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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Geography (4GE1)
Paper 1 Physical Geography

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General Comments

This was the second November exam series for this qualification and the first with a modular exam option. There remained a small entry for this exam series slightly increased on the 1123 series.

This paper consists of two sections from which candidates answer two 25 mark questions from Section A and one 20 mark question from Section B, the total marks on the paper are 70.

The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short, open response, calculations and extended response questions. The exam command words which are used in the paper are defined in the specification. Each of the questions is mapped to one or more of the Assessment Objectives (AOs).

In section A River environments, Coastal environments and Hazardous environments are covered. Candidates are required to select two out of three questions.

In section B candidates choose one out of three fieldwork related questions relating to river environments, coastal environments and hazardous environments.

This brief report comments on the overall quality of responses and highlights common errors observed across this paper. Whilst, the paper is considered to be accessible it was apparent that candidates found the level of demand challenging.

Common errors seen in candidate responses on this paper were:

- Candidates struggled to provide accurate definitions for key geographical terms such as mass movement and discharge.
- Candidates were unable to explain the role wind shear has in the formation of tropical cyclones.
- Most candidates were unable to calculate percentage increase.
- The 8-mark responses, in Section A, demonstrated little evidence of meeting the 'analyse' command with the majority of candidates simply describing what was shown in the resource. Candidates were often unable to demonstrate a depth or breadth of geographical knowledge and understanding.

Recommendations for centres:

- In questions where candidates are asked to develop a single reason, it is important to ensure that the appropriate number of links in the explanatory chain are developed. The number of marks should be used as a guide. These questions usually have the command word, 'suggest' or 'explain', but may differ in depth depending on the expectation of the question. For example, a 3-mark, 'explain one reason why...' question requires greater depth of knowledge than a 4-mark, 'explain two reasons for...' question which requires more breadth of knowledge.
- It would be helpful for candidates to clearly distinguish answers focused on river regimes (and include the seasonality element in changes in discharge) from answers purely focused on hydrographs or flooding causing discharge changes.
- Ensure candidates can correctly distinguish between distribution characteristics of ecosystems (those that are required for ecosystems to be located where they are on planet Earth) and ecosystem characteristics (the adaptations/features unique to the biome).
- Ensure candidates are aware of all the difference numeracy/statistical skills listed on the specification.
- Ensure candidates apply their geographical knowledge and understanding to the context of the question to avoid demonstrating lots of AO2 but limited AO3 for 8-mark questions.
- Candidates who just lift text directly from a resource will not gain credit on 8-mark questions.
- Centres need to ensure candidates are familiar with the different demands of the command words 'analyse' and 'evaluate' in this specification.

Question Feedback

1a This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the feature of a drainage basin.

1bi This MCQ was slightly more challenging for candidates with some unable to define the geographical term relief.

1bii The majority of candidates were able to give an accurate definition of the term discharge but some candidates confused this term with the definition for drainage basin and some gave a generic definition for discharging the contents of something e.g. the discharging of sewage/pollution rather than the specific river definition required.

1c Most candidates accessed both marks for this question where this was not the case it was most often because candidates simply stated precipitation rather than quantifying whether it was high or low precipitation and linking this to the impact on the river regime. It would be good to see more candidates link the seasonality element to river regime questions in the future.

1d The resource for this question showed a hydrological cycle. Most candidates were able to correctly identify a store shown in the resource. A very small number of candidates stated aquifer and this was not credited as there was not evidence of bedrock in the diagram and therefore this was not evidence gained from the resource.

1e This question required candidates to engage with a resource showing a climate graph for the Tigris basin. Most candidates gained marks on this question with a significant proportion gaining all 4 marks available. Where candidates did not gain 4 marks they often did not include clear evidence from the resource for a pattern shown limited their AO3 credit. Some candidates stated temperature was high (all year) and was not credited as the pattern is incorrect as several months had average temperatures close to 0°C, therefore temperature patterns had to be supported by the months in which the temperature was high.

