



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Pakistan Studies (4PA1)

Paper 02: The landscape, people and economy of
Pakistan

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General comments

- Candidates demonstrated secure, accurate knowledge and understanding of many of the topics examined in Paper 2.
- Candidates are required to answer all questions in the paper.
- As in past examination series, section A, B and C each consisted of a question (Questions 1, 2 and 3) which included short and multiple-choice questions and longer answer questions. There were resource based questions in each section 1(d), 2(d) and 3(c). While candidates were able to use some resources such as the photograph effectively (Figure 4), the resource based on rainfall (Figure 2) was not always used effectively to achieve all marks. Fewer candidates were able to achieve full marks for 1(d) as they had not interpreted the resource correctly.
- Candidates usually wrote appropriate amounts for their responses within the spaces provided, very few required additional pages.
- The majority of this year's candidate cohort appeared well prepared for the examination in terms of their knowledge, understanding and willingness to confront questions.
- There was little evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time.
- It was again heartening to see that there were very few candidates that didn't attempt questions, and nearly all responses were relevant to the question.
- Most candidates wrote answers in clear sentences and paragraphs with very few adopting simple lists of points that had been an issue raised with responses from the previous specification.
- Where questions in the paper were structured so that candidates should provide a number of responses in a question, for example, two factors', this structure was usually followed by candidates. Although in some questions where 'one impact' was required candidates would sometimes provide several reasons rather than developing just the one.
- This paper included questions with the command words 'assess' and 'evaluate'. Most candidates recognized the command word in the question and made an attempt to shape their answer to address this. It was encouraging to see that candidates seemed well prepared for approaching questions with these different command words and would often summarize their arguments, or would start with a sentence to attempt to address the command word. There were many examples of 8 mark questions with clearly structured answers where candidates were attempting to provide a balanced response to the question (for example human factors compared to physical factors in

2f). The most effective candidates presented their main idea as an introductory sentence, and reinforced this with a summary conclusion.

- In general, many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the command words used in the questions, which is a positive sign of exam preparedness. This was particularly evident in questions such as 1e, 1f, 2e, and 3d, where several responses were detailed and reflected a strong attempt to fully address the question. However, in some cases, responses became overly descriptive or included excessive, unfocused information, which detracted from the clarity and relevance of the answer. While it is encouraging to see candidates eager to showcase their knowledge, greater emphasis on addressing the focus of the question rather than the volume of information would enhance the responses for some candidates.
- It was particularly noticeable for 2f that candidates often did not recognize the focus of the question on the distribution of agricultural production, instead writing about strategies to increase agricultural production.

Section 1 A focuses on the Physical Environment.

- For 1a many candidates were able to interpret the map of natural vegetation of Southern Pakistan to identify the correct vegetation that could be found at the location specified. Where they did not score the mark here this was probably as they had used the wrong letter from the map.
- For 1aii many candidates were able to identify a characteristic of the vegetation located at the specified point from the map. Although many candidates just named the type of biome rather than a characteristic of the vegetation.
- For 1b candidates were required to state two causes of the southwest monsoon. While many candidates were able to recognise causes of the southwest monsoon quite a lot of candidates provided impacts or characteristics rather than the causes.
- For 1c candidates were required to explain one cause of tectonic (earthquake) activity in Pakistan. Many were able to correctly identify one impact, such as the presence of Pakistan on the boundary of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, and the collision of these plates creating pressure that leads to cracks and faults in the Earth's crust. However, a common error was that some candidates described the impacts of earthquakes rather than explaining their causes, which limited access to full marks. Most of the candidates would attempt to provide a developed answer recognizing that for a 3-mark question there needs to be some development of ideas.
- For 1d candidates had to use a graph showing actual and average rainfall for selected provinces to suggest two reasons why the actual rainfall was higher. Many candidates successfully identified a relevant factor, such as climate change, but few were able to develop their responses further. For example, global warming leading to increased

moisture and changes in the water cycle needed clearer explanation. Some responses included repetition, with two points about climate change making reference to different data. The ideas do need to be different to obtain full marks. Some candidates did not appear to have fully understood what the graph was showing, changes between average rainfall for 1961-2020 compared to actual rainfall for 2022. Some candidates provided answers related to why the rainfall might be different between the provinces rather than the change over time.

- For 1e candidates had to explain the distribution of a named natural resource in Pakistan. The responses were variable. Where candidates recognized the focus of the question and were able to provide a suitable named natural resource they were often able to obtain marks in level 2. However, some candidates seemed to miss the focus of the question on distribution and provide responses which focused more on how much of the resource was available to Pakistan and the importance for the economy. Most candidates were able to identify the correct natural resource; however, some confused the term "natural resource" with "energy resource". Others focused on the uses of the resource instead of addressing its distribution. A number of responses listed locations where the resource is found but did not provide any further development, which restricted marks to the lower level as there were no clear explanations provided. The natural resources listed in the specification are: water, forest products, fish/shellfish or minerals.
- For 1f candidates had to evaluate the responses of Pakistan's government to major river flooding events. Some students provided well-structured responses, although there were quite a few responses who provided detailed explanations of the causes of floods and not about the responses. Candidates generally understood the topic and wrote with a good level of detail making reference to specific flood events and places. Candidate did not always explicitly address the command word 'evaluate', often just providing details on responses from the government compared to international organisation, which often had implied evaluation, but it was not always clear. Many responses became descriptive, focusing on what the government has done (e.g., "the government introduced...") without assessing the effectiveness or impact of these responses. Stronger responses included at least two responses and a concluding judgement. A balanced evaluation, including both national and international perspectives, allowed some candidates to reach the top level.

