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GCSE

# Geography

8035/1 Paper 1 Living with the Physical Environment  
Report on the Examination

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## **General Introduction to the November Series**

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

## **Overview of Entry**

The small size of entry for the November series (330 students) meant that results were untypical. Some outstanding scripts were seen, but the overall standard was below that of previous years, when the whole cohort was assessed. Students who scored highly were able to write fluently and coherently about a range of topics using specific geographical information. They were very clear about their understanding of climate change strategies, impacts of deforestation and flood risk factors. This allowed them to access higher marks in the levelled questions. Such students were familiar with, and able to cope with handling the wide variety of ways in which geographical data was presented to them, coped with the skills involved and displayed a mature and sophisticated knowledge and understanding. Most students were able to make an attempt at their chosen questions. Less successful answers tended to be generic, with little or no precise geographical detail. Rubric infringements were frequently seen, with some students attempting all 3 questions in Section C, although where this happened, performance was generally poor.

It was evident that some students knew their case study or exemplar material well and could accurately complete most of the skills-based questions, so were able to achieve high marks, in excess of 60 out of 88. Some challenging questions tested the understanding of higher ability students who were able to respond well, demonstrating their clear grasp of the subject in extended writing. However, many students produced answers which did not include clear explanation, even when appropriate exemplars were used, and the quality of their evaluation was often limited. The short questions, usually at the start of each theme, were easily accessed although definitions and concepts were often not learned precisely enough to obtain full marks.

In order for students to perform well on this paper they need to use the mark allocations and answer space provided in the question paper to the length of answer required and the number of points to be made. They must provide evidence or data from a source if the question asks for it in order to get full marks. Data needs to be used to support statements being made rather than just being lifted and presented in isolation. Students should write developed ideas wherever possible, especially where extended writing is required in the 6 and 9 -mark questions. Place specific information should be provided when using exemplar or case study support; however, care needs to be taken that this is relevant and not done at the expense of answering the question.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Question 1 The challenge of natural hazards**

1.1 The majority of students answered this correctly.

1.2 Many correct answers were seen for the full two marks, although there were some errors in calculating percentages and giving the answer to the nearest whole percentage

1.3 In general, students answered this question poorly, mainly because the answers failed to refer to high water temperatures in summer/autumn.

1.4 This question was challenging for many students. It is important to make direct use of the source, in this instance to describe the structure of the cyclone shown in Figure 2.

1.5 There was a tendency to lift evidence from Figure 3 and comment on it without addressing the assessment of why some tropical storms have severe effects. The distinction between primary and secondary effects was frequently misunderstood, with some students assuming that secondary effects equated to responses to the storm. However, there were some excellent answers where students were able to demonstrate their understanding of a range of factors influencing the effects of tropical storms, as well as selectively introducing exemplar support such as storms Haiyan, Sandy and Katrina.

1.6 The correct answer was B and this was the most common answer given.

1.7 Most students realised that the type of plate margin was destructive, although a minority simply named one of the plates shown on Figure 4, usually the Philippine plate.

1.8 The majority selected either volcanic eruption or tsunami, although some students named a non-tectonic hazard such as a hurricane.

1.9. This question was well answered by many students. A significant proportion were able to explain how a range of strategies including monitoring, prediction, protection and planning can reduce the risks from a tectonic hazard.

1.10. This was often misinterpreted as recent evidence for climate change as opposed to long term change during the Quaternary. No credit could be given for answers such as melting ice caps or retreating glaciers.

1.11 Most students correctly interpreted the map and selected answer D as the right answer.

1.12 There was a tendency to miss the requirement for judgement or evaluation in this question and to name strategies without explaining how they worked as mitigation or adaptation. A few students were very good on the justification for both and weighed up the relative value of one versus the other, with effective back up support from Figure 6 on the various strategies. There was no direct need to include exemplar detail in the answer given but using it to support the point being made helped add context and often led to an increased level of assessment.

### **Question 2 The Living World**

2.1 This was a straightforward question for many students, and most were able to name an appropriate example of producer and consumer.

2.2 The role of producers was generally well known and many students provided a suitable correct answer.

2.3 This maths skill was carried out effectively, with the majority of students working out the temperature range accurately.

2.4 The question required identification of differences rather than two separate statements based on the data, which some answers gave. However, the majority correctly described differences in the pattern of rainfall or level of temperatures between Place A and Place B.

2.5 This multiple choice question was answered correctly by most students.

2.6 Quite often the focus was on naming and describing the strategies rather than explaining how they could reduce environmental damage. A number of students attempted to describe all 4 photographs, covering both environments. Some of the better answers introduced other ways that damage can be reduced, referring to international agreements such as the Antarctic Treaty or the use of intermediate or appropriate technology such as solar cookers and more efficient stoves which reduce the need for fuelwood.

2.7 Many students found it difficult to describe distribution or gave answers that couldn't be seen on the map.

2.8 This was answered well by the vast majority of students. Most were able to develop the information provided in the source about the release of stored carbon, and make the link to climate change.