1f This question required candidates to explain two ways to manage water supply. This question was answered well by most candidates with dams, reservoirs and transfers being the most common responses. Some candidates were not awarded full marks as they stated the name of a strategy and then wrote a definition of the strategy rather than providing an explanation for how the strategy works to manage water supply. Some candidates also wrote responses which solely focused on domestic/individual actions to reduce water use which was not relevant to the question as the focus was on larger scale supply management.

1g This question required candidates to explain one human cause of flooding. Candidates demonstrated strong knowledge of human causes of flooding. With a significant proportion achieving 3 marks.

1h This 8-mark question provided a resource showing information about the characteristics of an upland river landscape. Candidates knowledge of river processes and landform formation is strong however, the challenge with these questions is applying the AO2 knowledge to the context shown in the resource. A number of candidates simply wrote description of how waterfalls and interlocking spurs were formed which gained some credit but limited their demonstration of analysis needed for higher level 2/3 marks. Other candidates often just described how the river profile changes from source to mouth and again this was not the focus of the question. Candidates need to be reminded they need to apply their knowledge to the context of the question and not simply regurgitate pre-learnt knowledge as no credit is awarded for AO2 in these questions.

2a The majority of candidates were able to identify the correct landform created by deposition, making this MCQ an accessible introduction to the coastal environments question.

2bi This MCQ question required candidates to identify the best definition of longshore drift which candidates found accessible with the cast majority achieving the mark.

2bii This question required candidates to provide an accurate definition of mass movement. Candidates found this question challenging many gave a very generic definition 'moving sediment along the coast', some simply stated an example of mass movement rather than defining the term. Candidates need to learn accurate definitions for key geographical terms.

2c This question required candidates to explain two processes of weathering. This question was answered well by most candidates. A minority of candidates explained erosional processes rather than weathering processes and were awarded zero marks. Some candidates named a correct type of weathering and then defined the term rather than explaining how it broke down rock which prevented them to achieving the development mark.

2d Candidates were presented with a diagram of a coral reef food chain and were required to identify the abiotic factor shown. This was accessible for the majority of candidates with most stating sunlight/sun. A very small proportion of candidates identified a biotic factor shown in the resource.

2e This question required candidates to explain one characteristic of a mangrove ecosystem. The most common responses were linked to the root systems and tolerance of salinity. A few candidates muddled the focus of the question stating distribution factors rather than ecosystem characteristics. It would support candidates to be clear on the difference between factors which affect the distribution of different ecosystems and what constitute characteristics of an ecosystem.

2f This question required candidates to use a resource showing relative sea level change along the USA coastline (1960-2021). Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the impacts of sea level change and made specific links to locations shown on the resource. A few candidates stated that Hawaii was drowned/inundated which was not accurate as the resource did not show future predictions but current changes up until 2021 and therefore Hawaii has not already been drowned.

2g Candidates found this question more challenging, a proportion gave very generic comments about buildings needing to be waterproof which were not credited as a specific flood prevention adaptation. A proportion of candidates explained the role of sea defences e.g. sea walls which again was not a creditable building design strategy. Another misconception was explaining land-use zoning (by not building close to the coast to prevent buildings being flooded). Candidates need to be more aware of specific building strategies used to reduce coastal flooding of buildings. Where this was done best was the explanation of building being built on stilts.

2h This 8-mark question provided a resource showing information about a coastline which is being managed using soft engineering. Candidates needed to use this information to explain a range of conflicts which might occur as a result of this management. It was pleasing to see a significant proportion of candidates discuss specific key users of coastlines (e.g. tourists, business owners, government, residents) rather than providing generic comments about 'some users...'. This was a significant improvement on previous questions where conflict has been the focus. The analysis element was often absent from the responses limiting candidates to level 2. There were some candidates who simply stated the pros and cons of the coastal management which gained some credit but limited the number of marks they could be awarded as the focus was on conflict between users rather than pros and cons of the strategy/strategies.

3ai This was an accessible start to the hazardous environments question with the majority of candidates being able to identify the feature of a volcano in this MCQ.

