



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

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

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OPTION 1: Tectonic Activity and Hazards

Evaluate the view that volcanic hazards are always more successfully managed than earthquake hazards.

OPTION 2: Feeding the World's People

'Some strategies to increase food supply in developing and emerging countries have been more successful than others.' To what extent do you agree?

OPTION 3: Cultural Diversity: People and Landscapes

'Tourism usually has positive impacts on cultures and cultural diversity.' To what extent do you agree?

OPTION 4: Human Health and Disease

Evaluate the view that lack of access to healthcare is the most important threat to human health.

Overview

The extensive range of candidate responses displayed two dominant themes. Firstly, the importance of presenting a report rather than an essay, as both the generic and specific mark schemes make clear. There were many responses, across all options, which were without subheadings, lacking any structure, and thus unable to achieve more than 1 or 2 marks in either the 'introduction' or the 'quality of written communication' sections of the mark scheme. There is then the difficulty of teasing apart their 'research' and 'analysis' sections. Candidates and centres should be reminded that is a report-based examination and using the generic mark scheme is essential.

As in previous years, Option 1 was the most researched topic with over 65% of candidates choosing this question. However, there is, year on year a growing popularity for Option 3 and Option 4.

This report feedback will be organised by the sections of the generic mark scheme. This will help focus on the strengths and weaknesses of all candidates, through all the options. Please note that the keywords highlighted in the questions identify the main focus of the question.

Introduction (5 marks)

The most thoughtful and well-constructed introductions deconstructed the key elements of the question, while also making it clear where the report was heading in its debate. If the introduction did not score well, it hindered even the most able candidates in the analysis section.

For this series, there were some sound introductions to Option 1. Those candidates scoring the highest marks addressed the central contention and fully deconstructed the question. A good starting point would have been to differentiate between the reasons for different types of hazard management and the measurement of success. This would then allow candidates to further explore the role of 'other' factors, such as a country's level of development.

There were some good introductions in Option 2. Many were well structured providing a clear framework for their reports with a strong command of the language. The best answers were conceptual, using the Four Pillars Model to address the measurement of 'success'.

Many candidates in Option 3 showed little differentiation between culture and cultural diversity in definitions which hindered their 'impacts' discussion later on. The most popular framework used was by case study, but many candidates failed to deconstruct the question for a broader discussion on the topic.

Research (15 marks)

The pre-release steers set clear parameters for the range of research required for each of the options. Those candidates who used thoughtful and thorough case study examples to exemplify their debate were successful in this section of the report. Many candidates used appropriate theories and models to support their report, such as The Kuznets Curve in Option 4 and The Parks Model in Option 1. However, the exemplary research of models and theories was not always used to support the analysis and conclusions.

The ability to deploy well-researched case-study material that focuses entirely on the question is key. The best answers offered a good balance of case-study evidence and fitted their evidence effectively to the debate. For example, in Option 1, an excellent choice of case study was when candidates compared the success of the different management strategies for the earthquake in Tohoku, Japan to the Icelandic volcanic eruption management. Both are examples of HIC's but have varying levels of success when measuring the social, economic and environmental impacts. Option 3 provided some excellent research on The Maasai tribe and the impact mass tourism may have on culture and cultural diversity in Kenya.

Analysis (20 marks)

The analysis section of the report is one of the most important and holds the largest proportion of marks. The highest-scoring reports were those that were set out in clear sub-sections and consistent focus on the question.

Candidates approached Option 1 analysis in many different ways, some by theory, some by hazard, and some by case studies. Many candidates analysed the management of earthquakes and volcanoes separately and then brought them together at the end. This worked well in some cases, but others ended up with an evaluation of impacts for earthquakes and volcanoes separately. Some weaker answers listed the impacts of the case studies without bringing it back to the focus on management, resulting in poor performance. Surprisingly this series, some candidates used extremely outdated case studies, Vesuvius in 79AD to name just one example. This did not help aid the discussion on hazard management.

The most common route for Option 2 was by way of a case study, evaluating the success, or not, of strategies to increase food supply. Most candidates successfully identified the role of different players in managing food supplies, but the better candidates were more thoughtful with judgements on the outcomes. There were some good theories used, such as Malthus and Boserup which were linked to methods of improving yields. The range of players discussed was mainly those of governments and NGO's.

For Option 3, several candidates missed the focus of culture and cultural diversity in this question, simply explaining the social, environmental, and economic impact of tourism. If the key ideas of the question are missed it is self-limiting. Stronger candidates went on to analyse both the positives and negatives of tourism for culture and cultural diversity on a range of scales.

Stronger reports in Option 4 used the Four Pillars model which helped to support the focus. This option was most effective when comparing HICs to LICs and identifying the difficulties in access to healthcare, even in HICs such as the USA. Some candidates used the 'disease' framework Covid, Ebola, HIV, obesity issues, Malaria, Polio, TB, but opportunities to develop arguments and look at how access to healthcare depends upon different players at different scales needed work. These discussions were not as well developed as the details within the case studies. There needs to be careful consideration as to how candidates should adapt learned material to the demands of the question. It will never be a 'write all you know about...' type of question.

Conclusion and evaluation (15)

As in previous years, the weakest part of the report was the conclusion section, with only the most able candidates pulling all the detail in the analysis together and making judgements on the 'whole story'.

Some conclusions were drawn at the end of each section, yet these tended to be a reiteration of the points made, a summary style rather than any careful consideration of the question. Stronger candidates had sub-conclusions in each section which related well to the question set and remained focused on the contention, by using the keywords. However, not all conclusions 'followed' logically from the analytical material offered.

Quality of written communication (5)

Many candidates used the prerelease effectively scoring highly on the 'research' section, yet if that research is not adequately sourced then the QOWC section cannot reach top levels.

The most competent evaluation attempts were those presented in a methods table, and the sources chosen fully supported the focus of the question. However, some candidates spent far too long on this, so they ran out of time for sections with higher credit, for example, their conclusion and evaluation. In many cases, there were excellent chosen sources but the lack of consistent referencing throughout reports resulted in many candidates achieving only 2 or 3 marks for this section.

Summary

Many very competent reports only needed a little more focus on the contention of the question (highlighted in the first section of this report) to improve their mark significantly. However, at the other end of the mark range, there were several very brief 'essays' that failed to conform to the demands of the generic markscheme. Centres need to practice interpreting the pre-release material and practising past exam papers. Time management, which is an important element of this paper needs to be addressed and the research must be well sourced and consistent throughout.

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