
GCSE GEOGRAPHY

8035/3

Report on the Examination

8035

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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 meant that it was difficult to assess how typical the outcomes were. There was a wide range of marks, suggesting that the examination paper differentiated appropriately, however the pattern of marks appeared to be less consistent than what is normally seen. At the same time there were a small number of very good scripts where students scored highly and wrote fluently and coherently in both sections of the examination paper. In general terms it appeared that there was a greater degree of inconsistency in relation to the skill based questions and a significant number of these questions were not attempted. The general approach to the fieldwork questions was quite untypical. A number of students did not attempt some or all of the fieldwork questions, especially in relation to the seen fieldwork and it appeared that a number of students may not have completed any personal fieldwork.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A –Issue Evaluation

01.1/2– These questions presented few difficulties for students with the majority using the resources effectively to select the correct answers.

01.3–It was evident that the majority of students had looked carefully at Figure 1 in the resource booklet and consequently nearly all students who attempted the question showed some understanding of the link between economic development and urbanisation. Differentiation was generally achieved by how effectively students actually used the information in the resource booklet rather than simply identifying appropriate points and largely copying them. Many students simply quoted from the resource booklet (“improving living standards”, “better access to social and economic facilities”) or offered basic ideas about “jobs and money”. While this approach suggested a level of understanding it did not provide a very developed response. Those students who developed these ideas by suggesting what improved living standards and better access to social and economic facilities actually meant generally produced very sound responses.

01.4– This question was generally answered quite effectively with many students making points about how changing circumstances might affect future population estimates. A small number of students simply reworded the question by observing that “the data might not be accurate because it is an estimate”, which was rather self-limiting.

01.5- This question was generally answered effectively with the majority of students making observations about; imbalances in population structure and dependency; a lack of labour restricting development or urban growth leading to a lack of investment in rural areas. A small number of students misinterpreted the question and answered with reference to an urban, rather than rural context.

02.1 – The majority of students identified the correct evidence from the resource booklet in order to show an understanding of the question and consequently showed some awareness of the key idea (“unequal cities”) expressed in the question. Differentiation was generally achieved by how effectively students actually used the information in the resource booklet, rather than just identifying appropriate points and largely copying them. Many students simply copied points from page 4 of the resource booklet and offered very limited development or explanation about how those observations actually evidenced the idea of “unequal cities”. Those students who did offer some clear development often produced very effective responses. Differentiation in resource based questions is essentially between those students who simply identify appropriate points (which is generally a Level 1 indicator), to those who actually use the identified points as evidence to show a clear understanding of the question. Relatively few students used the photograph(s) in the resource booklet to express socio-economic differences. Those that did often made very pertinent observations about differences in living conditions and used these points effectively to express an understanding about inequalities in cities. A small number of students failed to address the question command, in some cases offering a basic comparison of urban and rural conditions, in other cases comparing inequality in LIC and HIC cities.

02.2-This question presented few difficulties for students, with the majority using the resources effectively to suggest that levels of access to water was higher in urban areas. A significant number of students failed to develop this basic idea by supporting their answer with specific information or data and consequently did not achieve the second of the 2 marks. A small number of students addressed the question in relation to access to sanitation rather than water, consequently gaining no credit.

02.3– The majority of students made appropriate observations about the use of “population growth per hour” as a way of expressing growth. In most cases responses focused around the idea that smaller numbers are easier to understand and manage or that expressing growth as an hourly figure emphasises the rapid rate of population growth.

02.4 – The idea of planning and the challenge of planning in the context of rapidly growing urban environments was not generally well understood. A significant proportion of students simply identified points from the resources (“providing services for the urban poor is a real challenge”; “Lagos already suffers from electricity and water supply problems”) without offering any real development or context in relation to urban growth. The limited number of students who did appreciate the challenging relationship between growth, resource allocation and housing and service provision produced thoughtfully considered responses. A small number of students totally misunderstood the question and talked about population issues or population control measures.

03.0 – Very few students failed to attempt this question or scored zero marks and virtually all students showed an understanding of the issues and opportunities relating to urban slums in LIC/NEE cities. A number of students failed to identify their position in relation to “Slums of hope or slums of despair” and this often meant that their discussion was more general and less focused. The quality of answers was largely determined by how effectively the points within the resources had been developed or linked in order to construct a discussion which supported a chosen position. Level 1 responses tended to be characterised by students who simply identified and largely copied points from Figure 3, in some cases virtually word for word. While the selection and

copying of appropriate evidence was clearly creditworthy it did not generally convey any degree of evaluation or sense of the relative importance of different perspectives within the resources. Those students who took this further by developing some of the evidenced points or offering a degree of evaluative and balanced thinking moved into Level 2. A more thorough and clearly evidenced and evaluative use of the resources to support the chosen position moved students into Level 3. These answers were often accompanied by a short conclusion which often brought the discussion back to the original aim of the question. A small number of students offered impressively sophisticated ideas, taking evidence from throughout the resource booklet and, on occasion making judgements about the quality of life and relative opportunities between urban and rural areas for the poorest communities. It appeared that the general level of preparation for the Pre-Release element of the examination paper was perhaps less than what had been seen in previous examination papers, although a small number of students appeared to have done some additional research beyond the resources. The key to achieving the highest marks on the final issue evaluation question is to ensure that students are familiar with the synoptically linked elements within the Specification and use the whole of the resources effectively when supporting their answer.

