
GCSE

GEOGRAPHY

8035/2: Paper 2 Challenges in the human environment
Report on the Examination

8035
June 2019

Version: 1.0

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General

This report covers responses from Paper 2 GCSE Geography in 2019, the second year of this examination.

This was a 1 hour 30 minute paper with 88 marks available and with a variety of question types: multiple choice, cloze exercises, short structured questions and longer extended prose answers. Questions came both with and without stimulus material. The questions required students to use and apply a range of skills, including the interpretation of photographs, graphs, maps, diagrams and charts.

This second year showed evidence of even better preparation for the examination than last for many aspects. Students of all abilities were able to access the resources with good use being made of them for all of the questions. The rubric was followed with few errors and the full range of marks was seen. There were few instances where students failed to answer a question. There was limited evidence that students were short of time, as most were able to complete the paper.

As the second year of a non-tiered paper, it proved to be accessible to students of all abilities as all questions elicited answers from students across the ability range. It was felt by many examiners that this was due to effective training by centres to help students of all abilities attempt all questions. The paper effectively discriminated between students of varying ability. There were basic answers showing some geographical knowledge and understanding at one end of the spectrum and responses that were truly outstanding in their grasp of geography at the other end. Centres should again be commended on the way they have encouraged all students to engage with the paper and on the amount and variety of content they have clearly taught.

As we still in the early years of the examination there are a number of general lessons to be taken which will no doubt improve performance as the specification content and questions formats become more familiar:

- Questions such as 01.4, 02.10 and 03.4 which require students to show understanding (AO2) and then apply this (AO3) still represent a significant challenge. Simply repeating case study information is knowledge (AO1) and cannot gain credit in this style of question. Centres could usefully engage in further preparation of this aspect of the examination.
- Centres and students should remember that 10% of the marks come from mathematical skills and therefore they should be able to perform a range of mathematical skills accurately.
- Where a source is provided, students are expected to make use of it, particularly where the command is “using figure... and your own understanding” Despite the challenges of a new specification, these fundamental skills (AO4) of extracting information from sources remain valid.
- Gaps in terminology and coverage are to be avoided as each time marks are lost for not knowing a term or concept this will add up.
- It was encouraging that almost all students knew, and were able to respond to, the command words. The key feature that indicated students operating in the upper levels was their ability to organise information to the specific demands of the question set.

Section A: Urban issues and challenges

As last year, this section produced slightly more confident answers than seen in Section B from the majority of students, possibly because the content is more familiar to teachers. The amount of case study detail known by students was impressive at times and when combined with a focus on the question yielded some outstanding answers. Students made varying use of the stimulus and source materials but showed an encouraging willingness to attempt the questions regardless of their ability.

01.1 A surprising number missed this question; most who attempted it were correct, if there was an error it was usually the migration element.

01.2 The majority of students only gained one mark for a generic remark about rates of growth in LICs. Only a few specifically referred to cities, highlighting the need to make sure the question is read carefully.

01.3 The same need to read the question was evident here where far too many students named a country. This question was straight from the specification and suggests a need for teachers to ensure that students are familiar with phrases in the specification so they know what to expect. The lack of clarity in addressing the ‘international’ aspect of the question cost even very able students a mark.

01.4 Encouraging aspects were good efforts by the students to use and attempt to interpret the resource. This made the question accessible for most who made at least basic links between industrial areas and development. Many could see the idea of transport links for import / export and were able to at least simply name the multiplier effect.

There remain still too many students copying information from the resource without doing anything with it. Centres could improve performance by clarifying the demands of the AO2 / AO3 questions, signalled by a command requiring understanding and the need to apply this in a new context, ‘use figure x and...’ and help students develop lines of reasoning using connectives. As last year and elsewhere on the paper, there is a need to be familiar with terminology as only certain students knew what an ‘urban industrial area’ was or were able to link it to development. There were frequent attempts to simply link development with tourism and mimic last year’s question. Equally, students need to go beyond the idea of ‘jobs’ or there is danger that ‘jobs and tourism’ become the new ‘litter’, seemingly a geographical consequence but actually offering little in the way of understanding.

01.5 This was the poorest answered of the multiple choice questions. Calculation of area is one of the skills listed in the specification and centres should ensure they are addressed during the course.

