



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
in Geography (WEG04) Paper 01
Researching Geography

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OPTION 1: Tectonic Activity and Hazards

Prediction and forecasting are the **most effective** ways of reducing the vulnerability of communities to tectonic hazards. Discuss.

OPTION 2: Feeding the World's People

Evaluate the view that increasing both **trade and commercial farming** is the **most important** way food security in countries can be improved.

OPTION 3: Cultural Diversity: People and Landscapes.

The increasing **growth of connections** between countries **always** results in greater cultural diversity. Discuss.

OPTION 4: Human Health and Disease

Evaluate the view that **global programmes** are the **most effective** way to manage health risks.

Overview

This year saw a slight shift in candidates' choices compared to previous years. As usual, Option 1 remained slightly more popular, but its numbers were almost equal to those for Option 4, continuing a trend observed in recent years.

This year's cohort was the largest yet; however, numbers remain relatively small compared to the June entry.

Encouragingly, a significant number of candidates performed well across all sections of the report, with some achieving particularly impressive scores. Unlike previous years, only a few candidates wrote in an essay format without a clear report structure.

This report feedback is structured according to the sections of the generic mark scheme rather than by the chosen option. This approach aims to more effectively highlight the strengths and weaknesses of all candidates. Additionally, the keywords in the questions, which should guide candidates' focus, are emphasised in the first section of this report.

Introduction (5 marks)

Deconstructing the question is crucial to ensuring the report remains focused on its key arguments. Candidates must break down the question thoroughly. To achieve full marks in this area, they should pay close attention to specific keywords, such as 'most effective' in Question 1 or 'always' and 'most important' in Questions 2 and 3.

Candidates must make use of past exam papers and pre-release materials to practice applying their research effectively in answering the question. Some candidates used the introduction merely to compile a glossary of keywords loosely related to the question. As emphasised in last year's feedback, incorporating keywords is important, but they must be seamlessly integrated into the introduction's structure, ensuring a clear and logical connection to the rest of the report.

Research (15 marks)

The 'Research' section provides candidates with a valuable opportunity to earn marks, even if there are weaknesses in other parts of the report. Marks are awarded for incorporating detailed and relevant case studies, as well as theory-based evidence.

Responses to Question 4 demonstrated that candidates had conducted extensive research on various aspects of health risk management. It was also fantastic to see that some centres had undertaken primary research on global programmes. However, it is crucial that candidates directly relate their findings to the question. Many spent too much time describing their research process rather than

focusing on answering the question and analysing their results. A variety of health risks were explored, with a primary focus on Polio, COVID-19, and Malaria. It was surprising that responses to Option 4 lacked the use of models and theories to support the analysis of the question.

Many candidates used thoughtful and thorough case study examples to support their arguments. This was particularly evident in Option 1, where candidates analysed various earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis to assess the effectiveness of prediction and forecasting in reducing vulnerability. Reports that demonstrated this breadth were especially impressive.

Additionally, many candidates incorporated appropriate theories and models, such as the Park's Model in Question 1, to strengthen their research. However, while research into models and theories was often exemplary, it was not always effectively integrated into the analysis and conclusions sections. In some cases, models outlined in the introduction were not referenced again throughout the report.

A key area for improvement is the selection and diversity of case study evidence, particularly in Option 2. Some reports from the same centres were almost identical in their case studies and, more concerning, in the structure of their arguments. Independent research is essential for candidates to demonstrate both breadth and depth, allowing for a more nuanced and thoughtful discussion.

As in previous years, this section of the generic mark scheme was generally well executed and scored highly.

Analysis (20 marks)

This section of the report showed the most improvement in this series. The strongest analysis examples were well-structured, with clear subsections and a consistent link to the question's focus. However, in some reports, the analysis failed to directly address the key contention of the question.

There were excellent examples in Option 4 where candidates highlighted the 'triple burden' and examined the effectiveness or challenges global programs face in managing it. Many candidates in this option also effectively linked development to the challenges countries face when implementing global strategies, which was accepted as a valid evaluative response.

Surprisingly, in Option 1, many candidates focused on explaining the physical processes behind hazard formation without clearly linking them to prediction, forecasting, and vulnerability. A significant amount of time was spent drawing diagrams, but this did not contribute meaningfully to the analysis of the question.

Question 3 was largely case study-based, with a focus on Australia, Iceland, and Japan, which suited the nature of the question. Some candidates effectively analysed the term 'connected', exploring how countries and places are linked socially, economically, and politically, and how these connections influence cultural diversity, either increasing or limiting it.

As with previous years and across all options, when the focus was not clearly established in the introduction, the analysis lacked depth and meaningful debate. The same issues of focus were identified across all four topics:

- **Option 1** - Ensuring a clear evaluation of what is 'most effective'.
- **Option 2** - Directly addressing what is 'most important'.
- **Option 3** - Defining and analysing the meaning of 'always'.
- **Option 4** - Evaluating the 'most effective' approaches.

A well-structured introduction that establishes these key focus areas is essential for a strong and analytical response.

Conclusion and evaluation (15)

Overall, the conclusions across all options were disappointing. In previous years, this was often due to time constraints, but that was not the case in this series. A large majority of reports did not place enough emphasis on the importance of this section, despite its 15-mark allocation. In many cases, conclusions were presented as 'sub-conclusions' at the end of each section and often simply reiterated previous points rather than synthesising arguments or providing a clear evaluative judgment.

Evaluations were generally disappointing, and it was unclear whether candidates fully understood how to approach this part of the generic mark scheme. Only a small number of reports attempted to address the limitations of sources used, but these efforts were often ineffective, limiting the marks available in this section. Stronger evaluations should critically assess the reliability and relevance of sources while integrating them effectively into the overall analysis.

Quality of written communication (5)

The most significant change in this series was the increased focus on report-style writing rather than an essay-based approach, which was pleasing to see. Many reports were well-presented and carefully structured, demonstrating that several centres had effectively prepared their students for the 'report' style exam.

However, there was still a noticeable lack of sourcing and referencing throughout many scripts. In some cases, referencing was completely absent, which meant the majority of candidates remained in Level 2 for this section. To achieve higher marks, candidates must improve their use of references, ensuring sources are clearly cited and integrated effectively into their analysis.

Summary

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

- Greater emphasis on referencing and sourcing candidates' independent research to enhance credibility and achieve higher marks.
- Meeting the specific requirements of a report-based examination. Increased preparation and practice should help improve this.
- A clear and direct focus on the key contention of the question in the introduction.