Section B – Fieldwork

Unseen fieldwork questions

04.1 – This question presented few difficulties for most students, the majority completing the pie chart with a high degree of accuracy. A small number of students made basic mathematical errors or did not complete the segments in the appropriate, conventional order.

04.2 – The majority of students did not appear to understand the word “pattern”, as expressed in the question and simply offered a description of the questionnaire results, which was not creditworthy. Those students who did respond to the question command by considering the spatial or temporal pattern generally scored full marks.

04.3 – The majority of students failed to address the command expressed in the question which was essentially an evaluative consideration of the effectiveness of the data (Figure 4). In most cases students appeared to focus on the word “conclusion” and simply wrote a conclusion based on the data in Figure 4. This approach did not address the key idea expressed in the question and was consequently not creditworthy.

04.4 - This question presented few difficulties for most students, the majority completing the table by calculating the median pebble size for Place C accurately.

04.5 – It was evident that the majority of students had a sound understanding of this question and were able to identify the relationship between pebble size and distance. Relatively few students developed this basic idea by using data to support their answer, consequently failing to achieve the second mark. Students should be encouraged to develop 2 mark answers by firstly identifying an appropriate point (1 mark) and then offering supporting evidence for the second mark.

04.6 – It was evident that the majority of students appeared to confuse “data collection method” with “data presentation technique” and consequently many students inappropriately listed data presentation techniques as their answer.

04.7 – A significant number of students did not attempt this question. The majority of students that did complete the line graph generally did so with a high degree of accuracy.

04.8 – This question presented few difficulties, virtually all students who completed the question calculated the answer correctly.

04.9 – It was evident that the majority of students did not understand the term “primary data”. Many either did not attempt the question or listed examples of secondary data or examples of presentation techniques.

Seen fieldwork questions

A reasonable proportion of students did not attempt some or all of the seen fieldwork questions. A number of students who did attempt these questions failed to identify the title of their enquiries or simply put a place name in the title box. Consequently the following observations are based on a very narrow range of responses where the aim of the fieldwork was clearly identified.

05.1 – In most cases students identified anomalies rather than suggesting how they might affect their fieldwork enquiry, consequently not addressing the question. Those students that did address the question often made sound observations suggesting how anomalies might affect either their results or their conclusions.

05.2 – In many cases students made thoughtful observations about their chosen technique (maps; photographs; field sketches) and suggested how it could be used to identify or present information. A very small number of students made observations about all three techniques rather than selecting one, as instructed.

05.3 – The majority of responses tended to focus on describing data collection methods rather than evaluating them, as expressed in the question (“Assess the effectiveness of your data collection method(s)”). A number of students did not appear to understand the term “data collection”, instead referring to data presentation, and in some cases students described the results of their data collection methods.

05.4 – Responses to this question were variable. At the lower end students appeared to have very little understanding of the question, either simply describing their data collection techniques or making basic observations about the aim of their investigation with only marginal reference to their results and conclusions. At the higher end a small number of students offered some sound evaluative observations which clearly linked their results to their conclusion and reflected on how their conclusion had addressed the original aim of the investigation. The ability to produce a sound answer to this question was often dictated by the degree of clarity of the original question or hypothesis.

Concluding Remarks

The examination paper was effective in providing students the opportunity to demonstrate both practical and thinking skills. This was evidenced by the way that a number of students used the resources effectively to show a high level of understanding and developed their ideas by incorporating learned knowledge.

As such, the examination paper generated a wide overall range of marks and consequently allowed a good degree of differentiation.

With such a limited entry size it is difficult to make conclusive observations, however the following factors appeared to be evident;

- Students did not appear to be as well prepared in relation to the pre-release material and the topic under discussion. There was a higher degree of misunderstanding and a greater amount of simply copying points from the resources, rather than using them as a basis for discussion.
- The application of skills appeared to be more inconsistent, suggesting less awareness of the expectation and requirements of the examination paper and perhaps less practice and preparation.
- With the unseen fieldwork questions it was evident that a number of students did not really understand some of the key terminology associated with the fieldwork process.
- It appeared possible that a number of students had either not completed personal fieldwork, or had not had the opportunity to re-visit it through a revision programme.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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