2.9 This 9 mark question produced a mixed response. Some students missed the question completely and a sizeable number limited their answer to a few lines of description. Those who answered it successfully realised that different economic activities have varying environmental impacts. For instance, palm oil plantations can lead to the deforestation of huge areas of rainforest. These are cut down to make way for commercial plantations but the land can only sustain crops for a relatively short period of time. By contrast, ecotourism can bring environmental benefits to an area. It tends to be small-scale with a focus on conservation and minimising negative environmental impacts. Amongst the less successful answers there were several misconceptions, such as the idea that small scale shifting cultivation is very damaging or that large scale hydroelectric dams and reservoirs are beneficial to the rainforest environment. The best answers introduced and evaluated the effects of other types of economic activity such as mining and logging, and recognised that small scale, local sustainable economic activities have a relatively small environmental impact compared to large-scale commercial projects.

### **Question 3 Coastal landscapes in the UK**

3.1 This was answered successfully by most students, making accurate use of Figure 12.

3.2 The majority were able to describe the area behind the shingle beach as being flooded.

3.3 This was poorly answered, with very few students identifying an advantage of the strategy. Credit was given where students mentioned that it is cheaper than hard engineering strategies or that it is natural looking and won't damage the environment.

3.4 As with all maths skills, this question was answered accurately by most students.

3.5 Many of the answers were generic, referring only to the overall benefits, as opposed to a consideration of specific hard engineering methods. The best responses identified two or three strategies such as sea walls and groynes and explained the advantages of each.

3.6 Answers to this question were variable. The question required application of knowledge and understanding in analysing the landforms shown in Figure 15. Some students provided a coherent account of the sequence of change over time to headlands and bays linked to different rock types. Most could pick out the alignment of resistant and softer rocks likely to result in headlands and bays along a discordant coastline, and consequent differences in rates of erosion. However, in order to progress through the levels, it was necessary to integrate processes such as hydraulic action and abrasion into the development of different landforms. Credit was also given for understanding of the role of weathering and mass movement processes. Less successful answers failed to identify either the landforms or erosion processes, or assumed that the diagrams represented a vertical section through a cliff.

#### **Question 4 River landscapes in the UK**

4.1 As with the equivalent in question 3, this was answered correctly by most students

4.2 The term relief was frequently misunderstood, despite the definition given.

4.3 Most students realised that river straightening helps to reduce flood risk or that the water flows faster and more directly.

4.4 This maths-based question was answered correctly by most students

4.5 A significant number of students did not appear to know how levees are formed and didn't attempt the question. The few successful answers that were seen included clear sequence and appropriate explanation of processes.

4.6 This question proved challenging for many. There were some excellent responses with secure use of terminology, covering both physical and human factors, with good use made of the information provided in Figure 19. A developed explanation of two factors, one physical and one human, was sufficient to access maximum marks. Many students recognised the idea that surfaces such as concrete and tarmac are impermeable, therefore rivers in urban drainage basins tend to have short lag times and higher peak flows due to higher amounts of surface runoff and drainage systems taking water to rivers quickly. Physical factors varied, but the heavy rainfall, relief and vegetation all featured effectively in the better answers. Less successful answers tended to ignore the source material altogether or simply copy it word for word without any development or understanding.

#### **Question 5 Glacial landscapes in the UK**

5.1 This was successfully answered by most students, making good use of Figure 20.

5.2 The shapes of drumlins were described in different ways, some of which were overstated-very steep and even mountainous were used as descriptions.

5.3 This maths skill was generally attempted successfully.

5.4 Very few students used the data in Figure 21 to accurately state the direction of ice movement. Sometimes they wrote north west without indicating that the ice was moving from south east to north west.

5.5 Most answers about economic opportunities were confined to tourism. Some incorrectly described activities in areas that are actively glaciated such as the Alps or Rockies. The most successful answers included a range of economic activities such as forestry, quarrying and extensive farming, with clear exemplar support.

5.6 There were few responses to this question. Glacial processes and landforms appeared to be unfamiliar to many students, and the formation of corries, aretes and pyramidal peaks was poorly explained.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The paper allowed for differentiation, and the varied nature of the assessment allowed students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, application and skills. This was realised through a broad spectrum of multiple-choice questions, source material stimulus questions and extended writing tasks to assess descriptive, explanatory and higher order cognitive skills. Questions that required students to show understanding of specification content (AO2) and those that were designed to apply this understanding to assess geographical information and make judgements (AO3), were particularly successful in discriminating between students of different abilities. The questions required students to use and apply a range of skills, including the interpretation of photographs, graphs, maps, text, statistics, diagrams and charts.

The structure of the paper was very similar to previous years. However, unlike the 2018 and 2019 series, the full range in quality of answers was not seen due to the low entry. Place-specific knowledge was lacking in a large proportion of scripts. Given the small entry and lack of preparation it was not surprising that responses across the paper were not entirely consistent, with some questions causing issues or difficulty. Student outcomes were highest in Section A, the challenge of natural hazards, and answers to Section B, the living world, were less convincing. Section C, landscapes in the UK tended to produce less successful responses. The most popular options were question 3, river landscapes, and question 4, coastal landscapes. Question 5, glacial landscapes, yielded the smallest number of responses, and the quality of answers was slightly poorer for this option. In Section B, answers relating to hot desert environments featured more prominently than cold environments.

For less able students, the questions enabled some engagement, especially where a source or stimulus was provided. A significant number produced superficial answers showing only a sketchy understanding of the subject matter.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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