01.6 Was more generally successful. A few had the northings and eastings the wrong way round and there were a few 6 figure grid references.

01.7 This did not elicit many high quality answers for what should have been a fundamental geographical concept, ‘location’. Most gained some credit but a significant number used minor features such as schools to try and locate the place and were too vague. More successful answers used distance and compass direction in relation to significant elements of the map extract.

01.8 Another accessible question for almost all students who were able to demonstrate some understanding of urban regeneration and how it improves this or other urban areas. Fewer students were able to link this to urban problems and how they were solved. As with elsewhere in the paper there is a need to recognise these AO2 / AO3 questions and then to be able to connect the elements of them to achieve marks. ‘Jobs and tourism’ made another of their frequent appearances in the answers, as many exaggerated the advantages of the Turner Prize or street market into great sources of interest, employment and income.

01.9 This was reasonably well answered for both aspects. Errors lay in poor locational geography, perhaps described in relation to where the students themselves lived. Often the accuracy was example dependent, with a wide number of cities used and London often the most vague.

01.10 A named city was almost always present, though sometimes in the form of an area within a city. There was a wide variety of cities used with the textbook examples of Bristol, London and Liverpool the most common. It would be nice to see students using an example that was more local to them and therefore had more meaning. There was some evidence that such examples produced better answers.

The answers spanned the full mark range which was a noticeable improvement on last year. Case studies were used well and with good understanding of the opportunities arising from urban change. There was significant evidence that students were using a stronger structure to scaffold their answers this year, clearly due to good preparatory work in centres. This was most noticeable with even less able students attempting to address ‘to what extent’ and therefore evaluate and assess impact.

There remains room for improvement in terms of evidencing the extent to which opportunities are created. Students need to be aware that they need to learn place-specific detail and move beyond the generic ‘jobs and tourism’ or merely equating shopping with social opportunity. Additionally, ‘to what extent’ needs to be more than merely asserted, but qualified and that qualification supported.

Section B: The changing economic world

Answers here displayed less confidence from many, notably in the final two questions. This suggests that there is work to be done in improving confidence in this section as it had been hoped that this would improve from last year. As in section A the range of knowledge was remarkable from the best students. Nonetheless, the majority of students remained willing to interpret the question and attempt to answer it and showed some sound geographical understanding in the process.

02.1 This was very well done, with few errors.

02.2 This question was also almost always fine. As with other graphs, students should be reminded of the need for a ruler and sharp pencil in the exam.

02.3 Generally this was poorly answered, mainly due to students not referring to figure 5 and failing to explain the statement. Many simply described the DTM or the characteristics of Japan without making a clear link between the DTM and development.

02.4 Also generally well done with many gaining full marks and many wanting to write much more than was required. War / conflict and colonialism were the most frequent but slavery, the Black Death, Ebola and corruption also made appearances..

02.5 Many showed some grasp of fairtrade, though equally many didn't progress beyond some idea of 'fair pay' and had a surprisingly vague knowledge of its operation. A shame when so much could have been said. Hardly any students illustrated their answers with an example, a missed opportunity. Whilst the question did not demand an example, centres could remind students that this can be a way to add clarity in these AO1 / AO2 questions. Successful answers went beyond 'more money' and linked the natures of fairtrade to how it reduces the development gap.

02.6 Was almost always correct.

02.7 Mostly correct.

02.8 The least successful of the three multiple choice. Clearly orientating a map in relation to a photograph challenged many students.

02.9 When there was an error it was frequently because students were using the map instead of the photograph. When students read the question it was done well..

02.10 This question proved to be accessible while serving to differentiate well across the ability range. The most frequent error or distraction came from conflating post-industrial economy and renewable energy. A significant number of students demonstrated at least basic understanding of the post industrial economy concept. Less effective responses did little more than lift items from the figure but many were able to link them to tertiary and quaternary sectors such that level 2 answers were seen regularly. When students fully understood the post-industrial economy, they were able to use the resource to illustrate the change fully by referencing cheaper labour abroad and resource depletion along with the economic added value in research and development.

02.11 One of the most noticeable features here was the frequency with which examples from other parts of the specification appeared, eg Mumbai's Dharavi and Rio's Rocinha et al. Whilst these were often able to access level 2 they lacked the focus necessary for a fully developed answer. This use of cities meant that many answers were simply describing shanty towns and the resultant quality of life for their inhabitants.