3aii This MCQ was also accessible as most candidates could correctly identify a hazard created by a volcanic eruption.

3aiii The vast majority of candidates would be able to give a developed reason for why people choose to live near volcanoes.

3b Candidates demonstrated secure understanding of the term earthquake risk assessment giving a correct definition of the term.

3c Candidates were shown a photograph of a volcano and were required to explain two physical factors which make the region vulnerable. It was pleasing to see an increased proportion of candidates focusing on physical factors. A few candidates explained purely human factors (most often linked to population density/age) and were not awarded credit.

3d A map showing the distribution of tropical cyclones was shown in a resource and candidates were required to state the range of latitudes where tropical cyclones occur. The vast majority of candidates gained this mark by giving the correct latitude range. A small number of candidates simply said near the equator which was not what was shown in the figure and not awarded credit.

3e This question required candidates to explain one impact cyclones can have on people and was accessed well by candidates. Some candidates were limited to two marks as they gave one developed impact and a separate image rather than one well developed explanation. It would be helpful for candidates to practice their chains of reasoning to access all three marks in these types of questions.

3f This question asked candidates to explain why ocean temperature and wind shear are important in the formation of tropical cyclones. Candidates demonstrated secure understanding of the role ocean temperature has on the formation of tropical cyclones accessing both marks. However, very few candidates could explain the role wind shear plays in the formation of tropical cyclones confusing this with Coriolis force.

3g This 8-mark question provided a resource showing information about the causes of death from two different Japanese earthquakes and an extract of preparation leaflet sent to households. Its pleasing to see candidates still improving in using evidence from the resource and this was consistent. Candidates demonstrated secure understanding by attempting to explain the differences in cause of death. A few candidates just described what was shown in the resource. There was very minimal evidence of candidates attempting to meet the command word 'analyse' which meant few candidates moved into to level 3.

4/5/6a This question was focused on unfamiliar fieldwork where candidates were asked to state one piece of equipment the students could have used in their enquiry. A large proportion of candidates were able to access this mark.

4/5/6b The focus for this question was explaining one advantage and one disadvantage of using annotated field sketches. There were good response to this question, however, the disadvantage part of the question was more successfully answered than the advantage part of the question. It would also be helpful to candidates to ensure they are not writing mirrors for their advantage and disadvantage for example a number of candidates write they are easy to do as their advantage and they are difficult to draw as their disadvantage which is the same point inversed which could not be double credited.

4/5/6c Very few candidates were awarded any marks for this calculate question, they were required to calculate the percentage increase.

4/5/6di This question required candidates to add the missing data plot to the graph and connect this to complete the line graph. Most candidates achieved two marks and it was pleasing to see far fewer candidates miss out the graph question this series.

4/5/6dii This required candidates to identify the trend on the graph and suggest why it is likely to have occurred. Almost all candidates were awarded the mark for correctly identifying the trend on the graph, however, far fewer were awarded the second mark for suggesting why this pattern occurs.

4/5/6diii This MCQ was accessible with the majority of candidates achieving the mark by correctly identifying the definition of the term anomaly.

4/5/6e This 8-mark question focused on candidates familiar fieldwork and required an evaluation of how effective both their site selection and sampling strategies were in helping them answer their enquiry title. It was pleasing to read responses where candidates were clearly reflecting on fieldwork they had carried out. It is clear candidates are aware of the different types of sampling strategies and can begin to explain the benefits and limitations of using these. A number of candidates explained clearly the rationale for their site selection which again was pleasing to see they could accurately reflect on these parts of the enquiry process. There were occasions where candidates responses slipped into purely describing their data collection methods, for example holding tape measures tight to increase accuracy. This was not relevant to the question and so some candidates responses were limited in the marks they could access as they had not focused on the question being asked. A reminder that the evaluate command words requires an evaluation at the end of the response would be useful as a number of candidates did not include this on occasion limiting their answer to top level 2 rather than potentially moving into level 3.

