



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Geography (4WGE1)
Paper 1R: Physical Geography

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Introduction

There was a small entry for this examination series likely due to this being the first Modular series for this qualification.

This Examiner's report is intended to provide an insight into performance on Paper 1 Physical Geography analysing the majority of questions in terms of what went well and where common mistakes and underperformance were evident.

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.

It is important that candidates focus on the requirements for each command word and the Assessment Objective (AO) distribution, particularly for the longer response 8-mark questions, to ensure they access the full range of marks available.

Summary – Areas for focus for next series.

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Ensure candidates make specific reference to the resource shown for 4-mark questions in Section A.
- Candidates need to be able to explain characteristics of all the named coastal ecosystems not just coral reefs and mangroves.
- When answering the 8-mark longer response questions candidates need to be clear on the demands of the command word 'analyse'. This requires candidates to investigate an issue by breaking it down into different components and making logical, evidence-based connections between these components. There is an expectation that judgement is made, although, this does not need to be in the form of an evaluation statement at the end of the response.
- Candidates need to recognise that the longer response 8-mark question is dominated by the AO distribution (4 marks for AO3 and 4 marks for AO4). Therefore, responses that are unbalanced or focus on one AO will be limited to a Level 1 response.

- Candidates also need to be aware that AO2 is not awarded on the longer response 8-mark questions, this means if using examples in their responses they need to show how these link to the stimulus material provided in the resource.
- Candidates who just lift text directly from a resource will not gain credit.
- 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.
- Candidates need to ensure they complete the correct fieldwork question, there were a number of candidates answering questions based on a coasts enquiry in both the river and hazard enquiry questions. This limited responses as marks could only be awarded for generic ideas plausible for the enquiry context being answered.
- Candidates need to be confident in explaining different stages in the geographical enquiry process not just fieldwork methods.
- Candidates need to be aware of the difference between risk and risk mitigation.
- Candidates need to know how to calculate all measures of central tendency.

1a

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the definition of precipitation.

1bi

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the definition of abrasion.

1bii

Candidates accessed this question well and were able to state one human cause of river flooding. On rare occasions candidates stated a human cause of river flooding. Also, some candidates provided responses which were too vague for credit for example: impermeable surfaces. This needed to be more specific to ensure they demonstrated they were not talking about concrete/tarmac but rather rock/soil type to accurately answer the question.

1biii

A significant proportion of candidates were able to achieve 2 marks on this question. As the factor temperature was provided in the question stem candidates were not given credit for stating whether the temperature was hot or cold. To gain the development mark they needed to explain the impact on the river regime.

1c

This question required candidates to use a resource (figure 1a) showing a diagram of a river's long profile and cross section in the upper, middle and lower courses. The first mark was awarded for identification of a relevant piece of evidence with the second mark awarded for the reason why this change occurs.

Candidates generally coped well with the demands of this question, although, a proportion of responses only stated what the characteristic and reason was for the upper course in their first point and what the same characteristic was in their second point and this limited the response to two marks as the focus of the question was on changes in the long/cross profiles.

Candidates should be reminded they can only gain AO3 credit for evidence specifically shown in the resource, some responses stated changes like bigger bedload, for which there was no evidence shown in the resource, limiting the response to just AO2 marks.

1d

The vast majority of candidates achieved the mark for this question by correctly identifying the landform as an ox-bow lake.

1e

For this question candidates were required to explain one reason why rivers deposit sediment. It is often these 3-mark questions which students find most demanding as they often find it challenging developing one point in sufficient depth to be awarded 3-marks. Most candidates were able to identify a correct reason linked to a decrease in energy. However, fewer responses demonstrated the detailed explanation for why the loss of energy happens.

1f

This question required candidates to identify a reason why it is important to prevent river flooding and develop this to explain why this is important/necessary. Most candidates were able to identify two different reasons most commonly linking this to social impacts (reducing injuries, deaths, homelessness).

Where candidates did not achieve full marks this was usually because they gave the same reason twice when the question asked for two different reasons.

