraine. There was some excellent understanding shown of Malthus and Boserup which when used in support of other points being made led to some very strong responses. Weaker responses went down the 'we don't know how many babies will be born, or how long people will live for' offering very little in support or development. In addition, not that many responses included specific country examples.

Question 5a

Candidates were asked to suggest reasons why the impacts of global warming shown in figure 5 would be uneven across the world. The expectation here was that candidates could use the resource to push on and develop a clear answer i.e. use the resource as a springboard. Unfortunately, weaker candidates stuck to the resource and failed to use this to extend beyond what was stated in the resource. These responses struggled to address the 'uneven' part of the question and simply stated that those places without glaciers (which many took to be floating sea ice in the Arctic) would not be affected.

The spatial and temporal elements of climate change and its impacts seemed less well understood and therefore accessing top levels became difficult.

The best response included place explicit examples such as locations with coral reefs were mentioned (e.g. GBR) with an explanation of what coral bleaching is and then how it will affect tourism in these countries. Some also understood the importance of coral reefs as a natural sea defence against increased tropical storm risk and sea level rise. Health impacts and migration was very much focused on Sub-Saharan Africa and was quite generally approached.

Question 5b

Candidates were asked to consider if mega-disasters require a different scale and type of response compared to other natural disasters. Candidates struggled with this question.

There were a few that misinterpreted the question and discussed actual magnitude scales (Richter & VEI) and whether these needed to be redesigned to cope with mega disasters. Many of the weaker responses were descriptive, outlining responses to hazardous events with the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami cropping up frequently, along with 2010 Haiti Earthquake. Understanding of these events varied significantly, as did the accuracy in figures used to support e.g. number of deaths and injuries. Responses tended to be heavily focused on earthquakes with a few volcanoes mentioned.

Stronger responses (while not mentioning models by name) did structure their answer around Modifying the Event, Vulnerability and Loss. This was a sensible way to think about the different types of management that could be undertaken and led to more precise answers.

Question 6a

Candidates were asked to suggest possible reasons for the differences in the 2021 KOF Globalisation Index scores. On the whole this was well answered by candidates who demonstrated a good understanding of what the KOF Index is and some of the things it includes.

Stronger responses were able to give specific measurements and link this to the countries in the table. The most common theme was the economic element with trade (EU membership) and FDI through TNCs discussed with regards to Netherlands. The USA was linked well to political elements of the KOF Index – in particular its influence in the IMF and WTO. Most understood Chad was poorly connected due to poverty and being landlocked. The Mexico/USA link for manufacturing was well understood by some as was India with the increased number of call centres for UK companies.

A small minority did not know what the KOF index measured and instead thought it was a measurement of development. This meant these answers often failed to answer the question as the response focused on education and health levels for example.

Question 6b

Candidates were asked to consider whether the negative impacts of urbanisation are experienced by people in megacities in countries at all levels of economic development. This question allowed candidates to develop a wide-ranging answer however, weaker candidates often got stuck describing the problems in LICs without considering the problems of modern-day cities such as London and New York. The issues of Chinese cities were not well understood in comparison to the more haphazard nature of Indian and Bangladeshi cities. Candidates do seem fixated on this example and seem to forget or be unaware that Mumbai has over 2000 squatter settlements, and not all are living in Dharavi. Water pollution, health, air pollution and congestion were the main problems identified in low-income megacities. The cause of this was overwhelmingly rural-urban migration with very few candidates showing awareness that natural increase is the second part of urbanisation.

Stronger candidates understood the problems faced by HIC but could articulate that these were more successfully dealt with than those within LICs. Cost of housing and air pollution were the most frequent issues discussed (with some acknowledging that these occur in all megacities). New York and Tokyo were used well with explicit examples of how these cities had tackled housing and transport issues.

