



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
in Geography (WGE04)
Paper 01: Researching Geography

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The Questions

OPTION 1: Tectonic Activity and Hazards

Evaluate the view that the **unpredictability of tsunamis** makes them **the most disastrous** of tectonic hazards.

OPTION 2: Feeding the World's People

Climate and the physical environment are the **most important** causes of food supply inequalities.' Discuss.

OPTION 3: Cultural Diversity: People and Landscapes.

Evaluate the view that **traditional cultural landscapes need the protection** of both **governments and global organisations** to survive.

OPTION 4: Human Health and Disease

'Globally, **air pollution** is now a **more serious health risk** than **water pollution**.' Discuss

Overview

As in previous years, Option 1 was the most popular question but there is evidence that Option 3 is becoming a more popular choice for candidates. In this year's small January entry there was a polarised candidate response across all questions. Reports were either very well written with a clear understanding of the demands of the generic mark scheme, or responses which were essay style and lacking any structure. The lack of structure to this report style examination results in candidates who are unable to achieve anything more than 1 or 2 marks in either the 'Introduction' or the 'Quality of Written Communication' sections of the mark scheme.

In 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 emboldened in the first section of this report.

Introduction (5 marks)

Some reports were very thoughtful and well-constructed in their focus, however, many introductions simply reiterated the question without a clear focus on the key contention of the question. For example, in Question 1, they did not address the 'most disastrous' element, or in Question 4 the 'most serious'. If the deconstruction of the question did not take place, it self-limited candidates and reduced the opportunity of gaining 4 and 5 marks. It is imperative that candidates use past exam papers and the pre-release steers to practice using their research in addressing the question fully. Some candidates used the introduction to simply create a glossary for keywords that somewhat related to the question. The use of keywords in this section is important but they must be incorporated into the main framework of the introduction and have a very clear link to the rest of the report.

A useful test when preparing candidates should be whether or not the question asked is obvious after reading their introduction. Sadly, in this January cohort, this was not always the case.

The majority of candidates scored 2/3 marks in this section.

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 were a range of candidates who used thoughtful and thorough case study examples to exemplify their debate, most notably, in Option 3, where candidates used a variety of traditional cultural landscapes to exemplify how they are protected at different levels and by different players. The

reports that displayed this range were impressive. Many candidates used appropriate theories and models such as The Deggs and Parks Model in Hazards Question 1 to support their research. However, the exemplary research of models and theories was always used to support the analysis and conclusions sections of the report. Many candidates that outlined the models in the introduction section of the report did not refer to them again. It is also important to note that candidates, especially in Option 4, did not use a selection and/or range of case study evidence. There were some reports from centres which were almost identical in the case studies chosen and more worryingly, in their order of argument. It is important for candidates to complete independent research, to display breadth and depth, allowing a more thoughtful discussion and debate.

Those candidates that did score highly in their reports for Question 4 were often characterised by good research and impressive place detail, but the depth was usually more notable than the range. Some built rather too much of an edifice on one example of air pollution versus one example of water pollution, this did not allow for appropriate and thoughtful analysis.

Overall, this part of the generic mark scheme scored well.

Analysis (20 marks)

The most successful analysis examples were those which structured their report in clear sub sections and had a consistent link back to the focus of the question. However, in the majority of reports the analysis was the least successful section because of a failure to address to key contention of the question directly. For example, in Question 1 it was important to address the words ‘most disastrous’ and offer some suggestion of how other hazards might be less or even more disastrous. The link to a discussion on ‘unpredictability’ was key here too. That should not have been too challenging given the pre-release steers. For Question 2, the most apparent oversight was a failure to explore how other factors could influence food insecurity, such as global food markets or rising income inequalities. Many reports displayed a tunnel vision approach, with a sole focus on climate and physical environmental factors affecting food inequalities rather than a range of ‘other’ potential factors. The stronger reports addressed a temporal focus, discussing how climate change now and in the future could severely impact upon food inequalities.

For Question 4, those who had independently researched well, investigating a range of places for both air and water pollution could have sensible discussion as to whether air pollution was indeed a **more serious** health risk than water pollution, using the ‘impact’ as a steer. Those candidates who achieved well in this answer discussed how, to a certain extent, it is impossible to control air pollution globally and how in many cases water pollution was more successfully ‘managed’.

As is true for the other options and repetitive of previous years, 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 1 - addressing ‘most disastrous’
- Option 2 - addressing the ‘most important’
- Option 3 - identifying what is meant by ‘needs the protection’ and ‘survive’

Conclusion and evaluation (15)

In general, the conclusions across all options were disappointing. As in previous years, it was obvious that many candidates ran out of time. A large majority of reports did not place enough emphasis on the importance of this section given the 15-mark allocation. Conclusions were sometimes drawn in ‘sub conclusions’ at the end of each section and tended to be a reiteration of the points made.

The most successful candidates recognised and placed emphasis on the final bullet point of the mark scheme ‘recognising the complexity of the question’. For example, in Question 3 it is perfectly possible, that many cultural landscapes could face an existential crisis not of their own

making. The threat of Arctic climate change for traditional cultures in North America, Scandinavia and Russia are challenges that are beyond the remit of many governments and although some mitigation policies may offer some protection, no strategy is going to be perfect. They will all have costs and benefits to their protection success. This will vary from place to place and time to time. Adding complexities of this type is not just useful, but ultimately essential for candidates who aspire for the highest grades.

Evaluations were disappointing and it was not clear candidates knew how to address this part of the generic mark scheme. A small number of reports addressed the limitations of some sources used but this was not successful and hindered marks available to the candidates for this section of the generic mark scheme.

Quality of written communication (5)

There were a small number of well-presented and carefully organised reports. It was obvious the centres who had prepared their students well for the 'report' style exam. As in previous series, 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. A lack of, or indeed a total absence of referencing meant the majority of candidates were in level 2 for this section.

Summary

On the whole there are three areas of improvement across this cohort;

- A clear focus on the key contention of the question
- Meeting the demands of the report-based examination. It is hoped that more preparation through practice will improve this.
- A focus on referencing and sourcing of candidates own independent research.

