



Examiners' Report

June 2023

International Advanced Level Geography WGE04 01

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Introduction

The questions

OPTION 1: Tectonic Activity and Hazards

'With effective governance, tectonic disasters are always avoidable.' Discuss

OPTION 2: Feeding the World's People

'Global food security is totally dependent upon international trade.' Discuss

OPTION 3: Cultural Diversity: People and Landscapes .

Evaluate the view that the degree of cultural diversity depends mainly on the attitudes and policies of governments.

OPTION 4: Human Health and Disease

'Economic development inevitably leads to a reduction in health risks.' Discuss

Overview

Overall, most students attempted in some way to use the report style format and used the guidance from the generic mark scheme well. However, there is still an attempt by some centres to write long essay style responses, that had no report style structure at all. This significantly reduces a candidates' ability to achieve the top marks in specific parts of the generic mark scheme, namely the Introduction and Quality of Written Communication. There was, however, evidence that the majority of candidates were exposed to the pre-release material and had prepared well, with some excellent research surrounding the topics.

It is important to stress time management in this report style exam. Many candidates spent far too long on their introductions, where there was a 'list' of definitions which were not incorporated into the deconstruction of the title, or where methodology sections were spread over pages of writing. The most successful scripts displayed an evaluation of the methods in an efficiently laid out table. As a result of too long spent on introductions and methodologies, a significant number of candidates ran out of time for their conclusions and many evaluations were absent from scripts.

The most obvious shift this year was the lack of referencing of sources from candidates' own independent research. This pattern is not a new one, however again it is reducing the candidate's ability to reach top levels within the generic mark scheme.

This report feedback will be organised by the sections of the generic mark scheme rather than by chosen option. This should help focus on the strengths and weaknesses of all candidates. Please note that the keywords in the questions that should provide the focus of the report for the candidates are highlighted in the first section of this report.

Question 1

Introduction (5 marks)

The most important aspect of the introduction is to deconstruct the question and identify the direction of travel for the report. The introduction is the candidate's opportunity to 'set the scene' and whilst it in some ways can be partly prepared based on the pre-release material steers, not all elements of the question can be foreseen and therefore prepared. Thus, the most obvious aspect of the weaker responses was the lack of any meaningful attempt at deconstruction of the titles. For example, the most successful candidates in Option 1 had a strong focus on the term 'avoidable' in relation to the governance of tectonic hazards. For Option 2, much the same was needed by way of deconstruction of the question; what exactly does 'totally dependent' consist of and to what extent is food security 'totally dependent' on trade. For Option 3, there should have been some discussion of 'to what degree' government and attitudes shape cultural diversity. As the command word is evaluate, there would need to be a discussion of other factors that might influence cultural diversity for any meaningful debate to take place. Finally, for Option 4, 'the extent of' economic development leading to a reduction in health risk was necessary.

If the deconstruction of the question did not take place this self-limited candidates the opportunity of gaining 4 and 5 marks in this section. It is vital that as part of their preparation, candidates are taken through past questions alongside the relevant pre-release steers to get them used to selecting the appropriate evidence from their case-studies to make a point that would form part of an argument or counterargument.

Question 2

Research (15 marks)

The 'research' section should offer candidates an opportunity to gather marks despite possible weaknesses in other sections of the report. There are marks available for detailed and relevant 'case-study' and theory-based evidence.

There was a plethora of candidates who used thoughtful and thorough case study examples to exemplify their debate, most notably in Health, where candidates compared countries with different levels of development, or in Hazards, where different levels of government intervention had consequences on the impact of disaster. Many candidates used impressive theories and models such as The Deggs and Parks Model in Hazards to support their research. The impressive research shown by some did not, however, carry through to analysis and conclusions. The selection of evidence is a very important part of this process, and some centres had almost identical case study materials in the same order, which in part, hinders the independent research of the most able candidates. It simply does not allow for breadth and depth of discussion and debate.

There were some excellent examples from Option 1 and Option 3 where candidates' research was approached in a thematic way. For example, in Option 1, the approach considered the role of physical and human factors such as the location, magnitude and nature of the event and then compared this to governance. The case studies were then incorporated within each of the sub-sections.

It is important to note that for the majority, and across all the options, there were well chosen case study examples which allowed plentiful discussion and debate.

Question 3

Analysis (20 marks)

The most successful analysis examples were those which structured their report in sub-sections and had a consistent link back to the focus of the question. There were some excellent examples in Option 4 where scale was an important element of the analysis. There was not only a discussion on the link between economic development and a reduction in health risks between countries but also disparities within countries such as urban versus rural. However, the analysis for many candidates was the least successful section of their report. It was not the case that research was too narrow, rather a failure to address the key focus of the question asked. For example, in Option 2 the most apparent oversight was a failure to explore how international trade influences food security. The weaker responses described a series of reasons leading to either food security or insecurity and could not relate this to international trade at all. The few stronger answers seen in Option 2 were able to discuss the role of trade using research based on fair trade, large corporations, Ukraine & Russia war and international trade in key commodities such as tea and coffee.

For Option 1, those who had independently researched well, investigating the different approaches to the governance of tectonic hazards disasters and then evaluating the impact, were able to come to conclusions on the 'avoidability' aspect of the question. Those that had not focused on that at all, could only describe the methods of governance without being able to evaluate their effectiveness. As is true for the other options, without the focus having been clearly established in the introduction the analysis lacked real depth and debate. For the other three topics the same issues of focus can be identified.

- Option 2 – addressing 'totally dependent' which is obviously contentious and hard to support.
- Option 3 – identifying what is meant by 'depends mainly on'
- Option 4 – Addressing the 'inevitability'

Question 4

Conclusion and evaluation (15)

This section is one of the largest scoring sections, and therefore it is important to sufficiently address conclusions throughout and in the finale of the report. In general, the conclusions across all options were disappointing, and, as stated before, in many cases this was due to candidates running out of time and thus not placing enough importance on this section. There was a consensus that conclusions are just a repetition of comments made earlier in the report and evaluations are those of just 'not doing enough' research. Candidates must draw together the evidence and reflect on whether the central contention of the essay has been supported or otherwise. The best conclusions not only did this but addressed 'the complexity of the question'. To aspire to the highest grades candidates must reflect upon the complexities of the question, the 'effectiveness' of Governance in Options 1 and 'significance' of international trade in making countries food secure in Option 2.

Section A

Quality of written communication (5)

There were a large number of well-presented and carefully organised reports. The most common errors were either a failure to write a report at all or a lack of any obvious sourcing or referencing throughout the script. There were, however, some excellent examples of carefully thought out methods to support the focus of the question. It was obvious that candidates had completed the research but throughout some reports it wasn't clear where their research had come from. A lack of, or indeed a total absence of referencing, meant a majority of candidates could only achieve level 2 for this section.

Paper Summary

On the whole, the majority of entries for this paper used a well-structured report and were well prepared in terms of the research. However, there are still a significant number of reports that are long essay based and therefore hamper the accessibility of reaching the top marks for some parts of the mark scheme. The research needs to be sourced well and referenced consistently throughout the report.

Grade boundaries

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<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

