



GCSE

GEOGRAPHY

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

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General Introduction to the Autumn Series

This has been another 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 meant that results were untypical. A few outstanding scripts were seen, but the overall standard was well below that of 2018 and 2019, when the whole cohort was assessed. The small number of students who scored highly were able to write fluently and coherently about a range of topics using specific geographical information, including exemplar support. They were very clear about their understanding of climate change factors, tectonic plate movements, deforestation issues and flood management strategies. This allowed them to access higher marks in the levelled questions. They coped effectively with the geographical skills involved and displayed an ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar source material. Weaker answers tended to be generic, with little or no precise geographical detail. Rubric infringements were frequently seen, with many students attempting all 3 questions in Section C, although where this happened, performance was generally poor.

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. Students should write developed ideas wherever possible, especially where extended writing is required in the 4, 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 and 1.2 The majority of students answered these skills based questions correctly.

1.3 Many students showed a basic awareness of the risks of living in areas at risk of tectonic hazards, but few were able to explain the potential benefits of living in areas prone to volcanic activity, other than mentioning general points about tourism. Several strayed into the risks associated with weather hazards, which was not required. Relatively few responses accessed marks above Level 1

1.4 Most were able to make use of the map information to answer this skills question accurately.

1.5 Relatively few students recognised the type of plate margin shown on the map. Many wrongly suggested that it was a destructive margin, or named one of the tectonic plates, usually the North American plate.

1.6 This question required an understanding of the processes taking place at destructive plate margins. Where this was recognised, students applied their understanding effectively and were able to explain the processes involved. However there was much confusion in the weaker answers about the causes of volcanoes and earthquakes, with some students even attributing them to hot weather in the tropics.

1.7 In many cases, planning to reduce the damaging effects of a tectonic hazard was confused with prediction or monitoring. However a significant number of answers referred correctly to the planning of evacuation routes, the preparation of emergency aid distribution and other similar strategies.

1.8 The correct answer was C and this was the most common answer given.

1.9 It is important to make direct use of the source, in this instance to describe the link between air pressure and surface winds. Students should be familiar with the global pattern of air circulation, but surprisingly few could see the movement of winds from high to low pressure areas as shown in the diagram.

1.10 The explanation for high rainfall in equatorial areas were not generally understood. Some poorer answers assumed that the latitude of 0 ° for the Equator given on the map represented the temperature. However a minority of students gave clear explanations, using the source appropriately.

1.11 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 general comment. Most responses accessed Level 1 AO3 marks by expressing a view about the importance of human actions in contributing to climate change but were unable to develop the answer with suitable geographical or scientific explanation. Relatively few showed understanding of the role of natural factors such as volcanic action. A small proportion provided a balanced answer, giving consideration to both human and natural factors, before evaluating their relative importance. In this type of question it is helpful to go beyond the source and demonstrate knowledge of additional factors such as changes in agriculture and deforestation (human factors) or orbital changes and variations in solar output (natural factors).

Question 2 The Living World

2.1 The majority of students were unable to select the correct definition of biodiversity.

2.2 This was a straightforward question for most students, who were able to use the latitude lines shown on the map to describe where biodiversity levels are lowest. However there was no credit for an explanation of low biodiversity.

2.3 Many responses showed an awareness of high temperatures at the Equator but relatively few linked this with higher rainfall which allows plants to grow.

2.4 Specific plant adaptations were not generally known. Note that the question required a single adaptation, not two separate points. Some students focused on animal adaptations for which there was no credit.

2.5 The majority of answers were limited to Level 1. Most understood the constraints imposed by extreme temperatures but relatively few understood the meaning of inaccessibility and the link to development challenges. Case study support was limited, and often wrongly focused on economic opportunities. However there were a few excellent accounts of challenges faced in the context of the Thar desert or Svalbard, with evaluation of their importance in these areas.

2.6 This maths skill was carried out effectively, with the majority of students working out the mean global forest loss accurately. Note the requirement to express the answer to one decimal place.

2.7 This skill proved to be more challenging. Relatively few could work out percentage change correctly.

2.8 The concept of debt reduction was not widely understood, with several answers simply rearranging the wording of the question. A few students were aware of that debt can be paid off in exchange for a guarantee that money is spent on conservation.

2.9 The requirement for judgement in answering this question was met by most students, and some were able to apply their understanding to the quotes in Figure 7 to develop a coherent argument. A minority of students considered both sides of the debate, with effective and relevant back up support. 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. Weaker answers tended to rely heavily on the source, with limited additional comment or explanation

Question 3 Coastal landscapes in the UK

3.1 This was answered successfully by most students, making accurate use of the map.

3.2 The majority were able to state the compass direction accurately.

3.3 This was well answered, with most students identifying evidence of tourism on the OS map. Some answers were too vague to be credited, such as the existence of a beach nearby.

3.4 Knowledge of specific types of mass movement was limited. Many answers confused mass movement with longshore drift or various processes of erosion

3.5 Answers to this question were variable. Some students provided a coherent account of the sequence of change over time leading to the formation of a spit. In order to progress to Level 2, it was necessary to integrate processes such as longshore drift into the development of the landform. A sizeable number of answers confused spits with other landforms such as arches and stacks.

3.6 Many of the answers were generic, referring only to the overall costs and benefits, as opposed to a consideration of specific soft engineering methods shown in Figures 10 and 11. The best responses identified two or three strategies and became engaged in a debate about the relative merits and disadvantages of soft engineering.

Question 4 River landscapes in the UK

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

4.2 The term relief was frequently misunderstood, despite the definition given, and little use was made of map evidence. A few answers were specific in describing the variations in height and gradient of the land.

4.3 Students generally identified the direction correctly.

4.4 This was answered incorrectly by most students, many of whom confused the river valley with the channel.

4.5 A surprising number of students had no idea about how oxbow lakes 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 showing secure use of terminology, covering impacts on both people and environment, and with clear application of understanding to the information provided in Figure 14. A developed explanation of two strategies, with some discussion, was sufficient to access maximum marks. Weaker 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 Many answers were inaccurate. Some students were unable to use grid references to locate places on the map.

5.2 The majority of answers showed some credit for identifying specific features of land use. However some responses incorrectly focused on the physical features shown in the grid square.

5.3 The use of map and photograph together was challenging for many students.

5.4 Very few students were able to use the photograph to identify evidence of glaciation. Most answers consisted of generic descriptions of hilly or mountainous land

5.5 There were few responses to this question. Glacial processes and landforms appeared to be unfamiliar to many students, and the formation of hanging valleys was poorly explained.

5.6 The most successful answers included a range of management strategies, with clear exemplar support and evaluative comment. However the majority depended entirely on the source material and failed to discuss the success of strategies as required in the question

Concluding Remarks

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 and a large number of students appeared to be unprepared for the nature of the assessment. Place-specific knowledge was lacking in a large proportion of scripts (AO1) and understanding was frequently superficial and lacked geographical detail (AO2). Questions that were designed to apply understanding to assess geographical information and make judgements (AO3) were generally successful in discriminating between students of different abilities. The questions that required students to use and apply a range of skills, including the interpretation of photographs, graphs, maps, text, statistics, diagrams and charts, showed a variable outcome (AO4). Mathematical skills were generally completed accurately, but those requiring more specific geographical skills were less successful. 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 difficulty for the majority. 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 the least 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. However 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.