1g

These 8-mark extended writing questions candidates are required to blend their use of the resource (AO4) with their own knowledge and understanding of the issue presented (AO3), therefore they are not case study questions, rather they require the candidates to apply their geographical understanding to the context shown in the resource.

Many candidates clearly used the resource to describe the areas of the world that had good and poor water quality and often were able to link this to basic reasons, most often relating to the information provided in the textboxes.

Some candidates misinterpreted the percentage of wastewater cleaned data which often led to the point they were making being incorrect as the data did not support what they stated.

To access the higher marks candidates needed to go beyond simply describing what is shown in the resources, but provide several clear developed reasons for difference in water quality in different parts of the world. The command word 'analyse' needs to be addressed to achieve full marks and often candidates found this demanding as there was often minimal judgement demonstrated in candidate responses.

2a

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the definition of chemical weathering.

2bi

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the type of coastal mass movement.

2bii

In this question candidates were required to state one characteristic of a constructive wave. Candidates have a clear knowledge of the characteristics of waves and the majority of responses were awarded the mark. A minority of candidates confused the strength of backwash/swash and stated either strong swash or weak backwash. A small number of candidates simply wrote swash, backwash which was too vague for credit.

2biii

In this question candidates were required to explain one type of coastal erosion. Candidates were awarded for identifying a type of coastal erosion and explaining why this happens. Most candidates were able to identify a correct type of coastal erosion, although some candidates did explain a different type of coastal process most often a type of longshore drift.

What candidates found slightly more challenging was to explain why the erosion occurs, many responses stated a type of erosion and then just described the type of erosion rather than explain how it leads to rock being broken down.

2c

This item required candidates to explain two physical factors that affect mass movement at coastlines. Candidates found the demands of this question a challenge.

Candidates are less clear on the factors that affect the rates of mass movement. Often candidates would explain a weathering process but not link this to mass movement.

Some candidate responses were focused on human factors, these candidates would often explain the role of coastal management impacting on mass movement. This was not the focus of the question and was not awarded credit.

2d

For this question candidates were required to explain one characteristic of a sand dune ecosystem. It is often these 3-mark questions which students find most demanding as they often find it challenging developing one point in sufficient depth to be awarded 3-marks. Historically, candidates tend to find it more challenging when asked questions about saltmarshes or sand dunes compared to when the focus of the question is on coral reefs or mangroves. Some candidates were able to gain 2 to 3 marks but a significant proportion were awarded 0 or 1 mark. The most common misconception was candidates describing characteristics of the hot desert biome.

2e

This question required candidates to use a resource, figure 2a, showing an extract of an OS map of rural stretch of coastline. The first mark was awarded for identification of a relevant piece of evidence with the second mark awarded for the reason for why soft engineering would be suitable.

A large proportion of candidates were able to achieve 4 marks, they coped with the demands of the OS map effectively. The most common responses were focused on the fact there was saltmarsh/bird sanctuaries present. The development mark was awarded for explaining why it is important to protect this feature e.g. to not destroy habitats.

There were examples of candidates who did not clearly use the resource for example by stating they are cheap with nothing used from the map. This meant these responses could only be awarded the AO2 credit and no AO3 credit.

2f

The majority of students correctly identified the coastal landform shown as a stack.

2g

These 8-mark extended writing questions candidates are required to blend their use of the resource (AO4) with their own knowledge and understanding of the issue presented (AO3), therefore they are not case study questions, rather they require the candidates to apply their geographical understanding to the context shown in the resource.

In this instance candidates were required to study figure 2c, a map showing the number of people at risk from coastal flooding. There were three countries highlighted with facts about the annual expenditure on coastal protection, the percentage of people living in low-lying urban areas and the predicted sea level rise.

Some candidates used the information from the resource and made links to the reasons why some of these countries are more or less at risk based on their level of development and their ability to plan, predict and respond to flooding.

Few candidates were able to discuss the reasons for differences between different developed countries. Most responses compared the countries highlighted to countries like China and India, which were highlighted on the map and so this was awarded credit.