Centres might therefore usefully consider a) priming students to utilise different case studies in different contexts or b) not too frequently co-teaching too many aspects of the specification from one case study as this can confuse the students. That said, we can take heart from students accessing all their knowledge and attempting to apply it to different questions in an unfamiliar context.

Answers here covered the full range of marks with Nigeria and India the most common case studies. Whilst the best answers had good precise knowledge of the likes of Shell and Unilever, there were too many who did not move beyond 'this gave them jobs' and centres need to remind students to learn specifics as with 01.10. The link to quality of life was more challenging even for those students who accessed factual detail. The level 3 answers addressed all aspects of the question and were able to evaluate both the positives and the negatives that Shell brought to Nigeria for example. They also genuinely considered quality of life by discussing improvement in healthcare, education and access to the benefits of development.

Section C: The challenge of resource management

The answers in the first section were somewhat variable.

03.1 A mixture of answers, many demonstrating the obvious need to take a calculator into the exam. There were occasional errors in rounding but many just did not know how to calculate a percentage so that 0 or 2 marks were often the result.

03.2 Mostly correct, many based around food miles or carbon emissions.

03.3 The majority reversed their answer from the previous question and added a development which served well. There remain misconceptions that UK produced food will be cheaper.

03.4 As with elsewhere on the paper these AO2 / AO3 questions present a challenge, with few answers getting beyond level 2. There was little in the way of discussion with many answers simply re-wording figure 10, explaining how farming causes water pollution and drifting into air pollution. Students also latched onto plastics and population growth without making the link to water quality. The successful responses were those that focussed on the wording of the question and used the problems in the figure either as a starting point for their answer or as supporting information to reinforce their comments. Developing this strategy would be a constructive focus for centres for future exams.

Question 4 – Food

In common with the other two options, the highest-scoring students displayed considerable knowledge and understanding in terms of both case studies / examples and concepts and processes.

04.1 Almost universally correct.

04.2 Again fine, although some left this blank even when they had answered 04.1.

04.3 Generally good, though some over-simplified and saw constant increase without fluctuations and / or a steady rate of change.

04.4 Success here varied, generally because students considered change in demand rather than consumption. Most gained at least one mark with the more successful considering consumption behaviour and dietary changes associated with development.

04.5 Again a fair spread of marks. Where the correct case study was selected, this was generally good. Too many students failed to identify genuinely large scale schemes, eg Almeria, Thanet Earth or IBIS and / or lacked specific facts, relying on generic answers that could apply to any large scale scheme. The opposite was also true with some listing all the advantages and disadvantages they knew without explaining them. The key to success remains addressing the command word and all aspects of the question.

Question 5 – Water

In common with the other two options, the highest-scoring students displayed considerable knowledge and understanding in terms of both case studies / examples and concepts and processes.

05.1 Almost universally correct.

05.2 As with 05.1, generally correct but rulers would make a difference.

05.3 Most were able to describe the trend with the best manipulating the data to give change over time rather than just quoting figures.

05.4 Water insecurity was understood by most students with at least one mark gained. Many were able to extend this into the impacts on health or for farmers in not being able to water crops and the consequences for food supply.

05.5 As in equivalent questions, many reached level 2 and the case study knowledge was good. The China south-north transfer project was popular as was Lesotho. This was usually well answered if the case study was correct, with perhaps better evidence here of having learnt case study information.

Question 6 – Energy

In common with the other two options, the best students displayed considerable knowledge and understanding in terms of both case studies / examples and concepts and processes.

06.1 Almost universally correct, with the same caveat about the absence of rulers as elsewhere in the paper.

06.2 Almost universally correct.

06.3 This was surprisingly low scoring for what should have been an easy question. Where the students used the figure as instructed they did well, but too many gave their own suggestions and failed to gain marks.

06.4 This was often vague with answers lacking development around how the issue causes conflict. Again this is specification wording with which the students should be familiar, so they should be able to do more than express basic ideas around differences of opinion.

06.5 Many students were able to gain credit for at least a basic understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of their selected fossil fuels. The strongest answers generally came from the selection of shale gas / oil, but the confusion over shale gas and natural gas persists.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.