Section B focuses on the Human Environment

- For 2ai most candidates were able to identify the type of pollution that caused the effect shown.
- For 2aii nearly all candidates were able to provide a suitable statement showing an understanding of deforestation.
- For 2b candidates were required to state two ways in which regional disparities affect the economic development of Pakistan. While many candidates were able to provide

relevant responses, quite often there was more written than necessary for question with the command word 'state'. For these types of questions, brief responses of a word, phrase or few words are usually sufficient. There were a wide range of responses for this question although common responses related to rural to urban migration and employment.

- For 2c candidates were required to explain one impact of globalisation on Pakistan. Many were able to identify a valid impact of globalisation and developed their responses effectively, demonstrating sound understanding. However, some responses included more than one impact, but without sufficient development of any single point, which limited their access to higher marks. Overall, candidates demonstrated a strong awareness of the impacts of globalisation on Pakistan.
- For 2d candidates were required to suggest two factors which affect the location of factories such as the one shown in Figure 4 (a bread making factory). Many candidates demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the factors influencing the location of the bread factory as shown in the image. Most were able to identify appropriate physical and/or human factors and offered relevant development. However, repetition was a common issue, factors such as transportation and cost were often mentioned more than once, which limited the marks available. Candidates who clearly identified and developed two distinct and relevant factors, whether human (e.g. proximity to market or labour) or physical (e.g. flat land or water supply), were able to access full marks. Overall, there was a good level of understanding shown, though greater focus on avoiding repetition would improve performance on similar location-based questions.
- For 2e candidates were required to explain why Pakistan has a negative trade balance. This question was generally well answered. Many candidates were able to accurately identify and explain causes of Pakistan's negative trade balance, demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding. A significant number also showed they were well prepared for this topic by offering multiple causes. However, some candidates focused more on suggesting solutions or recommendations to improve the trade balance, which was not the demand of the question. Those who successfully did so, using specific examples or details, were able to achieve marks in the top level.
- For 2f candidates were required to assess the factors which influence the distribution of farming (agricultural production) in Pakistan. Many candidates responded well by identifying relevant factors such as fertile alluvial soil in the Indus Plain, reliable irrigation through canal systems, and labour availability. These responses often included reference to specific regions and showed strong understanding and application, along with sound evaluative comments. However, a number of candidates focused too heavily on explaining strategies for increasing agricultural production, giving suggestions for improvement (e.g. what should be done to increase agricultural output), rather than assessing the existing influencing factors, which was the core requirement of the question. Understanding and responding to the command word assess was essential for success in this question. Those who did so effectively, with relevant examples and a

relevant judgement, were able to achieve high marks. Overall, while many candidates were well prepared and engaged with the topic, closer attention to the wording of the question and appropriate development is needed to reach the higher levels.

Section C focuses on Challenges for Pakistan

- 3ai Most candidates were able to identify the correct term for HDI.
- For 3aii most candidates were able to state a reason for Pakistan's low HDI ranking. As this was a 'state' question, short answers were accessible with the most common responses focusing on literacy rates and life expectancy which are two of the components of HDI. There were some responses that were too vague, just stating 'development' or 'money' which were not specific enough.
- For 3aiii candidates were required to state two factors used to determine the level of development of Pakistan. Again as a 'state' question concise responses were acceptable. There were a range of factors provided, often through making reference to development indicators such as GNI per capita or mortality rates.
- For 3b candidates were required to explain one physical factor that influences population distribution. While many candidates were able to respond correctly, a significant number confused physical factors (e.g., relief, climate, water availability) with human factors (e.g., job opportunities, transport), which prevented marks being awarded. Clear understanding of the distinction between physical/natural and human factors is important. Those who correctly identified a physical factor and explained its influence with contextual understanding achieved higher marks, and were usually able to develop their idea sufficiently for a 3 mark question.
- For 3c candidates were required to suggest two reasons why Pakistan's annual CO₂ emissions have changed since 1950. The resource associated with this question was a line graph of Pakistan's annual CO₂ emissions 1950 to 2021. Most candidates were able to identify correct causes of CO₂ emissions, such as industrial activity, transport use, and burning of fossil fuels. However, repetition of similar points and lack of development limited many responses. Some candidates simply listed causes without explaining their contribution to emissions or linking them to wider impacts.
- For 3d candidates were required to explain the responses of Pakistan's government to the challenges of living in large urban areas. Stronger responses clearly identified urban challenges, such as overcrowding, traffic congestion, air pollution, and housing shortages, and linked them to specific government initiatives, such as development projects in Karachi or mass transit systems. However, common issues included, confusing urban development with rural initiatives, referring to poverty without linking it to urban solutions, or providing general suggestions rather than focusing on government-led efforts. These misunderstandings led to lower marks where responses lacked precision or development.
- For 3e candidates were required to evaluate the success of incentives and strategies to support rural communities in Pakistan. Many candidates mentioned valid issues (e.g.,

lack of education, poor healthcare, infrastructure), but did not always address government responses or evaluate their success. Some candidates also confused rural and urban regions, discussing urban initiatives in the context of rural development. Others listed too many factors without developing any in detail. However, those who followed the command word evaluate, provided balanced evaluations, and offered examples specific to rural areas performed well and achieved high marks.