To access the higher marks candidates needed to go beyond simply describing what is shown in the resources, but provide several clear developed reasons for differences in flood risk in different countries. The command word 'analyse' needs to be addressed to achieve full marks and often candidates found this demanding as there was often minimal judgement demonstrated in candidate responses.

3a

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the hazard associated with tropical cyclones.

3bi

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the reason why volcanoes occur at hotspots.

3bii

In this question candidates were required to name the scale used to measure volcanic eruptions. Most candidates were able to access this question and provided the correct response. Although, some gave either earthquake or tropical cyclone scales with a very few stating seismographs.

3biii

Candidates were required to explain one reason volcanoes do not occur at conservative (transform) plate boundaries. They were awarded one mark for identifying how the tectonic plates move and a second mark to explain why this prevents magma reaching the surface. The most common response to this question was to state the direction of plate movement (sliding past each other) and then explain there are no cracks made in the crust which prevents magma rising.

There were a small proportion of candidates who wrote responses about the incorrect plate boundary and were awarded zero marks.

3c

For this question candidates were required to explain two reasons the management of earthquakes can be less effective in some countries than others. Candidates coped well with the demands of this question and gave a range of responses which were awarded credit.

3d

Candidates were required to explain one reason people live in areas at risk from earthquakes.

It is often these 3-mark questions which students find most demanding as they often find it challenging developing one point in sufficient depth to be awarded 3-marks. It would be helpful to remind candidates to ensure they read the question carefully, a significant proportion of responses were purely written about benefits of living in volcanic regions, most commonly mentioning fertile soils or attracting tourists. If the response had no, even generic, link to earthquake areas the response was awarded zero.

Where students offered ideas linked to family connections, poverty, ability to find work these were often developed sufficiently to be awarded 3-marks.

3e

Most candidates were able to identify ash (cloud) as the volcanic hazard shown in figure 3a. Credit was not awarded for smoke or gases.

3f

This item required candidates to use figure 3b, which is a resource showing the global distribution of tropical cyclones, to suggest two reasons for the distribution of tropical cyclones.

Candidates need to be reminded that when they are provided with a resource, for these 4-mark resource questions, they need to use specific evidence from the resource to gain their AO3 credit. A significant proportion of responses demonstrated purely AO2 evidence as they did not contain any specific reference to something shown on the resource, this limited responses to 2-marks. To gain the AO3 credit responses needed to include located examples which could be identified on the map or correctly identify the direction the arrows were pointing towards. To gain the AO2 credit responses needed to explain why tropical cyclones occur there not just describe where they are.

3g

These 8-mark extended writing questions candidates are required to blend their use of the resource (AO4) with their own knowledge and understanding of the issue presented (AO3), therefore they are not case study questions, rather they require the candidates to apply their geographical understanding to the context shown in the resource.

In this instance candidates were required to study figure 3c, two maps of Florida showing drought risk before and after Hurricane Debby and text and photographs of impacts from the tropical cyclone (hurricane).

Candidates were able to access figure 3c and use information provided to explain the impacts of the tropical cyclone on the environment. Better responses demonstrated their

AO3 knowledge by stating an impact mentioned in the resource and then building on this to give knock-on impacts, this was especially evident in candidates understanding of the importance of mangroves acting as a defence against storm surges and therefore, possibly increasing the risk in the future.

The command word 'analyse' needs to be addressed to achieve full marks and many candidates found this challenging as there was often minimal judgement demonstrated in candidate responses as they often remained descriptive of the impacts.

5/4/6ai

This MCQ was an accessible start to the question with a significant majority of candidates being able to identify the definition of secondary data.

5/4/6aii

Candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of the term qualitative data and were able to stage a correct type of data. The most common incorrect response provided was beach gradient.

5/4/6 b

Please note that the comments made on Q.5 also apply to Q.4 and Q.6 as the questions are in parallel and the resources very similar. Section B contained short answer questions on unfamiliar fieldwork and the extended 8-mark response on familiar fieldwork this series.

For this question candidates needed to identify one health and safety risk and explain the impact of this risk. The focus of the question was not how the risk was managed.

Candidates need to be clear on the distinction between what is risk and what is risk mitigation. Candidates who identified a health and safety risk and developed this by providing a way to reduce the risk were not awarded the development mark.

5/4/6 c

Please note that the comments made on Q.4 also apply to Q.5 and Q.6 as the questions are in parallel and the resources very similar. Section B contained questions on both familiar and unfamiliar contexts this series.

This item required candidates to calculate the median of the data shown in figure 4/5/6a. Responses needed to show the working by evidencing they had correctly identified the middle two figures and added and divided these to reach the correct answer. The working out credit was only awarded if candidates correctly identified the correct two middle numbers, as this is a vital element of the skill when calculating the median of a data set.

Where candidates did not gain credit, it was because they often calculated the mean. Candidates need to ensure they read calculate questions in full to ensure they perform the correct calculation.

5/4/6 di

Please note that the comments made on Q.4 also apply to Q.5 and Q.6 as the questions are in parallel and the resources very similar. Section B contained questions on both familiar and unfamiliar contexts this series.

Candidates were required to plot the two missing data plots onto figure 5/4/6b. There was less evidence of candidates missing out the graph question this series, but there was still evidence this had occurred as on occasion the candidates correctly identified the anomaly from the graph for dii, suggesting the candidate had overlooked this question.

5/4/6 dii

Please note that the comments made on Q.5 also apply to Q.4 and Q.6 as the questions are in parallel and the resources very similar. Section B contained questions on both familiar and unfamiliar contexts this series.

For this question candidates were required to identify the anomaly shown in figure 5/4/6c. Candidates have a clear understanding of the term anomaly as almost all candidates correctly identified the anomalous site shown.

5/4/6 diii

Please note that the comments made on Q.5 also apply to Q.4 and Q.6 as the questions are in parallel and the resources very similar. Section B contained questions on both familiar and unfamiliar contexts this series.

This question required candidates to suggest a reason for the anomaly shown on figure 5/4/6c. The first mark was awarded for identifying a reason for the error and two further marks for explaining why this led to an incorrect result being recorded.

Lots of candidates were able to suggest human error as their initial cause and went on to develop this to suggest how this may have happened. Most often suggesting an error using the measuring equipment leading to a bigger number being written down.

5/4/6 e

Please note that the comments made on Q.5 also apply to Q.4 and Q.6 as the questions are in parallel and the resources very similar. Section B contained questions on both familiar and unfamiliar contexts this series.

It is important to remind candidates to write their responses under the correct enquiry context, a proportion of candidates wrote coastal enquiry responses in the river enquiry and hazardous environments enquiry questions.

This limited their responses as only generic statements plausible to the enquiry context being answered could be credited.

There are also a small proportion of candidates who write tectonic responses for Q.6 and the specification is clear the enquiry needs to be focused on extreme weather events, this results in responses being awarded zero.

This question focuses on a familiar fieldwork context i.e., fieldwork that the candidates have undertaken as part of the course. This question asks candidates to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of their conclusion drawn from their own geographical enquiry.

There was a wide range of responses to this question with most candidates only evaluating their data collection methods, which whilst relevant to the question limited them to mid-level 2 if this was all they write about. The requirement for this question was to go beyond evaluating data collection methods and make links to how valid the candidates conclusions were. This would require some discussion of other stages of the geographical enquiry to reach the depth required for level 3. Candidates struggled to demonstrate they knew the difference between reliability and accuracy, at times stating something was inaccurate when what they had written was about reliability and vice versa. It would support candidates with their responses if they were clear on the difference between accuracy and reliability as they would be able to provide much stronger evaluations of their conclusions.

Candidates are provided space to provide their geographical enquiry title. They do not receive marks for this, but it provides context for the response that follows.

To gain level 3 credit the command word 'evaluate' needs to be met which requires a concluding statement at the end of a response for full marks.

